

Rhode Island Farm Bureau Newsletter



Farms Face Struggles in mid-2022

Farms have always faced challenges; it is the nature of the game. All farm products come from living things, putting the farm's products at high exposure to risk. Drought, floods, heat, cold, disease and more threaten farms every day, but farmers work hard to produce the best quality product they can for the consumer. But is nature the only concern? Not at all.

Fuel prices hit record highs this year, but fortunately both gas and diesel prices have dropped considerably in the last 5-6 weeks. However, it only takes one hurricane to disrupt the chain and prices may be back up again. To be clear, I'm not celebrating what are still very high prices, but I will appreciate the continually falling prices as long as I can. Luckily, I can curb the miles I drive, and if needed swap my truck for my daughter's Civic that gets 40 mpg. I have flexibility. But what if you're a farmer filling the tank in your truck or tractor? Switching vehicles isn't really an option, nor is using it less. Farmers already work on a slim margin, and they don't use any more fuel than necessary.

Seed costs have risen. The cost of trucking is so high that in some cases shipping costs for seed are higher than the seed itself. Is the answer to plant a smaller crop? For some farms that may be, however your fixed costs remain the same whether you plant 100% or 60% of your intended crop. Planting less cuts your input cost but it also cuts your profit.

With planting comes feeding your crop. Fertilizer component prices (NPK) have risen 200-300%! Luckily, American farmers struggling with the high cost of fertilizer got some good news last week when the U.S. International Trade Commission unanimously voted to reject anti-dumping and countervailing duties on imports of urea ammonium nitrate, or UAN, from Russia and Trinidad and Tobago. Farmers use different amounts and types of fertilizer, but plant food is needed to get the most out of your crop. That slim margin just got slimmer.

If that wasn't enough, drought looms over much of the country and over 90% of Rhode Island in Moderate drought as of July 25. Rain here is typically spotty with the heaviest rains going to the northern part of the state, and while one part of a farm's fields may get soaked another section stays bone dry. There are few things more heartbreaking than watching black clouds head to your rain-starved farm and then dissipate before the healing rain arrives. All that money and time invested, to be at the mercy of nature and the rain your crops need.

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Summer 2022

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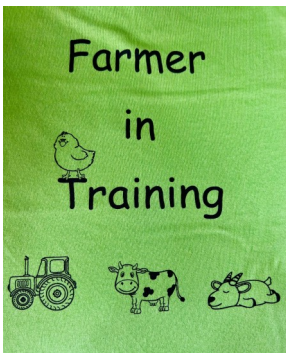
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What does this mean for you? If you're the farmer, it can be very stressful. If you're the consumer, it most assuredly means higher prices. Farmers want to provide you with high quality products for a fair price. But what does that mean? What is a fair price? Is it fair to the farmer or the consumer? The goal is both. Local farm products will almost always be more expensive than the supermarket, because loss leaders have always been there as a draw to get you into the SUPER markets. (Does anyone really think that milk can be produced for \$1.99/gallon?) It isn't a reality for most families to make all their purchases from the farm. But when you do purchase at a farm stand you are supporting that farm family, and very likely other farm families that they purchase products from to offer for sale. The most important thing to remember is that the convenience of the local stand disappears when they don't have customers to support them.

NEW!! Rhode Island Farm Bureau 'Swag'!

Visit us at the Washington County Fair, or stop by the Farm Bureau office to get one of our brand-new T-shirts or hats! We have kid's "Farmer in Training" t-shirts in Youth sizes XS and S in Lime, Bright Orange and Hot Pink for just \$10 each! Our "Ocean to the Field" shirts are just \$15 with Youth sizes M to XL in Lime or Aquamarine, and Adult S to 3X in Heather Gray or Steel Blue. All sizes have the RIFB logo on the chest. Our new RIFB ball caps have red embroidered fronts with mesh backs and are \$20. (Spotted bear not included.)



Farm Bureau members receive

\$500 EXCLUSIVE CASH REWARD*

ON AN ELIGIBLE NEW MAVERICK™, RANGER®, F-150® OR SUPER DUTY®

FORD MAVERICK FORD RANGER FORD F-150 FORD SUPER DUTY

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We value our long-standing partnership with Farm Bureau and are proud to offer you exclusive savings. Visit fordfarmbureauadvantage.com today!

FARM BUREAU ADVANTAGE
How We're Driving Change.

*Farm Bureau Exclusive Cash Reward is exclusively for active Farm Bureau members who are residents of the United States. \$500 Exclusive Cash Reward on the purchase or lease of an eligible new 2021/2022/2023 Ford Maverick, Ranger, F-150 or Super Duty. This incentive is not available on F-150 Lightning™, F-150 Raptor™, F-650 and F-750 Super Duty. This offer may not be used in conjunction with most other Ford Motor Company private incentives or AKZO-Plans. Some customer and purchase eligibility restrictions apply. Must be a Farm Bureau member for 30 consecutive days prior to purchase or lease and take new retail delivery from an authorized Ford Dealer's stock by January 3, 2023. Visit fordfarmbureauadvantage.com or see your authorized Ford Dealer for qualifications and complete details. Note to dealer: Claim in VINCENT using #36326

Young Ag Professionals

The 2nd Annual RIFB Young Ag Professionals Chicken BBQ was held at the historic Fry Farm in East Greenwich on June 19. We were spoiled by the beautiful weather at last year's BBQ, because despite the abundant sunshine, the wind and cool temps felt more like fall! Despite the weather, we had a wonderful time visiting with friends and Farm Bureau members from across the state. Nearly 130 guests enjoyed barbecued chicken, corn on the cob (donated by Confreda Farms), mac cheese, homemade baked beans and apple pie. Over \$3800 was raised for Ronald McDonald House Charities.

Once again our thanks to the LaPrise Family who went above and beyond to make this a successful event.



A lot of hard work went into selecting and husking the best ears of corn, as demonstrated by Ruby (left) and Reagan (right).



Host and RIFB Board Member Scooter LaPrise & RIFB Director Heidi Quinn attend to the chicken.



RIFB President Henry B. Wright III admires one of the LaPrise family's Jersey cows at the Fry Farm.

THE GREAT STATE OF RHODE ISLAND



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.

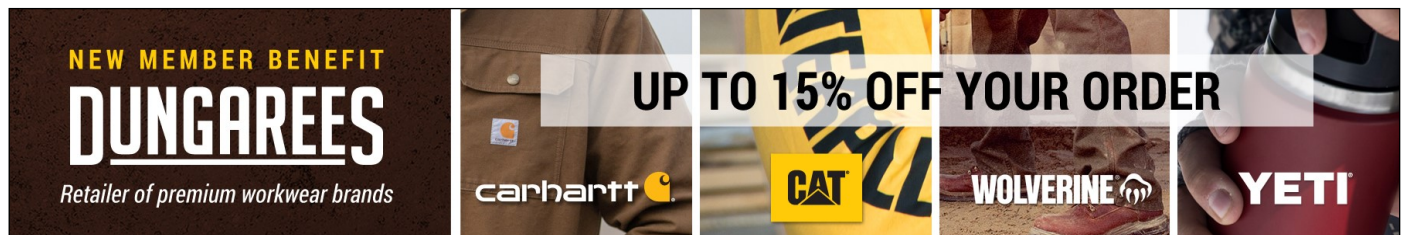


American National is a group of companies writing a broad array of insurance products and services. Products and services may not be available in all states. Terms, conditions and eligibility requirements will apply. Life insurance and annuity products may be underwritten by American National Insurance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

20-050-334583.V1.6.2020

The 2022 Rhode Island Farm Scavenger Hunt is on the way!

Our apologies for this MUCH longer than expected transition! But as this newsletter goes to print, the Scavenger Hunt Flyers are at their printers and should be available by the time you receive this newsletter! Flyers will be available at participating farms, the RIFB Farm Bureau office and other community locations where they have been available in the past. Visit us at RIFB.org for more information.



Call the Farm Bureau Office to get the Dungarees Discount Code!

Membership Renewal Time?

Remember to renew your RI Farm Bureau membership on time to maintain your member benefits and your American National/Farm Family Insurance discount (if that applies to you). Dues notices are no longer only sent in November, but are sent just ahead of the “anniversary” month you joined. Feel free to call the office at 401-385-3339 if you believe you have not received your renewal notice.

Your dues help RIFB promote farming in Rhode Island through our support to members just starting a farm and those with decades of experience; through outreach at events; by collaborating at the national level with American Farm Bureau; and by lobbying at both the state and national level for the right to farm, water rights and property rights.

Not a farmer? We still need your support. Our **Friend of Farmer** members are *very important* to us. As consumers, and often true friends of the farmers you support, your memberships help us continue our work to keep agriculture in Rhode Island.



IT PAYS TO BE A CUSTOMER- OWNER.



This year we paid \$91 million in patronage dividends.

Farm Credit East is customer-owned, which means customers share in the association's financial success. This year, qualifying borrowers received \$91 million from our 2021 earnings. That's equivalent to 1.25% of average eligible loan volume and adds up to \$1 billion since our patronage program began.

Discover the difference. No other lender works like Farm Credit East.

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Planning
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Estate Planning
Beginning Farmer
Programs
Crop Insurance

3 Chances to Win!

2022 RIFB Farm Products Raffle

Just \$5 a ticket or 5 tickets for \$20!

Proceeds to benefit our RIFB Scholarship program

Three prizes: \$500, \$300 and \$200 in RIFB Member Farm gift certificates.

With fuel prices higher than ever, your \$5 ticket for this year's **2022 RIFB Farm Product Raffle** gives you not one, but **two** chances to win a prize package including one-half cord of Verrier's EZLight Kiln Dried Firewood! That's right, the top **two** prize packages each include one half-cord kiln dried firewood*. Other prizes include gift certificates for Blackbird Farm, EMMA Acres, The Farmer's Daughter, Hopkins Southdowns, Pippin Orchard, Stamp Farm, Windmist Farm, and Young Family Farm. For more details, visit our [2022 RIFB Farm Products Raffle page](#) on our website.

We will once again be selling tickets at our RIFB booths at **Washington County Fair August 17-21**, so stop by and see us to grab your tickets! You can also stop by the Farm Bureau office in West Greenwich to purchase your tickets.

In addition to raising money for our scholarships, given out each fall at our RIFB Annual Meeting, our RIFB Raffle helps publicize our member farms and gets people out to shop at farms they may not be aware of. After the product availability issues of the past two years brought about an increased focus on local products, we think the time is right for lots of interest in the local farm products raffle! Would you like to be featured in our 2023 Farm Products Raffle? Reach out to us to get your farm on our prize list for next year!

* **Delivery for additional fee. Firewood may be picked up by winner at no additional charge.**

Lets Get To Work.



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Ashley Johnson
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West Greenwich, RI 02817

401.397.1050

Ashley.Johnson@american-national.com

Your ad could be here for just \$75/issue!



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

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.

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.

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.

Time to get back to work.



NorfolkPower.com
508-384-0011

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

Dungarees.com

Ford

Grainger

John Deere

Propane Plus

Wyndham Hotels

Your [Access Card](#) offers discounts at over 300,000 companies throughout the United States, including:

Disney World Tickets

Cruise Lines

Please plan to join us!

TUESDAY, AUGUST 9



Two very webinar topics special for Women Owning Woodlands!

"Tree Identification" and "Invasive Species"

Tuesday, August 9 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Not sure about the types of trees you have in your woodlands?
Do you have questions about non-native and invasive species?
This webinar can help answer your questions.

Tree Identification begins at 6:00 p.m., then continues with Invasive Species.
Paul Dolan, Area Director of RIRC&D, will answer your questions.

➔ **To REGISTER and get your FREE COPY of the Arbor Day Foundation booklet "What Tree Is That?" which we will reference during the webinar—** ➔

Please Call 401-500-0399 or Email rircd2283@gmail

RIRC&D 2283 Hartford Ave. Johnston, RI 02919
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*The RIRC&D
Area Council, Inc.*



"HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND SINCE 1973"

President's Corner

Quality product at an affordable price.



Commodity prices are hovering at the break-even point, so even while the gross price seems very high, high inputs are creating a less than profitable net situation.

This tends to create a disruption in the marketplace by farmers planting less or applying less fertilizer in subsequent years. This affects everybody in the end, from the farmer to the consumer to all ag related businesses. In a worst-case scenario, bankruptcies ensue. The ripple effect of this is a disruption in the financial marketplace, affecting the ability to get a line of credit to plant. To safeguard your farm, don't get overleveraged. Be careful not to invest in unnecessary expansion at this time. Be it a new truck, a new tractor, or new infrastructure, be sure the need is truly there before making that investment.

This is a great time to sit down with the "older generation" and see how they handled similar challenges in the past. While times may seem very different today, that past experience in difficult times may be good advice today, or at the least it may help you to think outside of the box.

The most important thing you can produce in the end is a quality product at an affordable price. How do you keep the customer coming to you when discount groceries offer below cost items, and the market or farmstand down the road is selling the same products you are? It is how you will do that while facing today's challenges that you will need to determine. How do **you** and **your** products stand out?

"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result." Don't ignore the opportunity to make a change. A new crop, a new product to sell, or a new farm activity may be just what it takes to maintain that most important item: the customer.

Henry B. Wright III, President RIFB

Focus on Agriculture: Food Inflation is 0% at My Farm in 2022

By Emmet Snead III, Virginia Farm Bureau member

The past year has been a time of economic volatility and turmoil unlike any period I have seen in my more than six decades of farming. I know many of my customers are also feeling this turmoil in the form of higher gas prices and larger grocery bills. That is why I'm sharing some of my own economic observations as a farmer and offering an explanation of how produce prices at my roadside stand are no higher this year than two years ago.

Last fall, I remember thinking that it felt like the beginning of the 1970s. Many signs led me to believe that high inflation would soon become a way of life. For one thing, the economy was awash in the large amounts of money provided to households, governments and businesses through the various COVID-19 pandemic-related stimulus programs. But where I really saw red flags was in the labor market. Hiring workers in October 2021—a time when my farm is active with fall festival visitors and pumpkin harvesting—was harder than ever. Even after raising wages 25%, there didn't seem to be enough workers to hire. And while I was lucky to find a group of dependable individuals who carried me through the season, many of my newer hires would call out of their shifts with no fear of repercussions. This was something I'd never experienced before. At the same time, the price of fertilizer—an important farm input—was starting to creep up. In my experience, small increases in fertilizer prices are usually followed by large jumps. I thought at the time that the cost of fertilizer would double by this spring's planting season. That's why I purchased all of my farm inputs for the entire year last fall.

But my prediction was wrong. The cost of farm inputs has not doubled since last fall—it has nearly tripled in some cases. For instance, my per-ton cost of potassium chloride—an important element of fertilizer—was \$202.50 this time last year. Today it goes for \$562.50 per ton—a 178% increase. By locking in input prices last fall, I've been able to avoid passing the increase in farming costs on to my customers. I've also changed the way I manage the farm.

I've limited the amount of crop acreage to match the labor that's available. I cut acreage back by planting fewer Christmas trees and less of certain items that have proven less popular in recent years, but I'll still have the same amount of cantaloupes, watermelons, tomatoes and other popular produce this year. This new approach has freed up eight acres of land, and I've planted those acres with wildflowers and native grasses, which provide habitat for honeybees and wildlife such as quail and turkeys. The bees seem to approve, as I've got a bumper crop of honey to sell at the stand and share with my community supported agriculture members.

Another way we've managed the rising costs of labor and farm maintenance is by opening the farm to visitors for four months each year instead of eight. We'll still be open through the end of summer, and again in late September and October for our fall festival, but we've limited hours to these popular times to ensure we can staff appropriately. Fortunately I was able to manage around the input cost increases and lack of labor availability this year, but with the ongoing turmoil in the market next year may be a different story. And many farmers will feel the impacts of these cost increases this year.

No one can predict the future and farming always has something new to teach you. This post-pandemic period, as the world has also dealt with a war in Ukraine and a tightly constrained supply of fuel, has been one for the books. It's never been more difficult to keep a family farm running, and I've watched a few long-time area farming families get out of the business. But while times may seem hard now, these conditions may look easy many years from now, when the world's farmers must feed a population of 9 billion people.

In the 1960s, my father predicted that one day land for growing food would become as valuable as industrial land. He told me to be ready. Today, his prediction is coming true. Farmland in the middle of nowhere all across America is being bought up at a record pace and at record prices by investors. As a result, it will be harder and harder for the next generations of farmers to own their own farms.

I offer these observations to emphasize the importance of supporting small local farms. Even though my three children may never farm, our family has placed Snead's Farm under permanent conservation easement with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, ensuring that it will remain in agricultural use in perpetuity.

RI Farm Bureau

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West Greenwich, RI 02817

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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.

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.

