

Rhode Island Farm Bureau Newsletter



#StillFarming

Volume 21, Issue 3

July 2020

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Cancelled. If any word describes the last four months, it would be cancelled. Flights, meetings, appointments, sporting events, school, graduations, vacations, weddings, family reunions, and many more. Cancelled. What *wasn't* cancelled? **Farming.** No matter what has changed in our lives, some things remained. For all the jobs that we learned could convert to work from home, there were those that simply couldn't. Police, firefighters, medical professionals, truck drivers, grocery and market workers and farmers. Simply put, we must eat to survive, and that food comes from farmers. It's not to imply that things didn't change drastically for anyone who still had to work during these past three months, because it did. But farmers had to make some serious decisions. When restaurants and schools closed, the wholesale market dropped out for producers. Indecision about what to plant, how much to plant and **even to plant at all** were daily questions we heard and received. To say there were many daily conference calls and Zoom calls that RIFB participated in on a local and national level is to put it mildly. Many of our RIFB board members began to participate on the calls and many members soon joined. Virtual meetings and calls have finally dropped off in frequency a bit, but so far none have been cancelled.

Since March, Rhode Island Farm Bureau has been hard at work trying to make sure our farms could operate their businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. We worked alongside RI Nursery and Landscape Association to have retail greenhouse sales reopened when the Department of Business Regulation shut them down on March 29 as non-essential retail. When greenhouses and garden centers were given permission to make sales again in late April, it was under previously unheard-of restrictions. We were very proud of the quick and often innovative changes and modifications our members took to be able to open. Some farms instituted preordering with curbside pickup or delivery, some created or improved websites to share products customers could no longer browse in a greenhouse, others developed new markets and marketing strategies when restaurants closed and even weddings and funerals no longer received floral deliveries. We then continued to work to ease the original restrictions and to achieve parity with the big box stores. This greatest challenge has been the scope of the pandemic, and the inability for our farms to simply expand their market; this pandemic hit our nation and all its agriculture as a whole. (cont. page 2)

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In addition to Greenhouse and Retail Garden Center Sales, RI Farm Bureau has also worked daily on many other issues. Addressing concerns about ag travel across state lines & the backlog in the processing of livestock, working with our lobbyists to help ease onerous restrictions introduced on May 4 relating to Agritourism events not even taking place until fall, discussing concerns about empty supermarket shelves in a country with the safest and most abundant food supply in the world. RIFB has continually shared information on Small Business Administration (SBA) loans including hosting an RIFB specific Zoom call with SBA. We have also encouraged farms to consider applying for Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) Direct Assistance to farmers for losses in pricing and market supply chains.

Because the newsletter is only updated to the day it goes to print, we held this issue until the Phase III Guidelines for Farmers Markets, On-Farm Markets, Agritourism and Pick-Your-Own Farms were released. These are posted on our RIFB.org website. If you do not have access to the Internet, please give us a call at the office and we can mail current guidance to you, or arrange for you to pick it up here. If there is a question you have on the guidance or another issue, please call and if we cannot answer it, we will reach out to get the answer for you.

Rhode Island is one of the few states whose COVID-19 numbers continue to drop. Many states' case numbers are rising by the day and their infection rates are increasing. If we all work together to follow recommended guidance to protect ourselves and others, Rhode Island may be able to operate more closely to normal as we navigate this new path. It is our hope that the public's newly heightened awareness of local ag remains long past coronavirus. The diligence of Rhode Island's farmers has not gone unnoticed throughout. Thank you for being good examples of how to run businesses and for being good neighbors.

Farming is a Calling

By Don Hartman

Who will fill my shoes? Who's going to be the next one to plant the seeds, and grow and harvest the crops? Who will feed the calves and milk the dairy cows when farmers are no longer here or not able to do so?

Young farmers, that's who. But where do they come from? They could be a first-generation farmer like myself or the eighth generation on a farm that was established years ago.

For me, it started with a dream. A dream is like a seed that gets planted, then cultivated, and with hard work it finally grows and bears fruit, becoming reality.

Farming is a calling. It gets in your blood. Family farmers are a special breed. We are thick-skinned but tender-hearted. We are church deacons and T-ball coaches. We are 4-H leaders and volunteer firefighters. We are the neighbor in times of need. The volunteer in hard times. We are members of our small communities, but feeders of the world.

There are both challenges and opportunities ahead of us. It's a challenge to connect with consumers, to understand their wants and needs. It's also a challenge to earn and keep their trust.

But there is opportunity now more than ever. Recent issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic caused a breakdown in the supply chain. People need to know that those of us in agriculture never stopped. We have always produced food – during wars, pandemics and every trying and difficult time throughout history – family farms are there for you. We produce!

Although time and technology have changed the way we farm, farm families haven't changed.

We still have the same spirit, drive and work ethic. I love what I do! My son followed in my footsteps and learned from me. Today, my grandson is working with and learning from his daddy. That's what farm families are all about. We are growing families, growing food, growing America and #StillFarming.

Don Hartman is a farmer and member of the New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau. He grows small grains, watermelons, onions and chile peppers.



LET'S TALK ABOUT THE STATE OF YOUR FARM INSURANCE

Big or small, when you dedicate your life and well-being into a farm, you need more than just a policy—you need an ally. Your operation is unique and a one-size-fits-all insurance policy isn't for you. You deserve a customized coverage plan and American National gets it. An American National Special Farm Package 10® or Country Estate policy can provide you with a flexible package that allows you to tailor a policy to match your individual needs, with coverage options that include windstorm, fire, mechanical equipment and utility line failures, machinery, livestock and more. Find a local agent at an.insure/rifb



American National is a group of companies writing a broad array of insurance products and services. Products and services may not be available in all states. Terms, conditions and eligibility requirements will apply. Life insurance and annuity products may be underwritten by American National Insurance Company, Galveston, Texas. Property and casualty products and services may be underwritten by Farm Family Casualty Insurance Company, Glenmont, New York.

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Young Ag Professionals

While most of the world has been on pause these last few months, the young agriculturalists in Rhode Island have been full steam ahead. Most of the Young Ag Professionals committee's plans have been postponed until further notice, but this just gives us more time to plan an even better program for our YAP members. If you have not done so already you should follow along on our YAP social media accounts to see what each of the committee members have been doing during quarantine to keep local agriculture alive. You can find us on Facebook and Instagram.

Our workshops are not the only ones that have been derailed. Most of the large, well-known fairs in the area have been canceled and are now offering options for youth to submit entries online. While it is not the same by any means, it gives the younger generation of farmers a way to showcase their animals despite COVID-19. It also helps to show the general public that Rhode Island is **#StillFarming**.

Watch for updates about upcoming workshops and mixers in the coming months. If you would like to be added to the email list for YAP activities feel free to call or email RI Farm Bureau at 401-385-3339 or director@rifb.org. The YAP program is for individuals between the ages of 16 and 35, but we encourage younger ag enthusiasts to have their parents added to our mailing list for activities younger people may be able to participate in.

Become GAP Certified

If you are receiving this, you have likely heard of the RI GAP program and know that there is a system in place and support for growers in Rhode Island that may need to undergo a RI GAP audit. We are well into the growing season, but we have developed a system to facilitate participation in this program for this unique season.

You can learn more about the RI GAP program by:

1. Visiting [The RI Produce Safety Portal](#)
2. Reviewing [RI GAP Certification During Covid-19](#)
3. Contacting Ananda Fraser:
Produce Safety Program Coordinator
RI DEM – Division of Agriculture
401-537-8093
Ananda.Fraser@dem.ri.gov

All of the above information can be accessed on our rifb.org website for those with internet access.

If you do not have access to the Internet, please call Ananda Fraser (listed above) to find out more about becoming GAP certified.

Need to apply for or renew your pesticide license?

While pesticide license training is normally done cooperatively with URI, DEM will be doing **testing only** until on-campus classes resume. Testing is available for **all** pesticide applicator licenses and categories. There is currently no list of dates as of yet, but exams will be scheduled based on demand. Study material can be made available for pickup at DEM's Agriculture office. For more information on how to take your pesticide license test or to get study materials, please contact Harold.Puckett@dem.ri.gov or Kimberly.Lavoie@dem.ri.gov.

If you do not have Internet access, you may contact Harold Puckett at DEM Ag 401- 222-2781, Ext 7261 or Kim LaVoie at DEM Ag 401-222-2781, Ext 4513.

Update your Farm's Commodities

We are happy to have fully transitioned to our new membership database supported by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau. One item that came to our attention as we transitioned, was that most farms have outdated commodities listed.

Please take a moment to send us an email at rifarm@rifb.org or call the office at 401-385-3339 to update your commodity listing with us. If you'd like to review what commodities we currently have listed in our database for your farm, Rebecca will be happy to look that up for you and update if needed. This will help us to identify specific farms and growers when the need arises.

Thanks in advance!



Did you know that you need a conservation plan?



The RI Conservation Districts are working with NRCS, under a special program, to write Farm Conservation Plans for the Farm Forest and Open Space (FFOS) Program of Rhode Island.

A conservation plan is a tool designed to help you better manage the natural resources on your farm and in turn may help save you money.

If you are in the farm program or are thinking about applying, this is a great opportunity for you!

Funding has been secured for a limited # of plans.

ACT NOW to assure you are approved for this special offer before all slots are filled.

Get a \$950 valued plan for only \$100, under special project funds!

For more information, contact your local Conservation District:

Northern RI Conservation District
Serving Providence County
(401) 934-0840

Southern RI Conservation District
Serving Kent and Washington Counties
(401) 500-0422

Eastern RI Conservation District
Serving Bristol and Newport Counties
(401) 934-0840



BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

Don't forget your membership benefits! You can easily save the cost of your dues by taking advantage of these discounts. Go to rifb.org for more info on:

American National Insurance

Avis

Budget

Case IH

Caterpillar

Choice Hotels

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401.397.1050

ashley.mccullough@american-national.com

Updating Your Email Address

RIFB wants to provide you with timely updates on legislation, meetings and other important information. We have worked hard to ensure that all member emails are correctly categorized to ensure that you receive our emails. If you do not currently receive emails from **RI Farm** (rifarm@rifb.org), please email us (**using your preferred email**) or use the Contact Form on our website to provide us with the best email to use.

The #1 Reason People Don't Join Farm Bureau?

No one asked.

Not a member of RIFB?

Know someone who *should* be a member?

Full-time farmers, part-time and hobby farmers, landowners, gardeners, foodies and anyone who enjoys local food and farms in Rhode Island– you can join RI Farm Bureau and help us to support the future of agriculture in RI and beyond.

You can stop by the office to join or renew, or join or renew online at rifb.org.



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Meet the RIFB Board, July Edition

Vinny Confreda's grandfather started Confreda Farm in 1922. His dad and uncle took over the business, and his uncle has since retired. Vinny's dad is still active and at 91 still walks the farm to see what is being done and to consult with Vinny. Vinny still goes to his dad for a second opinion using his years of experience in today's decisions. Vinny has expanded the farm and developed new segments since he became an active part of the family operation.

In 1970, Vinny headed to the local lumberyard and bought some scrap lumber, using it to build his first greenhouse. He began growing tomatoes in the ground inside the greenhouse, and in 1972 added in potted tomatoes. Vinny began to market the tomatoes at farmers markets and it grew from there. Confreda's began selling both wholesale and retail via word of mouth and soon gained customers. Today, social media has replaced most print and TV advertising.

Sweet corn is the number one item grown by Confreda Farms with 250 acres in production, followed closely by tomatoes, peppers, yellow and green squash using a large part of an additional 150 acres in mixed veggies. Confreda's also grows pumpkins and all the hard squashes such as butternut, acorn, etc., and as it has renewed in popularity, they now grow 10 acres of eggplant. Confreda's has a total of 28 greenhouses, both retail and wholesale.

Vinny's three sons all work actively with him as the 4th generation of Confredas. They are keeping the family tradition going, expanding while creating a model where each of the sons has their own division but still operate as a unit. Jonathan works in the retail side, Corey works in wholesale and oldest son Vinny works with the entertainment part of the farm and the maintenance. They operate two mazes: one haunted, one not. Hayrides to the PYO pumpkin patch are offered on weekends. There is a farm barnyard area for kids, to teach them about animals. They also offer school tours to teach children—and adults too—about farming.

Vinny works with three seed companies, traveling down south several times in the winter to look at different seed trials and discuss what can be grown in the northeast. They plant trial plots here to see what will grow, and some varieties that don't do so well in the south will grow well in the northeast. Vinny participates in an effort to be cutting edge, and to help out other northeastern farmers by supplying information on new varieties that may produce well here, using photos and harvest records to document the growth.

Vinny was elected to the RIFB Board of Directors in 1996. He has been on the RI Farm Service Agency State Committee for two stints totaling 15 years, stepping down last year after three years as chair.

"Farmers are the biggest casino in the world. They do more gambling than anyone does. I don't need to go to a casino, just going to the farm is my biggest gamble every day." --**Vinny Confreda**

Brenda Frederickson's grandparents bought a farm on Central Avenue in Johnston in the 1950's. Her parents remodeled one of the houses on the property and the family moved in when Brenda was five. Her dad tried dairy, Herefords, pigs, hay, and corn, then phased into a full-time job running the farm as a part-time hobby farm. The family grew two acres of mixed vegetables and would sell them at farmers markets in Providence and Scituate. Visits to her grandmother's friend's tobacco farm in Ontario Canada inspired Brenda to stay in the agriculture field. With no ag programs available at her high school, Brenda switched to a different school. She joined 4-H in her early teens and achieved the Key Club Leadership Award, and in 1982 attended 4-H National Congress representing RI as a state winner in Ag. Brenda was inducted into RI 4-H Allstars in the 80's.

Brenda attended URI to study Plant & Soil Sciences, transferring to Business Administration when the bank she was employed by offered to pay for the Business degree. Both have helped with her current businesses. In 1999 she and her husband purchased property on Chopmist Hill Rd. in Scituate, starting with greenhouses which was the easiest transition to become an active farmer. They worked for 20 years to establish plant-able fields to raise crops, which they do today. Brenda and her husband are currently working on creating pastures to raise beef animals. In 2014 they established the retail side of Frederickson Farm, 1/8 of a mile down the street from their home farm. The Fredericksons opened a farm to table café, a pellet and wood stove business and sell seasonal plants. Brenda was elected to the Scituate Town Council in 2001 and was elected to the Rhode Island Farm Bureau Board of Directors in 2012. In 2015 Brenda completed the AFBF Women's Communications Boot Camp. So far 210 women have graduated from the program which provides Farm Bureau with a passionate and persuasive group of advocates who connect with influencers on the local, state and national levels.

2020 RIFB Raffle Update– Postponed

With the postponement of local fairs until 2021, we have decided not to hold a raffle this year. Please keep the raffle in mind for 2021, both for purchasing tickets to support our Scholarships, and also to participate as a farm. In 2021 we will once again be offering 3 chances to win for each \$5 ticket- \$500, \$300 and \$200 in RIFB Member Farms Gift Certificates. We want to replicate our 2019 balance of gift certificates offering produce, fruit, meat, flowers, plants, syrup and/or honey, and any other products which you may grow/produce.

Turn-Key Hog Operation for Lease or Sale

RI Farm for lease. Great potential on this USDA inspected, turn-key hog operation. Currently 20 sows, capacity of 100 sows. Potential for up to 3000 hogs per year. Needs enterprising younger person to take over.

Current owner will be available to consult new operator. Option of lease to buy. Housing and/or full purchase also an option.

Contact Heidi at RI Farm Bureau for more information. 401-385-3339 or director@rifb.org. Serious inquiries only.

RI Farm Bureau offers free Notary Services.
Please call the office before coming @ 401-385-3339

Continue to Receive the Printed Newsletter.

RIFB plans to stop sending the printed version to our **Friend of Farmer** members as of this fall. We want to be conscious of waste and costs, but we are happy to continue to mail a printed copy to any of our members that request it. Please call the office and speak to Rebecca to be placed on the **Printed Newsletter list** to receive your free newsletter by mail. Current **Full-Time** and **Part-Time Farmer** members will continue to receive a mailed copy unless you request digital copy only.

Farmers- Do you have something to sell or trade?

Are you looking for a particular implement or service? Do you need seasonal or full-time help or are you someone looking for a summer or full-time ag related job?

The New England Ag Exchange Website is a collaborative effort between Farm Fresh RI, the Young Farmer Network, RI DEM Division of Ag and the RI Farm Bureau. It provides an online forum to buy/sell/trade, share advice, seek/offer land or labor, and more.

Visit <https://exchange.farmfreshri.org/> to see how it can help you!

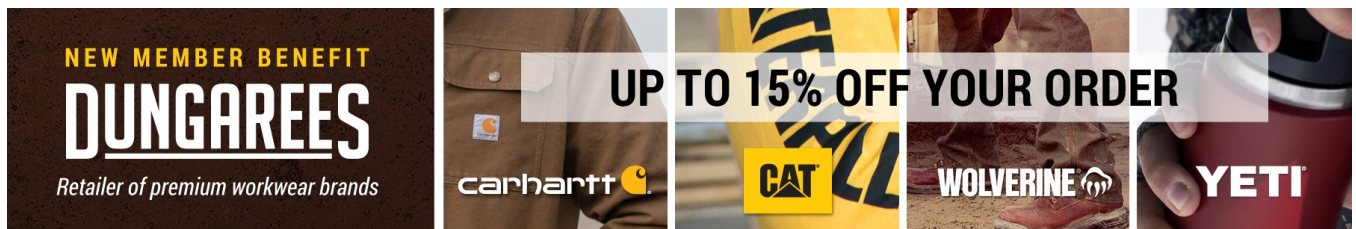
President's Corner

Past difficulties point out the importance of getting back to the old days when the agricultural community was active in local politics. It is what could make or break farmers. Historically farms have needed to stay involved in politics to afford them the ability to sell and ship their products. Too often politicians have used embargos on agriculture, affecting export markets.

It is important to plant seeds not only in the ground, but in the minds of politicians, state and local committee members, town planners, etc. Become active in your town and city political committees, regardless of party affiliation. You never know who you may reach out to and what minds you may change.



Henry B. Wright III, President RIFB



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Always free shipping over \$55.

Save 10% on orders under \$200, 15% on orders over \$200.

Use the RI Farm Bureau discount code RIFRB at checkout.

Farm Energy 101 - Summer Workshops from the *Rhode Island Farm Energy Program*



These **on-line sessions** will provide farmers with information about available funding opportunities and incentives for making energy efficiency improvements and/or installing a renewable energy system.

July 22, 2020 at 10:00 AM

August 19, 2020

at 5:00 PM

Email info@rifarmenergy.org to sign up and get your Zoom invitation!

The Zipline : A Message from AFBF President Zippy Duvall July 1, 2020



We can expect Fourth of July gatherings to look a bit different this weekend than in recent years. But whether you're more spread out or keeping celebrations to close friends and family, we can all stay safe, find time to give thanks for our country and honor the brave men and women who have fought for our freedom.

I hope you'll also join me again in thanking the brave men and women who report to work in different uniforms—from the health care workers on the frontlines to those delivering essential products to our communities. There are some jobs that are more than a day's work: they are lifelong callings.

“There are some jobs that are more than a day's work: they are lifelong callings.”

Farming is also one of those callings. Farmers and ranchers know how much our families, communities and country depend on us. This fact hit home even harder this year, especially as many of us faced empty grocery store shelves and mile-long lines at food pantries this spring and summer. For most of us, this was the first time we have experienced anything like this, and I doubt we'll be quick to take our safe, abundant food supply for granted again.

According to a recent survey by the American Farm Bureau, 84% of respondents say they trust American farmers and ranchers. That's an overwhelming and humbling statistic. I know farmers value that trust, and we take the responsibility that comes with it seriously. We know you and your families are counting on us, in good times and bad.

There's no question that agriculture is an essential industry. Work on the farm did not let up in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, and our work is still going strong now. That's why at Farm Bureau, we started the #StillFarming campaign this spring. We wanted to assure the public that the work of a farm never stops, rain or shine. And farmers know we cannot do this work alone either. We rely on and are grateful for the hundreds of thousands of skilled men and women who join us in our work on the farm to ensure crops are tended and harvested and that animals are cared for.

As we celebrate our nation's birthday this weekend, let's remember that our nation is stronger when we work together. No matter your calling or the uniform you report to work in—whether that includes scrubs or jeans, suit jacket or trucker hat—we all play an essential role in serving our communities and preserving freedom for all.

Vincent “Zippy” Duvall, a poultry, cattle and hay producer from Greene County, Georgia, is the 12th president of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

#StillFarming

RI Farm Bureau

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Fax: 401-385-3394
E-mail: rifarm@rifb.org
Web: www.rifb.org



Thank a farmer 3 times a day!

CALLING ALL FFA AND 4-H MEMBERS!



JOIN RI FARM BUREAU FOR FREE

Just a reminder that all 4-H and FFA Members can join RI Farm Bureau for free, and receive all the benefits our other members receive including discounts at thousands of businesses nationwide.



SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

RI Farm Bureau offers \$500 scholarships to qualifying Farm Bureau Members. Applicants must be enrolled or enrolling in an agricultural related course of study. Scholarship monies will be awarded upon presentation of the first semester's transcript, showing success in their ag-related major. For more information, and to apply, contact us at 401-385-3339 or follow the **Scholarship** link on our website. Look for an updated Scholarship Application in the summer.