

As I talk to farmers across the country, harvest is in full swing. It is the time of the year when farm families come together and do the hard work to harvest their crops. Thank you to the producers who rose to the challenge to feed and cloth the nation and world during this pandemic.

USDA has set October 30th as the signup deadline for Disaster Aid for both 2018 and 2019 crops. Congress also included funding for crop quality losses from natural disasters. It is unbelievable that producers have been waiting for over a year for this program to be rolled out. Another issue is the time it is taking to complete an application, I am told that unlike past Disaster programs this time it is taking FSA employees 4 to 5 hours for one application. Somebody was asleep at the switch when the software was written and made it much more complicated than was necessary. So, if you have not signed up, you still have time.

China has been in the market buying large quantities of corn, soybeans, and cotton. I think it is clear, China is going to buy what it must have from US producers as they rebuild their pork and poultry production. China has also been buying at a low price, so it is a good deal for them, and it is helping reduce the US carryover.

USDA and the grain trade have finally admitted the US corn and soybean production is not going to be as high as was forecast. Farmers already knew because of the natural disasters; production would be down in several areas. USDA now says the corn price is estimated to be \$3.60 per bushel and soybeans \$9.80. The higher prices are good news to producers that have not already sold or contracted their crops. I read where Net Farm Income is forecast to increase 19% to \$103 Billion, the problem is that \$37 Billion is from government payments with receipts from crop and livestock dropping \$12 Billion which is the lowest since 2010. Producers need a fair price for their production from the marketplace not through government payments.

In a sign of bipartisan support, there is an effort to pass legislation to help establish smaller meat packing plants that would slaughter maybe 1,000 to 1,500 head per day, spread across the country. This would be great news for livestock producers because it would add competition to the marketplace and allow local producers to sell direct to consumers. Also, there is growing support to allow State Inspected meat to cross State Lines if the State Inspection is equal to Federal standards.

Pilgrims Pride has agreed to a \$110.5 Million dollar settlement for price fixing. Pilgrims Pride is owned by JBS, the huge Brazilian owned meatpacking giant.

USDA's Food Box Initiative has not been meeting delivery targets. Food Bank managers say if the money had been used buying food, 2-3 times more food would have been delivered to those in need. Some of the contracts, the boxes cost \$60 each to prepare with \$20 worth of food in them. I applaud the House Agriculture Committee that has been looking into waste, fraud, and abuse in the program. Some of the vendors that were chosen have done a great job, buying local production for the boxes, and working closely with the Food Banks, but others failed to carry out their contracts.

Now in closing I want to commend The University of Arkansas's National Agricultural Law Center who just announced the Scott E. Fancher Agricultural Law Fellowship. Scott was a dear friend of mine and agriculture interests across the country. He was one of the best Agricultural Law experts in the country. I know Scott's family and friends are excited about this honor. He left a legacy that will live on now through this Fellowship.

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