

AAM Senter On The Hill 11-25-20

Thanksgiving is a time of the year that we need to say thank you to the hard-working family farmers and ranchers for the food we eat and the clothes we wear. Harvest is nearing an end across the country for grain, soybean, and cotton but daily harvest continues of vegetables and fruit to keep our pantries and refrigerators stocked. Thank you to all the producers who during this national pandemic crisis went to work every day. There will be empty chairs around many of our tables for Thanksgiving because of loss or families not traveling because of this surge of new cases. For many the decision they made will help make sure next year when the world starts to come back to normal, they will once again be able to hug family and friends.

For producers that have not signed up for the Federal Coronavirus Assistance program at your FSA office, the deadline is December 11. Eligibility is different for each crop which includes nurseries and specialty crops. If you don't know, check it out with your local FSA Office.

NRCS just announced a change in the EQUIP Program, they made a rule change to raise the limit from \$450,000 to \$900,000. I think this is a terrible change because few producers are currently able to be approved, now larger producers will take all the money and leave smaller with no help.

USDA has announced another \$500 million for their Food Box program, I hope this time they awarded contracts to groups that were successful and weeded out those that took the money and fell short of meeting their contract terms. Once again, on average each box costs about \$60 dollars and only \$20 worth of food is contained. Why not buy the food and provide it to the Food Banks across the country that know how to get the food to who needs it?

A peanut farmer victory, hats off to Dustin Land and Mark Hasty who initiated a Price-Fixing lawsuit against three large peanut-shelling companies who they accused of conspiring to lower the price of peanuts to the farmers. A settlement was reached with Birdsong Corp for \$50 million to resolve the antitrust claims against them, plus Birdsong agreed to cooperate with the farmers as they continue their case. In other action, a settlement was reached with Olan Peanut Shellers for \$7.75 million. Now the only company left in the as a defendant is Golden which is owned by ADM. If convicted in court, Golden could face full treble damages.

NCBA continues it's fight to protect Big Meat, by advocating for voluntary reporting and working to beat back mandatory price discovery legislation. We know that the meat packers are not going to change the way they manipulate the markets. They use your check-off dollars to work for the packers.

It has been good to see an increase in the price for corn, soybeans, and wheat. Wheat and corn are still below the 10-year average price. Producers deserve a fair price so they can cover their cost of production. A survey by Farmer Mac and the American Bankers Association of 500 ag lenders found that about 50% of their producers would break even or make a profit. Eight in

ten said they are most concerned about low prices for commodities. They found that farmers depended heavily on government payments to offset the economic impacts of trade wars and impact of coronavirus. About 20% of the borrowers asked for restructuring for their debts in 2020.

Covid started as an urban problem but now is everybody's problem. Rural counties now have the highest infection rates in the country. Many are left having to airlift patients to larger hospitals in other counties. AAM has had many of our family AAMer's fighting the virus, so say a prayer for healing and that 2021 will be a better year.

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