



LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU NEWS

THE VOICE OF LOUISIANA AGRICULTURE

LFB's Jackie Theriot Reflects on 50 Years of Service

By Michael Danna
FB News Staff Writer



Sue and Jackie Theriot at their home in Catahoula. Theriot officially retires this June after 20 years of service to the Louisiana Farm Bureau and 50 years of service to the Louisiana sugar industry. Photo by Michael Danna.

CATAHOULA – Jackie Theriot remembers the first time President John F. Kennedy spoke to him. It was Inauguration Day, Jan. 20, 1961.

"I remember the famous 'ask not' part of his speech," Theriot recalled, having watched the president's address on a small black and white television.

The next time Kennedy spoke to Theriot was in the spring of 1962 when he and hundreds of other Peace Corps volunteers stood 10 feet from the president in the Rose Garden of the White House. There the president promised Jackie the work he and the other young volunteers would do would change the world.

"Out of curiosity I decided to join," Theriot said, recalling his Peace Corps years. "And lo and behold the curiosity became a reality because I graduated (college) in May of '62 and by August of that year I was in Togo, West Africa as a Peace Corps volunteer."

And so began a life of service for Theriot, first to his country through the Peace Corps, then as a farmer and finally a statewide farm leader who's efforts helped shaped much of what is today the foundation of the Louisiana

when it comes to business of farming.

Theriot's home is filled with mementoes of his family and his travels throughout the world since that spring day at the White House; more than 100 countries to date, teaching, advising and building agriculture and its infrastructure all over the world.

From his Peace Corps days to his return to the family farm in 1967 to his election as St. Martin Parish Sugar Bureau president in 1972, Jackie Theriot has spent the last half-century helping sugar farmers, and all farmers, become more successful at what they do.

The son of a fisherman who would later become a sugar grower, Theriot's earliest memories of the family farm date back to the end of World War II when he was a child hunting down firewood for his father's small syrup mill.

"Back then sugar was the only commodity that was rationed by the government," he recalled. "My father couldn't sell his sugar to the factory, so he set up his own syrup mill. I remember going into the woods to pick up wood and branches to build the fire to cook the sugar. There were these people from Mississippi who would come to my father's mill to buy the syrup. I couldn't figure out why they wanted his syrup so much. It was only later that I found out they were taking it back to Mississippi and making moonshine out of it."

Theriot admits agriculture has changed from the early days when he and his brother began running the family farm. Farming today is much more global, be it political or economic. He recalled the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, where despite American sugar growers' best efforts at negotiating a trade deal with Mexico, the outcome was lost in translation.

"Unfortunately everything was done in English and when it was translated into Spanish there were some 'hiccups' here and there," Theriot said. "Since then we've been hurt

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Labor, Federal Regulations Top Agenda for YF&Rs on Capitol Hill Visit

By Neil Melançon
FB News Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. – For the last 10 years a group of young farmers and ranchers from Louisiana has come to the nation's capital to tell lawmakers how decisions made in the beltway impact the back 40.

They've been rice growers, soybean growers, poultry farmers, cattlemen and cattlemen and every manner of farmer the state has to offer. But no matter their commodity, the issues of immigration reform and onerous federal regulations have always taken center stage when they visit Capitol Hill.

This year was no different. A group of young farmers and ranchers, led by Louisiana YF&R Committee Chair Melissa

Morris, spent the week of March 10 knocking on doors of the state's congressional delegation. Morris, a sugar grower from West Baton Rouge, and the others agreed that immigration reform has all but stalled in Congress and despite the lack of a workable farm labor program, farmers and ranchers in the Bayou State continue to endure the headaches associated with getting seasonal workers to assist them in their farming operations.

"For the most part the system is broken," Morris said of the federal H2A program that governs the number of foreign work visas the government issues each year for foreigners seeking jobs in agriculture. "The paperwork, transportation costs, legal fees and the constantly-changing regulations are

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Loss of Longtime Louisiana Farm Bureau Leaders Felt Statewide

When Farm Bureau loses a leader we all feel it. But when we lose three over a short period of time, the sense of loss hits extremely hard. For me the loss of Natchitoches Parish President Ronnie Owens, Jefferson Parish Farm Bureau President Patrick Becnel and longtime Cameron Farm Bureau President Whitney Baccigalopi really drove home the ideals that drive services in an organization like ours.

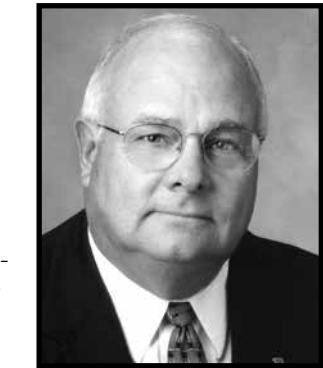
Ronnie Owens was a poultry grower and an outspoken advocate for the Louisiana poultry industry. Ronnie, who passed away Dec. 16, was a member of our state board of directors at the time of his death at 69. He suffered a fall at his farm in the fall of 2013 and never recovered.

Owens and his wife Madeline have been friends of ours for years. There was rarely a board meeting in which some humorous remark wasn't made about chickens. And it was Ronnie who usually initiated it. He had a great sense of humor and he often employed it to broker relationships with all those associated with the poultry industry.

Ronnie was a true workingman's farmer. Poultry growers have to be. The operation needs constant oversight and often Ronnie

would show up at his parish board meetings covered in poultry dust, having just come from a full day's work on the farm. But that's the kind of farm leader he was, never too busy to conduct the business of agriculture. Patrick Becnel, an experienced helicopter pilot who for 15 years flew for the Plaquemines Parish Sheriff's Department, was killed in a helicopter crash in the Gulf of Mexico Oct. 9 of last year. Patrick was 47. He'd recently left the law enforcement profession and was flying contract oil rig transport for Panther Helicopters.

As president of the Jefferson Parish Farm Bureau, Patrick was as dedicated to our organization as he was to the farmers he served. He understood the unique challenges of growing crops and raising livestock in coastal parishes slowly giving way to the Gulf's constant barrage of tide and technology.



Ronnie Anderson, President, Louisiana Farm Bureau

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Defending Yields Rains Dividends

Farmers across the state are finished with planting and set up for a successful season. But achieving high yields does not stop when the seeds go in the ground. Farmers must work year round and throughout the season to protect their investment in the fields.

With tough growing conditions and weed pressure in the area, properly protecting soybean acres is crucial. At this stage in the season, farmers should be thinking about herbicide applications for their operations.

"Early in the season farmers need to manage any potential problems in the field," said Fran Deville, Asgrow® Technical Agronomist. "To get the best weed control, farmers should be applying herbicide to small, actively growing weeds."

In addition to herbicide application for those small weeds, Deville says farmers are always encouraged to scout fields for any yield robbing pests that could damage their bottom line.

"We ask farmers to scout and pay close attention to any weeds, insects or diseases they may encounter," said Deville. "We encourage them to include as many modes of action as necessary to control those targeted weeds."

To give farmers even greater flexibility in controlling tough to manage weeds, the Roundup Ready Xtend™ crop system will be an advanced dicamba and glyphosate-tolerant crop system comprised of traits and chemistry, including Roundup Ready 2 Xtend™ soybeans. The system, which is pending regulatory approval, is designed to provide farmers more consistent, flexible control of resistant and tough-to-control broadleaf weeds in order to maximize yield potential.

"We are excited about this opportunity to enhance our weed control options in the area," said Deville. "This will hopefully give us another way to fight resistant pigweed and also provide a tool for better control of broadleaf weeds."

Farmers should work with their seed dealer or expert Asgrow® agronomist or seed dealer to ensure they are using the best practices for their farm. For more information, please visit Asgrow.com.

SEED SESSION. Monsanto's Fran DeVille, left, speaks with Ville Platte rice and soybean grower Richard Fontenot about the ASGROW® soybean product line. ASGROW® soybean products make up a large part of Louisiana's bean acreage. Photo by Michael Danna.



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Louisiana Leads U.S. in Migrant Workers; Seminar Highlights Perils of Securing Viable Seasonal Labor

By Kristen Oaks
FB News Staff Writer

PORT ALLEN -- If there is a common thread that runs through the migrant labor debate it's that there aren't enough workers to do the jobs Americans won't.

At the Louisiana Farm Bureau's Mid-South Ag Labor Seminar, held here March 6, about 200 farmers and agribusinesses were told by labor experts that agricultural processors such as seafood processors and sugar mills should expect continued difficulty in filling seasonal job vacancies through the H-2B unskilled visa program since it is doubtful that the federal government will increase the number of immigrant workers it allows into the country each year.

The 66,000 yearly limit on H2B visas needs to be increased if businesses that experience seasonal labor shortages are to survive. Louisiana farmers are having similar problems finding enough workers for seasonal jobs like sugarcane planting and are

forced to use the H-2A visa program. Workers who come to Louisiana under the H-2A program are legal and keep many Louisiana farmers in business, but the H-2A program is a paperwork nightmare and very expensive to use. H2B workers are those traditionally employed by hotels, construction and agricultural processors while the H2A program provides seasonal workers for farmers.

Brian Breaux, a labor specialist for the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation said as more and more people move to the cities, fewer farm workers are available to hire and the need for H-2A workers continues to increase. He said farmers struggle year after year to get the necessary workers to plant and harvest crops, transport crops to market and to work in the processing areas of Louisiana agriculture.

"Louisiana agriculture has the highest percentage of H2A visa workers in the U.S. when it comes to the percentage of H-2A workers in the state's agricultural workforce," Breaux said. "A recent census

showed 12,483 people directly employed in the state's farming, fishing and forestry industries. By comparison, during the same time period, Louisiana had 7,409 visa workers contracted for seasonal jobs under the H-2A program. And I have farmers tell me every day that securing reliable labor is the biggest problem they have on their farms."

While Louisiana ranks fourth in the nation for the number of H2A workers hired in agriculture with 6,588 in 2013, North Carolina has the highest number of H2A workers with 12,386 according to 2013 U.S. Department of Labor statistics. Mr. Breaux commented that Louisiana's strong participation in the H-2A program means Louisiana farmers hire workers legally with their jobs first offered to Louisiana workers with H-2A workers only hired for seasonal jobs that cannot be filled.

The limit on H-2B workers has hurt businesses and agricultural processors when businesses have seasonal jobs they cannot fill and no visa workers are available due

to the 66,000 annual visa limit. Several measures have been put forth in Congress to increase the number of guest workers allowed in the U.S. Rep. Andy Harris, R-Maryland, proposed corrective legislation that would exempt returning H2B workers from the 66,000-worker cap. Supporters say bringing in H-2B workers for unfilled seasonal job vacancies are critical to businesses as well full-time U.S. workers because many U.S. workers' jobs rely on the hard work performed by seasonal workers.

"Many businesses in Louisiana work the same (migrant) employees year to year, yet every year their (application) paperwork has to be completed as if it's the first time these workers are showing up," Breaux continued. "Exempting returning H-2B workers from the 66,000 cap would allow the program to operate much better by focusing the available visas under the cap toward the future seasonal labor needs of businesses." He said there was a symbiotic relationship between

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killing us. For many farmers it's a constant struggle to maintain a legal workforce while trying to manage the timetables the crop demands. Congress needs to fix the program and they need to fix it now."

Morris knows firsthand the trials associated with farm labor. Each year she and her husband Bobby pore over federal regulations to make sure their seasonal labor force is legally compliant. They check and recheck federal documents, complying with the law that sometimes changes without notice; or at least enough notice to allow a farmer to revise applications for employment on the fly. "It's a constant battle I can tell you," Morris continued. "Just one violation can cost us, big-time."

During Hill visits Morris urged Louisiana's members of Congress to work on bipartisan solutions to immigration reform.

"There's been so much debate about tying immigration reform to farm labor," said John Compton, a rice grower from Jeff Davis Parish who traveled with the group to Washington. "The two can be mutually exclusive. Many farmers don't care about the citizenship issue as long as we can get a reliable workforce we can count on."

For St. James sugar grower Matthew Gravois, the realities of the farm labor issue outstrip the political ramifications that often frame the immigration debate.

"The fact of the matter is you can't find Americans willing to do the work that's sometimes required on the farm," he told Congressman Vance McAllister, R-La. during meetings March 12. "It's real tough to get domestic people to come out and do the

work that we do. So what do we do? The crop won't wait. Does agriculture suffer and fail because no American will work planting cane or harvesting fruits or vegetables?"

"That's what I expressed to them," said Rep. Vance McAllister. "I said, they wonder why there are so many illegal immigrants in this country working. It's because we've made it too hard to do it legally. At some point in time everybody gets frustrated and they've got to get their crops out of the ground, so what do you do?"

The debate on federal regulations targeting agriculture has also caught farmers in the middle, tied between sometimes costly, self-imposed best management practices and EPA regulations many feel have no basis in real-world applications. The issue of federal data protection has also found its way to the farm gate. Much of the data farmers provided to the federal government during the crop-subsidy years is now being used against them by environmental groups who gained access to it through the Freedom of Information Act.

"Now someone can show up on your farm, anyone, it doesn't have to be a federal official and can draw attention to what you're doing, or what they think you should or should not be doing," said Amelia Levin-Kent, a cattle producer from Tangipahoa Parish. "Federal officials might have the right to be there, but certainly not someone who's going to use your farm for their own political purposes."

The American Farm Bureau has urged Congress to protect farmer data and approved a resolution at its January annual meeting calling for better safeguards on such information.

President's Perspective, continued from page 2

Like his view from the air, when it came to farming Patrick saw the big picture.

While he was 47, Patrick was a young leader in our organization. He traveled to California last year as part of farm tour examining the state's diverse agriculture as well as its ever-increasing regulatory climate. He and I talked about the challenges farmers there faced and how, in his words, those regulatory issues could never be allowed to find their way to Louisiana if we wanted agriculture here to continue to prosper.

And Patrick knew a lot about challenges. His citrus operation in Belle Chasse had been hit by three hurricanes in seven years. He'd seen freezes and diseases take their toll on his crop and still he farmed. Farming was definitely a passion for a man who possessed a skill set that made him a comfortable living outside the farm gate. Many might have given up on farming after such adversity. Not Patrick.

Whitney Baccigalopi, who on Jan. 11 died at age 86, was one of the first people I met when I joined Farm Bureau more than 40 years ago. Mr. Whitney and Lorine, his wife of 65 years, were two of the finest people I've ever known; generous, caring and committed to agriculture and Farm Bureau.

Food and family were always at the heart of Whitney's life. His garden was legendary and no visitor ever left his house without a bag of something. His home was always filled with the laughter of grandchildren, relatives and friends who would drop by as they passed along Highway 82. If they were lucky Mrs. Lorine would have one of her famous German chocolate cakes in the oven.

In 2005 Hurricane Rita destroyed the Baccigalopi's home. I walked around the washed out remains of the home knowing that while the structure and its contents were lost, the memories made there would remain with their family forever. For Mr. Whitney it was always about who you were, not what you had.

Mr. Baccigalopi was a former member of the Farm Bureau State Board of Directors and served as Cameron Parish Farm Bureau president from 1973 to 2007, making him one of the longest-serving parish presidents in the history of our organization. There's not much more you can say about a man who gave nearly four decades of his life to better the lives of all of Louisiana's farmers and ranchers.

These three Farm Bureau leaders will be missed. Our organization was better because of their service, and given their commitment to agriculture the best we can do is offer our sincerest thanks.

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ANNUAL MEETING NOTICES FOR THE 2014 LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION, INC. STATE CONVENTION

(Editor's Note: While all meetings of the 92nd annual convention of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation's affiliated companies are scheduled to begin at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 29, 2014, the meetings may begin earlier or later, depending on the adjournment of the voting delegates' session.)

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION, INC.

Notice is hereby given to all members of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, Inc. and to all members of any Farm Bureau organization affiliated therewith, that the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, Inc., will hold its 92nd annual meeting June 26 through June 29, 2014, at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La., and that the meeting of the House of Voting Delegates shall be held in conjunction therewith for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU MARKETING ASSOCIATION, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Marketing Association, Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 29, 2014 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU SERVICE COMPANY, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Service Company, Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 29, 2014 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU INVESTMENT CORPORATION

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Investment Corporation will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 29, 2014 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU ENTERPRISES, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Enterprises, Inc. will be

held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 29, 2014 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

AgriPAC

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of AgriPAC will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 29, 2014 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Foundation, Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 29, 2014 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 29, 2014 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA BROKERAGE OUTLET, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of Louisiana Brokerage Outlet, Inc., will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 29, 2014 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the policyholders of Louisiana Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 29, 2014 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

Theriot, continued from page 1

because of that translation. The fact is that Mexico can now ship all the sugar they want into this country. There's no limit at all unfortunately. We thought we were big winners then, but now we know we were losers."

But outcomes like NAFTA never deterred Theriot from being an outspoken advocate for the Louisiana and U.S. sugar industries, particularly in Washington. The federal sugar program is under constant attack from groups who say it artificially inflates the price of sweetened goods to consumers.

"The sugar program operates at no net cost to the taxpayers and many either don't understand, or refuse to accept that fact," he continued. "You don't dismantle a \$2 billion a year industry (in Louisiana) because somebody thinks a box of cookies should be 16-cents cheaper."

While he served the Louisiana sugar industry in many capacities over the years, Theriot also was an outspoken supporter of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation. Its grassroots structure, he said, allowed all farmers' voices to be heard, a concept that has been successful for the last 92 years.

"We never forget that farmers, all farmers, no matter what commodity they grow, face a lot of the same challenges," he said. "Over the years we've been able to put various differences aside and do what's best for all of Louisiana agriculture. That's what's made Farm Bureau so strong; our credibility and our ability to get things done."

"Jackie's leadership is really unequalled when you look at all the things he's been involved in," said Ronnie Anderson, president of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation. "Jackie's the guy you want in the room when the going gets tough. He's known for his unyielding honesty as well as his ability



LFBF Secretary-Treasurer Jackie Theriot began his life of service as a member of the United States Peace Corps, inducted by President John F. Kennedy.

to compromise. Jackie gets things done and we were honored to have him as part of our organization all these years."

"It is so difficult to sum up the value of Jackie Theriot's contribution to the sugarcane industry and Louisiana agriculture overall," said Jim Simon, general manager of the American Sugar Cane League. "He has been a champion for our cane producers and processors, and worked so hard for the American sugar industry that he was not only respected by the sugarcane farmers of Louisiana, Hawaii, Texas and Florida, but also by the Midwestern sugar beet producers. You don't replace a man like Jackie Theriot; you can only hope for the best."

Despite leaving the Farm Bureau Theriot plans to stay active in the farming industry. He's been contacted by farmers in several South American countries about helping to establish farming and other ag processing operations. It's a continuation of those early days of service in the Peace Corps, listening to a young president talk about how helping your fellow man helps all the citizens of the world.

"You couldn't help but be moved by President Kennedy's words," Theriot said. "It's true what they say. When you help others you end up helping yourself along the way."

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Chevy Truck, John Deere 'Gator' Await 2014 YF&R Contest Winners at LFBF Annual Meeting

By Neil Melançon
FB News Staff Writer

BATON ROUGE – Winners of Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers contests will receive a host of prizes, including a 2014 Chevrolet pickup and a John Deere Gator utility vehicle.

The state's largest general farm organization will hold its annual convention June 26 through June 29, 2014 at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans. Young farmers from across the state will compete in the YF&R Achievement Award contest, the Discussion Meet, the Outstanding Young Farm Woman contest and the Excellence in Agriculture Award contest.

The organization will name its Young Farmer and Rancher contest winner Thursday, June 26 at the annual Organizational Awards program beginning at 5:30 p.m. The Achievement Award is presented to the young farm or ranch couple whose operation typifies diversity and sound farming practices. The statewide competition is sponsored by the Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee.

A variety of outstanding prizes will be presented to the Achievement Award winner, including a 2014 Chevrolet pickup truck, compliments of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Casualty Insurance Company, and a \$500 cash merit award.

The 2014 Achievement Award winner also will receive a \$250 cash award from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Agri-News Network, as well as a \$250 Sears gift certificate. The 2014 state Discussion Meet winner can look forward to receiving a John Deere 4x2 Gator utility vehicle, compliments of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Insurance Company. Gowan Company will be donating a \$1,000 U.S. savings bond to the Discussion Meet winner, while Syngenta also will donate a \$1,000 U.S. savings bond.

Other prizes include a \$250 cash award from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Agri-News Radio Network and an all-expenses-paid trip to the national Discussion Meet finals in San Diego, Calif. in January. The Discussion Meet is designed to engage young farmers in timely topics of discussion that impact the state's farming operations.

Louisiana's 2014 Outstanding Young Farm Woman will be presented with a \$1,000 savings bond from BASF Agricultural Products, Inc., a \$2,000 Office Depot gift certificate from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company, a \$250 cash award from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Agri-News Radio Network, a \$250 Sears gift certificate from the Farm Bureau Insurance Companies, as well as a trip to the AFBF Young Farmers and Ranchers Leadership conference. The award is presented to women producers who promote leadership in the continuation of the family farm here in Louisiana.



Food for Thought. Denise Cannatella, Louisiana Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee Chair, front right, presents food donations to Georgia Street, front left, executive director of the Monroe Ronald McDonald House, on behalf of the committee. The committee donated more than \$10,000 in food products, supplies and cash to organizations statewide as part of its community outreach efforts.

This year's Young Farmer and Rancher Excellence in Agriculture Award winner also will receive a host of prizes. The award honors those who have supporting roles in agriculture or those who may be part-time farmers.

The prize package carries with it a \$500 cash award, a \$250 Sears gift certificate from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Insurance Companies; a \$250 cash awards from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Agri-News Network and a decorative wall clock, compliments of the Louisiana Farm Bureau.

The winner also will receive a trip to the American Farm Bureau convention in San Diego in January to compete for the national title, where he or she will be eligible to win a 2014 Chevrolet pickup truck and other prizes.

Louisiana's Young Farmer and Rancher Achievement Award, Excellence in Agriculture and Discussion Meet winners will be recognized similarly on a national level this January as they compete against other state winners at the American Farm Bureau's national convention. The national winners of the YF&R Achievement Award and the Discussion Meet will be presented with model year 2014 pickup trucks. A Chevrolet pickup also will be awarded to the Achievement Award winner.

The winner of the national Discussion Meet will receive

a 2014 Chevy pickup. Each of the American Farm Bureau Discussion Meet runners up will receive a \$6,000 U.S. Savings Bond, courtesy of Cummins Engine.

The winner of the national Excellence in Agriculture Award will receive a 2014 Chevy pickup. Each runner up will receive a \$2,000 U.S. Savings Bond and a Farm Boss chain saw, courtesy of Stihl Outdoor Power Equipment.



Amanda and Ryan Kirby, of Caddo Parish, took the wheel of their new Chevy truck as winners of the 2013 Louisiana Farm Bureau Achievement Award. The 2014 winners also will receive a Chevy truck during the organization's annual meeting in New Orleans June 26-29.

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Willie F. Cooper Retires as Farm Service Agency Director After 42 Years

By Allison Sabine
FB News Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA – After 56 years, eight U.S. presidents and thousands of Louisiana farmers, state Farm Service Agency Director Willie Cooper has retired.

The man who knew more about federal farm programs than perhaps anyone in the state celebrated his retirement March 19 as more than 250 packed the Emergency Center on the campus of LSU-Alexandria.

Cooper, who began his employment with the USDA in the mid-1950s as a cotton field inspector while still in high school, told the crowd he was blessed to have worked with dedicated individuals who served the state's farmers.

"It's been the best job in the world," Cooper said. "I'm proud of the work we've done over the years to make sure farmers understood the often complicated world of federal farm programs."

He thanked his family and fellow employees, as well as those who worked on behalf of Louisiana's farmers and ranchers.

"Words cannot describe my heartfelt thanks to so many who have helped me on this journey," he continued. "Co-workers, employees, state and county committee members and the wonderful farm organizations. And I especially want to thank my loving family."

Cooper was appointed state executive director by President Richard Nixon April 16, 1972. He would serve until January of 2014. His reappointment would continue for the next seven presidential administrations, a testament to his knowledge of farm programs and his ability to work with the farming community to enact federal farm policy.

"These positions usually change when the president changes," said Ronnie Anderson, president of the Louisiana Farm Bureau.

"Willie's reputation as a knowledgeable, caring advocate for agriculture kept him in his job for more than 40 years. That says a lot about his character, as well as the complexities of the programs his office administered."

Cooper's list of awards reads like a Who's Who of Louisiana agriculture. He has received the USDA's Administrator's Award for Service to Agriculture, the FSA Distinguished Service Award, Progressive Farmer's Man of the Year and the Louisiana Farm Bureau's Distinguished Service Award.

Following his graduation from Southeastern State College, Cooper married Jeanette, his wife of 50 years. Cooper is active in the Lions Club and holds a lifetime membership in the Louisiana Lions League for Crippled Children.



Willie Cooper, Louisiana FSA Director for more than 42 years, right, was celebrated at his retirement by Louisiana Farm Bureau President Ronnie Anderson. Photo by Jim Monroe.

Labor, continued from page 2

agricultural processors such as sugar mills and crawfish peeling plants and Louisiana farmers because many times, these businesses are the only market for our crops. "We can never forget that businesses cannot buy our crop if they don't have enough labor to process and sell our crop."

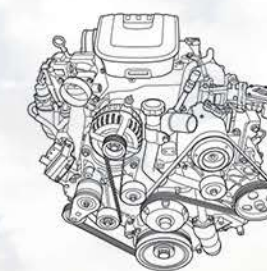
Dan Bremer, of AgWorks, a Lake Park, Ga. labor advisor and consultant, told farmers despite the limitations on H2A farm workers, protecting themselves and their workers goes a long way to maintaining the current ag labor force.

"Make sure you and your farm are compliant with all federal labor regulations," Bremer said. "Know the rules and keep proper records. And carefully review your labor contracts, particularly if you're using a third party to secure your workers. And make sure the workers understand what's expected of them and what they can expect from you. Until the situation in Washington improves the best thing you can do is exercise due diligence on behalf of your farm and your workers."

"The real issue is what you did in good faith to secure those workers from Mexico is the very thing the federal folks are going to be looking at if they ever show up on your farm," Bremer continued. "And believe me, they will show up sooner or later."

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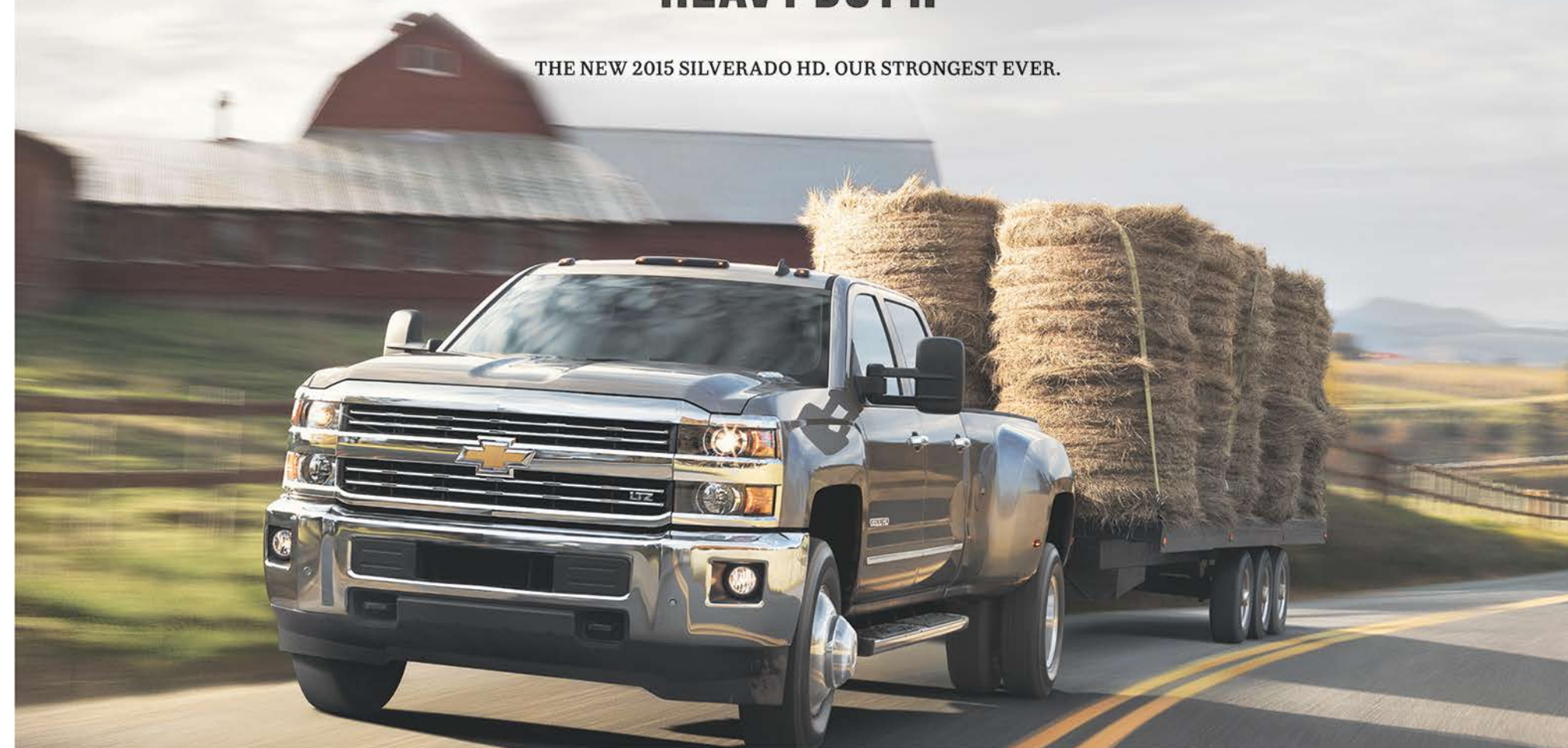
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