

Farmstead Times

from the Rhode Island Farm Bureau



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Spring 2024

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The 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture was released last month, and Rhode Island is the only Northeast state showing an increase in both the number of farms and land in farms between 2017 and 2022. Nationally, agriculture lost 20 million acres between 2017 and 2022, and there are nearly 142,000 fewer farmers in 2022 than in 2017. In that same time frame, RI recorded an increase of 2,200 acres farmed and added 11 producers. In addition, Rhode Island was ranked #1 in the number of beginning farmers in the nation with over 41% of RI farmers having farmed for less than 10 years. New Jersey and Maryland both increased their number of farms by over 100, but lost acres of farmland. These are three of the top 5 most densely populated states. No other Northeast states saw a gain in either category.

Legislation of Note

No money was allocated for Farmland Preservation or Open Space in the Green Bond in the Governor's Budget for fiscal year 2025. Representative Cotter and Senator DiPalma have introduced H 7550 and S 2336 adding 4 proposals totaling \$16 million to the Green Bonds for Farmland, Open Space, and Forests and Habitat Management.

Legislation to define Urban Ag and Small Farms, exempting both from property tax and the requirement to file an IRS 1040 Schedule F to receive a Farm Tax Exempt Certificate. While we appreciate the desire to define Urban and Small Farms, there is no definition of Farmer in RIGL except for in the Wetlands Act in Title 2, where a farmer is defined as making \$10,000 gross income on their 1040 Schedule F for 4 years. We agree that a farmer should not be defined by their tax status. For that reason, the RI Farm Bureau will likely support the bill with an amendment to define farms by activity and not only size, and to provide equal exemptions to all sizes of farms.

The familiar relish and pickles bill is this year tied to raw milk legislation on the house side. On the Senate side, the Raw Milk bill is a standalone bill. RIFB supports both the pickle and relish legislation but is opposed to the Raw Milk portion of the bill. RI Farm Bureau would be willing to consider supporting raw milk legislation at such time that the RI Dept of Health not only sets up an inspection program for raw milk, in addition to TB and Brucellosis testing for dairy cows, and the equipment used at the farm is tested using the same guidelines any licensed RI milk producer shipping raw milk to a licensed producer must follow.

RI State House

On March 6, RI Farm Bureau representatives Kevin Breene, Rob Swanson, Maggie Cole, Tyler Young, and Heidi Quinn were joined by Andrew Morely of Sweet and Salty Farm, and Nessa Richman from the RI Food Policy Council at the Rhode Island State House. The group met with Governor McKee to discuss the future of agriculture in Rhode Island. Their meeting with the Governor focused on the importance of preserving agricultural land for those farming today and for future generations.

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RI State House, cont.

Rhode Island's impressive figures from the Ag Census were brought up, as was the importance of our local food system, especially if supply chain issues like those experienced in 2020 and 2021 were to recur. We appreciated the chance to bring our thoughts to the governor and answer his questions about our state's agriculture.

Later that week, RIFB sent three speakers to present before the House Land Use Commission which President Henry B. Wright III has a seat on. President Wright felt they had an impact on a few key people who appeared open to what they had to say about the importance of agriculture in Rhode Island, and the need to protect our existing ag land.

Convention

The AFBF Annual Convention was held in Salt Lake City, Utah in late January. President Wright attended and spent most of the week in meetings with AFBF staff and Farm Bureau Presidents from across the country. As a grassroots organization, the most important part of Annual Convention is the Delegate Session. There, delegates from all 50 states and Puerto Rico voted on 2024 policy for the American Farm Bureau Federation. This was the smallest delegation in years for RIFB, and we hope to bring more delegates in 2025.

The takeaway from the AFBF Annual Convention for everyone is a greater understanding of AFBF; who we are & what we do. Motivational and inspirational speakers cover topics of all types, and continue to impress us each year. Watching the Young Farmer and Rancher Discussion Meet is both educating and exciting, seeing the next generation of leaders take on serious and current topics. Meeting other Farm Bureau members from all over the USA is an amazing thing. Our similarities are greater than our differences, and finding shared connections whether through helpful and interesting workshops, amazing ag tours, or just personal conversations, is another way to make our world a bit smaller. Attending the AFBF National Convention always leaves us with something other than what we think we are going for. A deeper understanding of farming and AFBF is always the takeaway for our RI delegation. In January 2025, the AFBF convention will be held in San Antonio, Texas where the 106th anniversary of AFBF will be celebrated. Reach out to the Farm Bureau office if you would like more information about attending the AFBF Annual Convention.

Ford Survey

Greetings,

As a valued Farm Bureau member, you are invited to participate in this short survey inquiring about your current experience with the Farm Bureau incentive program offered by Ford. Your feedback in the survey is extremely important and will provide Ford Motor Company with valuable information about the program.

This survey will take less than 5 minutes to complete. Your responses will be anonymous and used only by Ford Motor Company.

We thank you for your time.



Scan QR code to complete survey

Equipment Dispersal Sale

Henry's Christmas Tree Farm has permanently closed.



352 Seven Mile Rd
Hope, RI 02831

Contact Dave Henry
413-231-0136



- Agtech sprayer 5004 w/ 200 mph wind blast
- Swihart Sprayer
- Howey 214 A Baler (gas)
- Howey 214 A Baler (gas and electric)
- Care Tree 524 Tree Spade
- Several Roof mowers and **LOTS** of parts
- Grouser skid steer tracks

- Tree cutting saws
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- 1,500 feet of Irrigation pipe
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LET'S TALK ABOUT THE STATE OF YOUR INSURANCE

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Having a strong relationship with the Rhode Island Farm Bureau over the years has given American National the understanding of what truly matters most to farmers across the state.

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.

*2020 SNL Market Share Data

21-188-25-410890.422

Lets Talk Umbrella Coverage



There's no disputing that accidents happen. And while having primary insurance is certainly a must-have to safeguard against losses, there may be more you need to consider.

Every day large financial judgments are awarded in accident cases. What would you do if a legal judgment against you was greater than your primary insurance limits? This type of judgment could involve attachments to assets such as your home, car, or boat. It could even involve your paychecks, savings, and investments, including stocks, bonds, and mutual funds.

To help further safeguard your property and finances, personal umbrella insurance may be your solution. You can choose additional coverage over your primary limits in the event of:

- Bodily injury
- Property damage
- Libel
- Slander
- Wrongful eviction
- Defamation of character

Don't risk a potentially lifelong financial crisis when there are options.

IT PAYS TO BE A CUSTOMER- OWNER.



This year, we paid \$130 million in patronage dividends.

Farm Credit East customer-owners received \$120 million in cash patronage dividends based on 2023 earnings, but we didn't stop there. Thanks to outstanding financial results, we were able to distribute an additional one-time special patronage of \$10 million to members.

We're grateful to continue serving farm, fishing and forestry business owners like you.

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The 2024 Rhode Island Farm Scavenger Hunt is in the Works!

We have added some new farms for 2024!

Be on the lookout for the 2024 Farm Scavenger Hunt in farm stands across the state beginning May 1st!

Questions?

Call Heidi or Maggie at the RI Farm Bureau:
401-385-3339 or email rifarm@rifb.org.



We're there to keep you doing your job.

As a three-generation family-run business, I know first hand what it takes to keep a business going. When my father started Monroe Tractor in 1951, his philosophy was "if you take care of the customer, the business will grow" or as he often said, "where courtesy dwells, service excels." His words are still the foundation of how we do business today.

Every Monroe associate understands that when we help a customer with their equipment, we're also helping them do their jobs, earn a living and raise a family.

We are committed to providing the right product selection, quality service and support, and understanding the real needs of our customers to ensure that you're always up and running.

We are proud to be a part of the RI Farm Bureau and excited to bring the CASE brand back to New England and recently, CASE IH. Reach out to Mike Reagan with any of your equipment needs!

Best,

Janet Felosky
Janet Felosky, CEO



Mike Reagan – RI Equipment Sales

401-332-8062

Sizzlin', smokin' and satisfying

RIFB FAMILY FUN FIELD DAY BBQ

July 20th

Fun for the
whole family!
Yard games
South County
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tickets
\$25
children 10 and
under FREE

Event starts at 5:30 at the Fry Farm In East Greenwich
Good food, good people, and a good time for a good cause!

Call the Farm Bureau office for tickets

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



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

Ashely Johnson

Agent

780 Victory HWY Unit 1
W Greenwich, RI 02817



401.397.1050
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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 the RI Farm Bureau and help us support agriculture's future in RI and beyond. We have several 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.

Does it Work? Asking Someone to Join Farm Bureau?

Yes. Yes it does.

We hit goal in 2023
because somebody asked.

We are proud to announce that for the 2023 Membership year, RI Farm Bureau has achieved Membership Goal, Increasing our membership over the 2022 total. In honor of this year's achievement, President Henry Wright was presented with a Commemorative Membership Growth Pin at the December AFBF Resolutions Meeting In DC. It Is the first time we have received the honor since 2018, and we would like to thank every member who asked someone to join Farm Bureau.

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

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Propane Plus

Wyndham Hotels

Your **Access Card** offers discounts at over **300,000** companies throughout the United States, including: **Disney World Tickets**
Cruise Lines

Need to apply for or renew your pesticide license?

All pesticide exams are available online at this time except private applicator exams. Private Pesticide License exams are given in person by the Rhode Island Department of Agriculture. Exams are given by registration only and under RIDOH guidelines. Please contact Harold Puckett or Kimberly Lavoie to schedule a private license exam.

Commercial licensing exams are available online. The study material for the core exam is available for download on the RI DEM Pesticide Safety and IPM Training page. The category manuals are available for purchase online through the Cornell bookstore.

For more information 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 401-537-4284,
Howard Cook at DEM Ag 401-537-4271, or
Kimberly Lavoie at DEM Ag 401-537-4280.

President's Corner

As we move from Spring into Summer, take into consideration that Food Inflation is going to rise. Deflation is not going to happen as much as expected and core inflation has risen as of mid-March. Corn futures are down, in the low \$4/bushel range for March. The dairy margin did go up a bit this month for the first time in a year.

Farm-to-table seems to be a booming market. Is it a fad? Will it sustain itself? Will it price itself out of the market? That remains to be seen. It behooves you to make sure you have the best product you possibly can, whether you produce it yourself or not. What is your plan for this market season, which might be challenged? How will you continue to keep product moving as there is more pressure on discretionary funds?

Take the time to assess what you will move or may not be able to move in your farmstead. The economics of having stock that doesn't move are not good.

The USDA Ag Census was released in February, and it shows that RI is the only state in the Northeast to increase both the number of farms and the acreage in farms from 2017 to 2022. New Jersey and Maryland both increased their number of farms by over 100 but lost acres of farmland. These are three of the top 5 most densely populated states. No other Northeast states saw a gain in either category.

Through the efforts of RIFB reaching out to small and large farmers, and promoting agriculture in RI, we work behind the scenes to broaden the availability of farmland in RI with work through land trusts and large landowners in Rhode Island. We work to lessen the burden of bureaucracy in the way of rules and regulations, and fees. Lots of people would be discouraged by running into the buzzsaw of regulations in the state, but after speaking to FB, they realize that there may be ways to work through the regulations. While we can't make them go away, we can help our members navigate their way through them. But we cannot do it without your support. Reach out to friends and neighbors that you feel would help support our endeavors as Friend of Farmer or Farmer members.

I traveled to DC in early March to attend the AFBF Board meeting. These meetings are valuable because they provide me the opportunity to lobby on the hill with our federal legislators. Many high-level administrative cabinet officials meet with us at these meetings, providing the opportunity to ask questions and gain insight into the direction things are heading. This provides us with the opportunity to lobby our legislators in a way that benefits our state's and nation's farms.

In early March, the Securities and Exchange Commission announced its final climate disclosure rule, which completely removed the Scope 3 reporting requirement. This requirement would have seriously burdened U.S. farmers and ranchers as it required public companies to report on the greenhouse gas emissions of their supply chain, meaning that farmers would potentially have to track all their emissions constantly. The onerous reporting requirements could have disqualified small, family-owned farms from doing business with public companies, putting those farms at risk of going out of business.

The American Farm Bureau led the charge to remove Scope 3 and advocated on the issue for two years. Farm Bureau members, leaders, and staff rose to the challenge and their voices were heard. The SEC chair reached out to President Zippy Duvall and the SEC staff began to look into how this reporting requirement would affect farmers. The removal of Scope 3 would not have happened without the American Farm Bureau.

The efforts of making Hill visits while in DC has also allowed me to meet with our two newest representatives, Seth Magaziner and Gabe Amo. I was pleased to see that both voted in support of the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act, which would allow for Whole Milk to be distributed in schools. Unfortunately, Senator Stabenow, Chair of the Senate Ag Committee, is holding up the bill on the Senate side, using it as leverage for the Farm Bill



Henry B. Wright III, President RIFB

The Zipline: The Big Picture of U.S. Agriculture with the 2022 Census

By Zippy Duvall, President, American Farm Bureau Federation



From a window atop my grandfather's old barn, you can see my family's whole farm, from the hay fields to the chicken houses to the pasture where the mama cows are grazing. I love watching the sunrise from there, taking in the big picture. But even from that bird's eye view, I can only see so far. I can't see across the country, my home state, or even my whole county. That's where USDA comes in, bringing us all the big picture of U.S. agriculture with its Census of Agriculture. Every five years, this census offers a sweeping view of America's farms and ranches, and yesterday, USDA released its latest data.

So, what did we learn about the farm landscape from the 2022 Census? A key takeaway is an overall decrease in the number of family farms across the country. While the number of producers held steady, the number of farms and ranches is down 7% from 2017. This decrease largely hit small- and medium-sized farms, with the number of large farms up slightly.

We have all seen the for-sale signs pop up across farmland, so this number is likely not a surprise to most farmers. From rapidly increasing regulatory requirements to inflation to skyrocketing labor costs, it's getting harder for small and medium-sized farms to hold on, and we're starting to see an increase in consolidation of farms. This big picture from the Census of Ag should serve as a wake-up call to our lawmakers. These aren't just statistics to farm and ranch families across the country: they are deeply personal stories of heartbreaking decisions. Farm and ranch families, and the men and women they employ, cannot hold on for long overdue reform on issues like the farm bill, tax reform, and farm labor—to name a few.

Now, it's not just dark clouds on the horizon. I firmly believe we can find hope when we look at the big picture, and it's no different here. I, for one, am encouraged by looking to the future with the growing number of beginning farmers. According to USDA, in 2022, the number of beginning farmers was just over 1 million. That's up 11% from 2017. That said, the average age of a farmer ticked up again to 58, so we need to find ways to encourage more young people to get involved in farming or to come back to the farm. With expenses and high startup costs, such as interest rates up 43%, young farmers need more tools to keep them farming rather than obstacles that drive them out of business. We need to keep exploring ways to ensure that farming is economically sustainable for all farmers. The importance of the farm bill cannot be overstated here. So, I'll say it again: we need a modernized farm bill in 2024, one that helps family farms stay in business during difficult times and keeps our food supply secure in all seasons.

The Census of Ag data isn't just about the big picture, however. The census gets down in the weeds with 6 million data points. That level of detail (all confidential) is critical for USDA in their work to ensure farms of all sizes and types have the support they need. The big picture—and all the details in it—helps USDA allocate funds down to the county level to support farms and ranches of all types and sizes. In the days to come, you'll also see insights from our team of economists as they dive into this important research. And you'll see Farm Bureau employing USDA data along with our analysis throughout the year, from sharing the great strides farmers are making in sustainability to helping consumers better understand where their food comes from.

But none of this research and analysis would be possible without participation across the country by farmers and ranchers. The Census of Ag is another critical tool in sharing our farm and ranch stories. The big picture of agriculture should matter to all Americans, because we are all counting on the success of America's farmers and ranchers.

RI Farm Bureau

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West Greenwich, RI 02817

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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.

