Greetings to all our AAM members across the country. As your AAM President, I wear my AAM cap proudly as I work to make sure our message is heard. I’m always glad to see Letters to the Editor and other communication from AAM farmers, speaking the truth while working to provide for their family. I want to take this opportunity to welcome new AAM Members and look forward to working with you to improve farm policy and help build a future in agriculture for the next generation. This convention in January will mark the 40th Anniversary of AAM’s historic Tractorcade to Washington, D.C. Many of us enjoy telling stories about AAM’s protests but AAM is not about stories, we are about representing family farmers and demanding a farm policy that addresses price. It seems most organizations just talk about selling more and opening markets. AAM believes we need a fair price in the market place, not thru a subsidy check. We believe we need to support young farmers and help them stay on the farm, so they can be the new generation of family farmers.

Unfortunately for 3 years, AAM has been warning of a deepening farm crisis across Rural America, and sadly it is happening. I checked out the Kansas City Federal Reserve, which covers Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Missouri, Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming, in 2016, loan denials to producers were about 5%. In 2017, loan denials reached 8% and for the 1st quarter of 2018 denials of 12% of producers. In addition to that, farmers had an increase in debt carryover of between 35% and 45% depending on the state. When you add up the 3 years, that is 25% of the farmers being denied loans which means they are already out of farming or on their way out. This year with increased debt carryovers and lower prices for commodities brought on by bad farm policies as well as an expanding Trade War with America’s trading partners has set the stage for a huge disaster in Rural America. I’ve been concerned that we might loose as many as 50% of our family farmers and now that estimate looks to be on target. As family farmers lose their farms, production is concentrated to fewer and fewer bigger farms. Scott Irwin, University of Illinois Agriculture Economist said, “if things don’t get better by this Fall we may see another Tractorcade to Washington, DC”. Next year will be the 40th anniversary of AAM’s Tractorcade, I don’t think security will let us in again but maybe there are some other places in the country to go.

I read where in Oklahoma, Kim Anderson, Grain Market Economist at OK State said, ‘what happens in Russia will determine what the wheat market will be here in the US, for there to be a good rally, Russia needs to have a crop failure, if that’s not a great farm program, hope for a crop failure so our prices go up’. That’s like saying since our dairy farmers are going broke, we want to make sure Canadian dairy farmers go broke too. That’s insane, family farmers worldwide need a fair price. The biggest failure of the current version of the new 2018 Farm Bill is that it does not address the price issue.

Trade War threats are beginning to look like a full-blown Trade War. Just to be clear, AAM opposed the GATT and WTO negotiations when they were held because we believed that agriculture would be used as a tradeoff for insurance, banking, energy and other sectors of the economy. AAM believed that the United States should have our production for sale at a fair price and that world producers should not be allowed to dump their production into the United States below the US Cost of Production. AAM also opposed NAFTA when it was passed because once again AAM did not believe farmers would be protected, plus it would lead to massive job losses as manufacturing moved off-shore. That said, you cannot undo bad trade policies overnight. The escalating Trade War is going to leave family farmers as collateral damage because farm prices are already below the cost of production. Ever since the talk about placing tariffs on imports, Secretary Perdue has said he was told by the President that farmers would be protected against any adverse effects of a Trade War. Farmers were told they would be fully protected against any lower prices. Now there’s no timeline when assistance will be offered, and Secretary Perdue just told farmers not to expect to be fully protected. So now once again, producers are being used as a foreign policy tool to benefit other sectors of the economy. AAM has urged that USDA use existing authorities to raise Commodity Loan Rates to the Cost of Production plus using existing authorities where USDA could purchase nuts, fruits, cheese, butter and other food items to be used in School Lunch and Senior giveaway programs to stabilize prices. This way producers would be protected from adverse market drops from Tariffs other countries place on our agriculture

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products. Producers must sell commodities to cover harvest costs and living expenses, plus they will be talking to bankers to work out borrowing needs for next year. For many producers it will be too late if no support is given until late this year. COOL also needs to be put back in place to label imports as to the Country of Origin, that way consumers know who produced the food they are buying.

Speaking of meat, FDA is planning on regulating lab grown meat, can you believe it. How in the world can you make meat in a test tube? I guess you go into a restaurant and look at the menu and see, grain fed beef, or test tube burger. I don’t think they should be able to call it meat, Lord where is this world heading?

This brings to mind something that has been bothering me. AAM has been criticized on occasion over disagreements over policy issues and we have been called radical a few times too. As you know AAM supported Check-Off reform which was proposed as an amendment to the Senate Farm Bill. Mandatory Check-Offs that are not refundable and allow the dollars to go to trade associations that lobby Congress is just bad policy. Mr. Kevin Kester, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association President, said that all the organizations that supported Check-Off Reform were extremist groups and militant vegans. Now, if Mr. Kester ever wanted to attend one of our AAM meetings, I think he would see a lot of meat eaters. When you are one of the big shots making a huge salary and your organization operates on millions of dollars of Check-Off funds, I think maybe you should think before you spout off. AAM has cattle producers as members who pay the Check-Off that you spend. For an organization that lobbied to kill COOL which turned your back on US cattle producers in support of foreign entities, you should be explaining to the cattlemen not telling lies about other cattle producers in support of foreign entities, you should that lobbied to kill COOL which turned your back on US cattle producers it will be too late if no support is given until late this year.  For many

The 2018 Farm Bill

The 2018 Farm Bill is still a work in progress but at least the process is still moving forward although it is slow. The Farm Bill is an amendment to Permanent Law, the 38 and 49 Farm Acts and provides farm programs as well as authorizes numerous programs important to farmers and rural communities. This week the House finally passed a Motion to Proceed to Conference on the Farm Bill which will allow House Leadership to appoint House Members to the Conference Committee to work out differences between the House and Senate. House Agriculture Committee Chairman Conaway says it may take until almost August to get the appointments completed. The House is out of session the entire month of August, so it will be up to staff to work out the non-controversial items and leave the main disagreements for Members to decide when they meet. An interesting item, Majority Leader McConnell has said he will attend every meeting of the Conference Committee to help move the Farm Bill along. That is a showing of strong interest from the Majority Leader to make sure the Farm Bill is finished on time, plus he wants to make sure his amendment to legalize hemp is in the final version. My guess is that the welfare reform issues as well as a few conservation changes contained in the House Bill will be the most difficult to work out between the House and Senate. This may delay agreement and make it hard to finish before the current Farm Bill expires the end of September.

The Farm Bill has been on two separate tracks in Congress. The Senate Bill has been a bipartisan effort that most farm groups supported because there was an effort to address many issues as possible in an open process that allowed amendments and debate. The House Bill became very partisan after Leadership outside the Agriculture Committee demanded certain changes to the Bill. This action resulted in the Bill not receiving any Democratic votes in either the Committee or on the House Floor. It was another one of those cases where the controversial changes came from the Speakers Office not from the Agriculture Committee. This is the exact process that the Failed Freedom to Farm Act followed in 1996. It makes you wonder if they wanted to use a poison pill to kill any chance of passing a successful Farm Bill or if they just were hellbent on using the Farm Bill to pass welfare reform. The Senate Farm Bill maintains the rural/urban coalition which is needed to pass farm legislation, so I think the final bill is going to be closer to the Senate version than the House.

Of concern to many is the House Bill eliminates the Conservation Stewardship Program and uses part of the dollars saved to fund other programs outside of conservation.

David Senter  aamincpresident@gmail.com
Museum Update

The Bayer Museum of Agriculture, with the guidance of AAM’s executive committee, continues working on upgrades to the AAM Heritage Exhibit. Most recently, we took down all of the photos and posters from the red wall, patch holes and with the help of one of our part-time staffers, repainted the wall.

Hartsfield Design did a phenomenal job of creating an interactive map to be the centerpiece of that wall. It was installed in April. The map itself is recreated from a 1975 map purchased through eBay. At the bottom you will see four buttons that, when pushed, highlight each route taken during the tractorcade that led your group to Washington DC.

We are now working to write a list of dates and towns visited on each route. Since we couldn’t fit this on the map, we will create four panels that resemble a diary page, and mount them around the map. We’re trying to find diaries from all four routes. We have transcribed all the dates and locations of Stanley Matlack’s diary for I-70, and by we, I mean Dan Taylor’s daughter Hallie Cook volunteered her time one afternoon to do it. We’ve also been in contact with Southwest Collections to try and locate Joyce Jobgen’s diary. Once we have a good written record of all four routes and the graphics are created and mounted around the map, we’ll know how much room we have for additional photographs, posters and artifacts.

On a side note, the exhibit has served as a wonderful point of connection for both our museum members and new visitors. Many stop by the front desk to tell memories of the tractorcade or how they were involved in a rally or protest. It is an amazing story we are proud to tell at our museum. Thank you for sharing it with us, and I encourage you to stay connected with the Bayer Museum of Agriculture by becoming a member. If you would like more information you can email me directly or call the museum at 806-744-3786.

Thank you again and I will keep you posted.

Lacee Hoelting  •  director@agriculturehistory.org

The 2018 Farm Bill  continued from page 2

AAM believes the Senate will prevail and the Conservation Stewardship Program will remain as a stand-alone program. The House Bill does increase the CRP acre cap from 24 million acres to 29 million acres. AAM has supported increasing the CRP cap so more acres can be added. In the Senate Bill, they only increase the cap to 25 million acres, a 1 million acre increase, we may see a 2 or 3 million acre increase in the final bill. Both the House and Senate Bill allow better management of CRP acres by allowing more haying and grazing.

AAM supports passage of a new 2018 Farm Bill and believes that the Senate passed Bill is by far the best. The Senate Bill maintains funding for renewable energy programs, livestock disaster programs, loan programs as well as funds a program to provide grants for Hot Lines and Mediation Programs run by State or non-profit groups. The one issue that is missing in both bills is they fail to address low prices which is driving the expanding farm crisis. As AAM believes,

It's the Price, Only the Price and Nothing but the Price.
Farm Aid 2018  By Jennifer Fahy

On June 25, Farm Aid announced we’d bring our annual music festival to Hartford, Connecticut, on Saturday, September 22. To some, Hartford might seem an odd choice for Farm Aid 2018, but to others who know the organization well, they know the event travels to many places outside of what folks generally think of as farm country. There’s a good reason for that: to bring the people and concerns of the people of farm country to everyone. From its start in 1985 during the height of The Farm Crisis, that’s been Farm Aid’s goal: to celebrate farmers, cultivate relationships between farmers and eaters, and increase the number of people who understand agriculture and the importance of family farmers.

The concerns of farmers across the country play out in the Northeast. Farmers in the Farm Aid 2018 region are competing in global markets that are consistently shrinking farmers’ margins, making farming profitably a big challenge. Farmland access and affordability are big barriers to existing and new farmers in the Northeast. Corporate consolidation and power are felt by producers here, particularly on the orchards and dairy farms that make the New England landscape so beloved. The loss of dairy farms in New England is leaving an indelible mark on local economies and landscapes. Policy changes, particularly around trade, are creating uncertainty in markets and having direct impacts on farmers’ income. These are some of the challenges that Farm Aid 2018 will bring to light.

Farm Aid 2018 in Connecticut was well-received, selling out 24,000 tickets in four hours! The lineup features Farm Aid Board Members Willie Nelson, Neil Young, John Mellencamp and Dave Matthews, plus artists like Chris Stapleton, Kacey Musgraves, Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats, Margo Price and more. Add to that lineup, Farm Aid’s HOMEGROWN Village, featuring hands-on exhibits that engage festival goers in the culture of agriculture, and HOMEGROWN Concessions™, featuring family farm food, and it’s no surprise tickets went quickly! Our focus now is on connecting with farmers and farm organizations in the festival region (CT, NY and New England) to showcase their stories, successes and challenges; sourcing family farm food for HOMEGROWN Concessions™; planning the HOMEGROWN Village and more. At the same time, Farm Aid staff members continue the daily work of advocating for fair family farm policies, answering the 1-800-FARM-AID hotline and working directly with farmers, and spreading the word about the crisis farmers are feeling across the country.

If you want to learn more about Farm Aid’s annual festival celebrating family farmers, good food and incredible music, visit farmaid.org/festival.

For more about Farm Aid’s work on the current farm crisis, here’s Farm Aid’s farm advocate, Joe Schroeder on page 5.

MICHIGAN NEWS

This spring and planting season has been one of the strangest Bruce and I have ever seen. It was very wet for a long time. We had spots in fields drown out that we had never seen before. Got dry enough to plant then rained some more. Corn and beans got a good start, but now it’s getting hot and dry. Everyone that has a pivot has them running. So far the corn fields close to us look good in morning, but are rolled up by evening. 7-15-18 We just got .3 rain and on 16th showers. Forecast is for more rain this week.

Bruce and I are slowing down with old age. Don’t get to do as much as we used to or as much as we would like to. But we are still home and able to get what we need to done.

Hope all our AAM friends are doing well. Hope we can make Convention.

Christine Miller
Farm Aid’s Farm Advocacy
By Joe Schroeder

Here at Farm Aid, we’re known for a lot of different things. For dedicated fans, we throw a darn good show for a good cause. For farm and food organizations across the country, we gather our collective power to figure out how keep as many farmers as possible from the edge. For folks in DC, we advocate for policies that keep farmers farming.

The heart of what we do, of course, is for farmers directly. For them, we are the ones to call when times get tough, and our hotline at 1800-FARM-AID is the way we do it.

The reasons farmers call Farm Aid run the spectrum. Some days farmers are looking for money to get an operation started or help thinking through what to grow and where to sell it. These are the good calls. To do our jobs well, though, we must be real about the hard calls: when farms are in foreclosure, when the unexpected flood takes out an entire year’s worth of crops, when commodity prices are so low that farmers can barely get by.

The hard calls are the ones that inform the rest of the work. They let us know what’s working, what isn’t working, and what isn’t panning out as expected for farmers. They let us know what’s on their minds when they go to sleep (if they go to sleep) and what gets them up in the morning.

No doubt, this year has been tough--our hotline proves it. Commodity prices have been in a multi-year slump. The weather has been even less predictable than usual and, specifically, wildfires and drought are taking a terrible toll. Add on to that farmers getting denied loans, dairies struggling in a flooded milk market, and accumulated stress from one of the toughest jobs in America and you’ve got some trouble.

From our own records we’ve see close to a 30% increase in volume of farmers reaching out since last year, and those numbers are continuing to rise. Our partners around the country are seeing similar increases in volume and severity of their caseloads. We have strengthened our response to meet the need by adding additional capacity on our hotline and focusing on strengthening our network’s ability to respond as a cohesive community witnessing (and fighting as best we can) the decline of our rural communities.

We make a commitment to walk the farmers who call on us through every option available and help navigate for resources where they might exist. The hard truth about the work of responding to so many complicated farm problems is that we often cannot solve the issue and are unable to get the farmer further on the path of achieving their goals. There are bright spots where resources and needs meet up, especially when navigating options for negotiating with USDA lenders, federal programs, and finding capacity from local support organizations, but those have been harder to locate as we head into further financial crises in the grain and dairy belts.

In times like these it’s important to remember the dozens of very real and very impactful wins this small community of advocates have achieved. Many of those wins were legal and many more were policy-based, but all of them came from careful study of exactly the forces that place farmers in peril. Advocates hear and see the details and together we can read through the complicated intersection of forces that limit a farmer’s success and act to create systemic change.

To keep on with the good fight, to keep these farmers on their land and farming, we need your help. Our advocates are smart, savvy, and heroes unto themselves, but with this farm economy crisis farmers need more advocates on their side. Now is a good time to be an advocate or support one so we remain steadfast in our work to save and strengthen family farm agriculture, the land and the assets farmers—and all of us—rely on.

To learn more about being a farm advocate, send an email to farmhelp@farmaid.org. To support Farm Aid’s farm advocacy, donate at farmaid.org/support.

Weather, rain, memberships and other things

Since we last reported it seems our weather pattern is kind of like the clouds, spotty to clear. However if you are fortunate enough to be under one of those clouds, you can receive a pretty good rain. A few days ago we experienced that, about .70 in the gauge and a mile around, nothing. The next evening one came thru to the south and I have heard as much as two inches. Here at the house not a drop but it came close. Tonight as I write this, lots of thunder but looking at the radar, spotted showers once again.

Crops do look good even with the spotted rains here in southwest Kansas. I see many irrigated fields that have been converted from corn last year to soybeans and cotton. Yep, more less water demanding crops this year. I don’t know how wide spread it is but it certainly is in my area. The last few days have been HOT and humid. Today it reached 110. The hot is to be expected, after all it is July. As for the humidity, A lot of that has to do with irrigation I believe. But for right now things are still a little green and those evening thunderstorms keep forming. All you need is to be in their path. It is hard to get a large general rain it seems.

We continue to grow in memberships. Not at a great pace but slow and sure. It seems more and more people are continued on page 6.
Weather, rain, memberships and other things  continued from page 5

becoming interested in our message of a “price at the market place”. Just to bad congress is deaf on the subject to even do so much as a discussion. BUT election is coming remember, is your Representative or Senator one that prevents those discussions, mine is!!!!

We have had lots of interest in our AAM Caps and even an enquiry from North Wales, Great Britain. If you would like one, summer or winter, they are twenty five dollars which includes shipping and all. Within the USA that is. Just send us an email at aam.inc@yahoo.com and I will be happy to provide payment details and get your cap or caps on the way.

Our AAM Facebook page continues to grow in the number of viewers. Readers get really excited when David posts his updates. It is fun to watch how many those posts reach, sometime in the thousands. Also we appreciate your comments, don’t be afraid to respond as we like to know your thoughts as well.

Hope you are making plans for the convention. As you can see our exhibit has experienced some great changes since last year and if you are like me, I can’t wait to see it.

One last thing, We have had some requests for this newsletter to be emailed so our readers can share with others. We are in the process of getting email addresses. If you would like to receive yours that way just let us know at aam.inc@yahoo.com. Or if you want to keep your current hard copy coming and receive one on your computer we can do that as well. Just let us know. See you next time.

Jim

Membership Application

Name ________________________________

Street Address ________________________________

City______________State_________Zip____+

Email ________________________________

Number of Memberships @ $100_____ Total $______________

Send to: Jim Rice
11232 RDK
Liberal, KS 67901

Please send any contributions for the newsletter to: Christine Miller.
We appreciate and encourage info or pictures that we can use.

(AAM stands for food producer and commodity PARITY. Parity is a term that denotes a fair commodity price adjusted for inflation to the commodity prices brought in 1910-1914 when producer-middlemen-consumer had a balanced income. Today, 15 commodities average less than 50 percent of PARITY. Meanwhile costs of trucks, implements, tractors, fuel, fertilizer and help rose many times. AAM still demands a parity price increase for commodities.)