

Rhode Island Farm Bureau Newsletter



2021 RIFB Annual Meeting Wrap-Up

Thank you to everyone who was able to join us on November 18 at the [Crystal Lake Golf Club](#) as we celebrated 68 years of Farm Bureau in Rhode Island. Over 35 attendees joined us for the morning and early-afternoon events, with 90 guests attending the dinner. Casey Ellington, of [Ellington Farms](#) in Ohio is currently serving her first year on the [American Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee](#) along with her husband, Charlie. They raise beef, pork, and chicken that is sold directly to local consumers. They also grow corn, soybeans, and hay. Casey specializes in connecting agriculture to her local communities by working with many local organizations. Casey spoke to about 30 attendees including the RI State FFA officers about marketing and the importance of being on boards and committees.

After lunch, Executive Chef [Andy Teixeira](#) of [Brix](#) restaurant at Newport Vineyards returned as our featured chef to make a lamb pasta dish using [Hopkins Southdowns](#) lamb. The workshop was sponsored by [Blackbird Farm](#).

During the RIFB Business Meeting, **Rob Swanson of West Greenwich** was elected to the board, filling the spot vacated when Wayne Salisbury stepped down. Wayne had been on the RIFB Board of Directors since 2004. The remaining incumbent board members were also re-elected to the board. Eight resolutions were then brought before the membership for discussion and all passed. After the social hour, guests enjoyed a buffet dinner and Sam Kieffer, Vice President, Congressional Affairs at AFBF, spoke to the group. Sam was followed by the introduction of guests including:

Janet Coit, NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, former Director RI DEM
Terry Gray, Acting Director of RI DEM

Jason McNamee, Deputy Director, Bureau of Natural Resources

Ken Ayars, Chief, RI Division of Agriculture

Juli Stelmaszyk, Director of Food Strategy, Rhode Island

Samantha Seivers, Congr. staffer on behalf of Congressman James Langevin

Representative David Bennet, Chair, House Environment and Ag Committee

Jacob Raleigh, Credit Representative, Farm Credit East, Dayville, CT

Richard Brock, Multiple Line General Agent American National

Earl Adams, Adams Agency

Ashley Johnson, Ashley Johnson Agency

Matthew Richter, Acting State Director, RI State Farm Service Agency

Sheryl Michner, County Executive Director, Farm Service Agency

Peg Sweeney, F/S Capitol Consulting (our lobbyists)

Jack Teear, F/S Capitol Consulting (our lobbyists)

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Board of Directors

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2021 RIFB Annual Meeting Wrap-Up, cont.

Evenings Awards

Janet Coit was awarded our highest honor, the **2021 Golden Tractor Award**.

This award is bestowed each year upon deserving individuals who have personally upheld and campaigned for the preservation of farming in our great state and sustaining agriculture for future generations. As the Director of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management for over 10 years, her dedication to the role has helped to show our state's citizens and legislators the value and importance of farming in Rhode Island. Without such strong support from RI DEM, many people would be unaware of the role of agriculture in our small state and continuing the farming tradition would be even more difficult. For her years of dedication and support of RI farms and agriculture, RIFB has chosen this opportunity to reward Janet Coit for her efforts on behalf of Rhode Island's farmers.



William Tabor received the Director Emeritus award, retiring from the board in 2019. **Richard Schartner** also received the Director Emeritus award, retiring from the board in 2018. The award was accepted on Richard's behalf by his son, Tim Schartner.

Rhode Island Farm Bureau was honored to present **Dave Lewis's** family with our **Lifetime Achievement Award**. Dave was a dedicated teacher at Scituate High School for over 25 years until he retired. He then continued his love of teaching at Exeter-West Greenwich High School for a short time after. Dave was an active and passionate member of the Rhode Island chapter of the Future Farmers of America (FFA). He enjoyed farming, the Washington County Fair and spending time with friends and family. His contribution to local agriculture through educating young people as well as the general public was of great value/cannot be overstated. Dave lost his battle with Dementia on July 17, 2021. Wayne Salisbury, outgoing RIFB Board member and former board Vice President, taught with Dave for many years. He gave a wonderful speech about Dave's dedication to his students and agriculture, impressing upon the evening's attendees the importance of continuing to offer vocational education opportunities for students.

Following the awards, our raffle winners were announced.

Silent Auction for 1 Cord EZLight Kiln Dried Firewood donated by Verrier Tree Service- winning bidder was Larry D.

Local Farm Products Raffle winners of RIFB Farm Gift Certificates were:

1st Prize \$500 – Kristen F.

2nd Prize \$300 – Angie B.

3rd Prize \$200 – Cheryle M.

Our Penny Social Raffle had donated items and gift cards from: Grainger, Dave's Marketplace, Seven Cedars Farm, Briarberry Farm, Dungarees.com, Wright's Dairy Farm and RI Farm Bureau.

The Grainger winners were: Coleman 45 Quart Cooler- Deana K., Snow Brush- Maggie L., Flashlight- Emily M., Insulated Beverage Bottle- Dave B., Cordless DeWalt Drill Kit- Peter D., 5 Piece Phillips Screwdriver Set- Steve B., Aluminum Snow Shovel- Scooter L.

Farm Equipment “Right-to-Repair” Workshop and Discussion

On October 19, over 25 farmers attended a Tractor Demo/”Right to Repair” workshop at Turf Inc. in North Kingstown. Industry representatives from John Deere, United Ag and Turf, Norfolk Power Equipment, Kubota, CNH (Case-New Holland) and AGCO were all in attendance and gave presentations to the group made up of small and large RI farms, both owners and their employees. Industry discussed the information, tools, and technology currently available to farmers, growers, and equipment owners to enable repair and maintenance of their equipment by themselves, by independent repair providers, and by their dealer.

After the presentation, attendees joined the reps for hands-on demonstrations of equipment diagnostic and repair information technology currently available. Attendees expressed their appreciation for industry outreach and the ability to meet face to face to discuss concerns and issues. RI Farm Bureau appreciates **Turf Inc** allowing us to use their location for the workshop and to **Sodco** for bringing additional pieces of equipment for the demos.



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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. For more information, and to connect with a local American National Agent near you visit an.insure/rifb or call (800) 899-6519



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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Loss Prevention Tips: Wood and Pellet Burning Stoves

Many people have turned to wood or pellet burning stoves as a supplementary method of heating their homes. They offer the promise of cheaper fuel costs combined with a rustic beauty that is unique among heating sources. However, stoves also come with some serious potential drawbacks.

The Danger of a House Fire:

From a hazard standpoint, it's quite easy to understand that burning wood inside your dwelling increases the risk of fire. To minimize this danger, a homeowner must know the do's and don'ts of wood stove installation and operation.

What to Do:

- Professional Installation - Having a licensed, experienced professional install your wood stove is probably the single most important safety step a homeowner can take. A professional will make sure that all clearances between the stove and the wall, floor and ceiling are proper, as well as installing the stove pipe in a proper and safe manner. The installer will also make sure the stove meets all state regulations and local codes.
- Use Dry, Seasoned Wood - The moisture content in green wood is too high to make it efficient for burning. Hardwoods (apple, red oak, maple, etc.) that have been dried for at least 6-12 months offer the best efficiency and helps minimize the buildup of creosote (an oily substance from incomplete combustion that can catch fire) on the lining of the stove pipe.
- Annual Maintenance - Have your wood stove professionally inspected and cleaned annually, before each heating season. The small cost of an annual service call is well worth the value of protecting your home and family. The chimney system of any wood burning unit, whether it's a fireplace, stove, or insert, will develop deposits of soot and creosote that can cause safety and odor issues. Excess creosote can result in a chimney fire that is so intense that it will destroy your chimney. Hiring a chimney sweep, or service technician to perform a thorough inspection and cleaning will ensure that your venting system is working properly. They will check for cracks, leaks, corrosion, and warping that could lead to a carbon monoxide leakage, clean out any creosote buildup or obstructions in the flue. Creosote buildup is extremely flammable and may create an unsafe operating situation if left uncleaned from season to season.

What NOT to Do:

- Don't burn trash or other refuse in a wood stove.
- Don't start a stove fire using a flammable liquid, such as gasoline or kerosene.
- Don't let a wood fire burn unattended or overnight.

The Danger to Children:

The risk of being burned by a wood stove is well understood by adults, but children are another matter. Even when they recognize the danger, children are still apt to play and roughhouse around one. Therefore, it's critical that a child guard screen or hearth safety gate be placed around the wood stove. These products separate children from the stove yet allow access for adults, usually through a gate with a child proof locking mechanism.

Other child safety issues to consider:

- Wood chips and pellets if spilled or left within a child's reach can pose a choking hazard.
- Pollutants put in the indoor air by a stove can adversely affect a child with asthma.
- Wood stove pokers, rakes and other tools need to be placed outside the reach of small children.

For more on wood stove safety, visit the Insurance Information Institute web site at <https://www.iii.org/article/wood-stove-safety>.



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TAX PREPARATION Just as 2020 was a year unlike any other, filing your 2020 taxes will also be different. The financial circumstances brought on by COVID-19 could have a significant effect on the deductions and allowances available to your business. This year, more than ever, you will need a reliable ag tax specialist to help guide you through your unique tax situation. Contact Farm Credit East to keep your business Strong at the Roots.

800.562.2235
farmcrediteast.com/taxprep



Young Ag Professionals

On November 18th farmers from all generations met at the **Crystal Lake Golf Course** for the RIFB Annual Meeting. Throughout the day there were numerous workshops held covering various topics. The Young Ag Professionals had the pleasure of hosting Casey Ellington from Ohio. The Ellingtons both sit on the AFBF Young Farmer and Rancher committee. Casey and her husband run a small yet diverse conventional beef farm, and focus on community outreach and building a strong sense of community amongst their customers. This topic was a great area to focus on for Rhode Island's Young Ag Professionals since so many farms need the diversity in income for the next generation to grow. The discussion with Casey was able to help young FFA/4-H members learn more about how to market and reach their ideal customers. We look forward to seeing how the young farmers use the knowledge from Casey to improve their businesses.



RI FFA State Officers Harrison Quilliam, Emily Myers, Stephanie Holland and Peter DiStefano were among the FFA members attending the RIFB Annual Meeting.

Let's Get To Work.



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Contact Heidi or Rebecca at the RIFB Office to learn more about advertising opportunities in the quarterly newsletter. **401-385-3339**



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DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU NEED A CONSERVATION PLAN?



WHAT IS A CONSERVATION PLAN?

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

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

Funding has been secured for a limited number of plans. Contact us today to assure you are approved for this special offer before all slots are filled.

You can get a \$950 valued plan for only \$100 under special project funds!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT YOUR DISTRICT:

Eastern Conservation District (Bristol & Newport Counties):
Sara Churgin, schurgin.ericd@gmail.com | 401-934-0840

Southern Conservation District (Kent & Washington Counties):
Gina Fuller, gfuller@sracd.org | 401-500-0422

Northern Conservation District (Providence County):
Gina DeMarco, gdemarco.nricd@gmail.com | 401-934-0840



Southern Rhode Island Conservation District



The RI Conservation Districts are working with NRCS to write Farm Conservation Plans for the Farm Forest and Open Space (FFOS) Program of Rhode Island. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

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. We have a number of membership levels— find one that suits YOU!

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

Update your Farm's Commodities

We get calls and emails at the office asking about hay, Christmas trees, CSA offerings, etc. 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. If you happen to have a seasonal or "at-the-moment" offering such as hay, silage or seasonal items, give us a call and we will put you on our list of farms to call if a request comes in.

Volunteer Opportunities on the Farm?

We also get the occasional request for a farm where someone can volunteer. Perhaps it is a young adult or a retiree, and many farms just aren't set up for that. Unskilled labor can take time from some operations, but if you would like to be on our list of farms an interested volunteer can reach out to, please let us know.

ATTENTION RI FARMERS AND AG-BUSINESS OWNERS



The cost for renewable energy systems such as photovoltaic solar panels and wind microturbines has come down significantly in recent years. And now, there are many new ways to deploy solar and wind projects on farms and rural small businesses. Today's solar is a whole lot more than some panels on your roof! But, with all these changes, you may not feel you know enough about these systems to decide whether any of them might be right for your farm or business.

The Rhode Island **RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM** can help you.

The Rhode Island Renewable Technical Assistance Program is ready to help you evaluate the potential for solar or other types of renewable energy system on your site *at no cost to you* — and your participation in this program takes only four hours of your time spread over a 10-week period.

However, you must apply to determine your eligibility.

Only 26 to 30 eligible farms and businesses can be chosen to participate in this program, and acceptance is on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Find out how you can
reduce your farm energy costs!**

Apply TODAY by contacting

Margaret Lee of EnSave.com

800-732-1399

MargaretL@ensave.com

**Tell Margaret you want to apply for the
Rhode Island Renewable Energy Technical Assistance Program.**

This program is being funded by a USDA Rural Development grant with the goal of assisting local farmers and small rural business owners explore their operation's potential to benefit from renewable energy. RIRC&D has partnered with EnSave to offer this program to farms and businesses throughout Rhode Island. If you don't already know EnSave, they are one of the nation's leading providers of agricultural energy systems design and analysis, and they work with farms across the country to reduce energy costs for farmers and rural small businesses and technical feasibility of implementation of those systems for their farm or rural small business.

President's Corner

Looking Forward to 2022

2021 saw farm markets transitioning from the lockdowns of 2020.

Ag in general was in good shape with markets rising and restrictions easing, with the hard work of the RI Farm Bureau insisting on parity between our small businesses and the big box stores. Business was brisk and inputs were low. However, going forward we could have difficulties. We are transitioning from low inputs, steady markets and manageable regulations to higher inputs and less discretionary money with the threat of increased regulations.



Only 38% of rigs are drilling for gas and oil compared to a year ago. Leases have been shut down and there is difficulty keeping personnel. The #1 problem is the inability to finance wildcatters as banks are uncertain about the return on their investment without the assurance of longevity with new or existing leases. All fertilizers, but especially nitrogen, are dependent on natural gas.

Energy based constraints are affecting the supply and cost of goods because of increased cost of travel by the customer, of the goods and of the inputs. Qualified labor is hard to find, contributing to the goods and inputs constraints above.

RIFB is striving to do all we can to lessen onerous regulations at the state and federal level with outreach to our congressional representatives and AFBF. As we enter into the election year, we try to reach out to all our legislators to make our case known, trying to stave off restrictive regulations by government agencies. Last week, at the AFBF Resolutions Meetings in DC, I was instrumental in stopping several resolutions that would restrict landowner rights.

At this time, my recommendation is to purchase as much of your inputs as soon as possible, to keep costs down and to also be assured of your supply. If you need to make a substitution, be wary of low quality and mislabeled products. Organic plant food, specifically because of the larger amounts of inert materials these products contain, has the potential to contain harmful or even hazardous materials including forever chemicals (PFAS) because testing requirements may not have been met.

Finally, another reminder to make sure to take the opportunity to make the best use of a good location and staying competitive. Tap into RI being the 2nd most densely populated state. We are so close to all of our consumers, but to that end, don't forget that as a small state we have "too far" syndrome. It is once again time to consider what you have to offer or can choose to offer that will draw the consumer to your location, and not just to the nearest grocery or big box store.

Remember, the sun will come out again, as we look forward to another good crop year. As always, optimism will prevail.

Henry B. Wright III, President RIFB

Focus on Agriculture: The Business of Farming

By Greg Doering, Kansas Farm Bureau

My grandparents received exactly one paycheck per year, usually in mid-August when they took calves to market. I was probably five or six years old the first time I got to go to the sale and sit in the grandstand as the cattle were auctioned off in lots.

I don't remember much from the sale, other than the auctioneer's cadence was pleasing even if it didn't make much sense to me. It was the conversation with my grandparents as we were leaving the parking lot that's stayed with me. It was a good year, and my grandmother said she'd picked up a nice check at the cashier's office.

Upon hearing the word check, the most obvious question spilled forth from my mouth. "How much was it?" I asked. My grandfather stared at the road while my grandmother flatly stated, "We don't talk about money." End of conversation.

I accompanied my grandparents to lots of sales over the next several years, and the routine was always the same. We'd go to the auction, stop at a restaurant on the way home and, in the good years, I'd come home with a new pair of boots. True to my grandmother's word, we never talked about money.

Years of careful observation eventually allowed me to decipher the general workings of the business side, even if I lacked access to the actual accounting of dollars and cents. By the time I was a teenager, I generally understood the success of the ranch depended on a delicate balance of controlling expenses in down years and setting something aside in the good ones.

One of the biggest misconceptions about the business of agriculture is that corporations are taking over and displacing family farms. There's no doubt there are some large corporate farms, but the rise in corporations is driven primarily by family farms and ranches. These are still mom and pop operations choosing to incorporate for any number of reasons, from liability protection and enhanced management to transition and tax planning.

It's a recognition of what's always been true — agriculture is a business and those who grow our food are its leaders. We tend to gloss over those facts by calling farming and ranching a lifestyle. While it's undoubtedly true, it also obscures some of the most difficult work those in agriculture do.

To grow a crop or raise livestock requires an extensive set of skills, ranging from finance and marketing to logistics and recordkeeping. Even with managing what they can control, farmers and ranchers are still at the mercy of markets and Mother Nature. Those are tough partners, but thankfully our food is in the hands of business professionals.

Greg Doering is a writer and photographer for the Kansas Farm Bureau.

#StillFarming

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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.

Our 4-H and FFA Members are the future of agriculture and we encourage you to join, either online at RIFB.org, or by calling the office at 401-385-3339.

