

SERVING IOWA FARMERS SINCE 1934

PEOPLE. PROGRESS. PRIDE.
IOWA FARM BUREAU

Spokesman

JANUARY 27, 2016 | VOL. 83, NO. 21 | WWW.IOWAFARMBUREAU.COM

Hill sees a strong Farm Bureau ready to face challenges

BY DIRCK STEIMEL

As he begins a new term as president of the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF), Craig Hill sees Farm Bureau as a vibrant and growing organization that is building on its grassroots strength to accomplish key goals that have been identified by the membership. Farm Bureau's accomplishments in building understanding about today's agriculture, continuing the state's long legacy of conservation and promoting economic development in rural com-

munities are all making Iowa a better place, he said.

The Spokesman visited with Hill last week after he returned from helping set national policy goals at the American Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting and as he looked forward to a busy year in Iowa. Here are some excerpts from that conversation.

Q. How is the Iowa Farm



HILL

Bureau doing in 2016?

I really believe the organization is in fantastic condition, thanks to our continued emphasis on the grassroots and our strong county leadership. We are growing and have reached an all-time membership of more than 159,000 families. We are striving to accomplish the goals and the objectives that the organization has set. And we are making a clear difference in our rural communities and all over Iowa.

Q. Why do you think that Farm Bureau continues to be so

successful as it nears its 100th anniversary in 2018?

I think we are strong because we have stayed true to the core upon which we were founded — that being united is key to making real progress. As we all know, farmers like their independence. But we have recognized that now more than ever, it's imperative we stand together. Such a small percentage of us farm today, yet agriculture has an enormous impact on everyone's lives. There are too many influences, too many constraints, too many people who

want to control our activities. So it just makes sense to unite in a grassroots organization, like Farm Bureau, to work together to navigate those challenges.

There really isn't an organization that's better constructed to work for farmers than Farm Bureau. We have strong, active leaders and strong organizations in every county of Iowa. We have a rich history that takes into account every member's voice at the grassroots level; not many

►► HILL PAGE 2

HILL

►► FROM PAGE 1

organizations can say that after nearly a century.

Q. Water quality and soil conservation continue to be key issues for Iowa agriculture. How do we continue the momentum we've seen in these areas?

We need to continuously improve our practices based on science and technology to resolve water quality concerns. Soil erosion and reducing nutrient loss are things that Iowa farmers have been working on for years and will continue working on. It's an evolutionary process, and it takes science-led practices to continue to make improvements. But it won't happen overnight, and it will take all of us working together to continue to make progress.

The Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS) is a good and comprehensive blueprint that can help get us where we want to be. We all know it will require significant investments both from farmers and the state to create that conservation infrastructure to keep us moving forward on our goals.

We also need to ensure we have reliable, aggregated statewide data to help us measure and track that progress. That's where the Iowa Nutrient Research and Education Council (INREC) can really help. That information, coupled with the assistance of Certified Crop Advisors, can help fill a void to advance the NRS.

Certainly one thing that is hurting momentum, however, is



Iowa farmers have been working for years to reduce soil erosion and improve water quality and are stepping up their efforts through the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, said Craig Hill, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation president. This stream bank project on Henry Shepard's farm in Black Hawk County is part of a demonstration project funded through the strategy. PHOTO/GARY FANDEL

the lawsuit filed last year by the Des Moines Water Works against drainage districts in three counties in northwest Iowa. It won't provide solutions to water quality issues and clearly has the potential to set them back. We need to support those farmers in the drainage districts who have been sued.

Q. Are you concerned about the health of Iowa's farm economy with the sharp decline in commodity prices over the past 18 months?

Profitability, or lack of it, is a very big concern for all of us in Iowa agriculture. After some very strong years, we now have to weather the storm of low commodity prices. Farming is cyclical,

and many of us have been here before; we know how to work on our fundamentals and how to remain disciplined in our farming operations in order to ride out the storm.

Farm Bureau has always provided members with as much insight and information as possible on how to survive tougher markets. That's one of the reasons we will be hosting another economic summit this summer. The organization also helps by bringing all generations of farmers together, so our members who are experienced farmers can help the younger ones who are facing these kind of markets for the first time.

Q. Raising livestock has long been a key to profitability in Iowa agriculture, especially for young farmers starting out. How do you envision Iowa livestock continuing to grow responsibly?

The key is continuing to refer farmers to the Coalition to Support Iowa's Farmers (CSIF) which Farm Bureau helped create more than a decade ago with other farm organizations. CSIF provides first-hand information farmers need to responsibly grow livestock operations, such as the best place to site a new barn, how to navigate various rules and regulations and how to establish and maintain strong neighbor relations. Those tools are critical to help farmers raise livestock responsibly.

I truly believe we have a historic opportunity in livestock because protein is going to be in heavy demand around the world in the coming years. Iowa is the epicenter for meat and egg production. We are the best in the world at converting feed grains into protein, so the developing countries are going to look to Iowa for the protein it needs. With one in five Iowa jobs linked to agriculture, that is a great opportunity for our rural communities. We need to be ready to meet that demand while balancing our environmental footprint, and I'm confident we can do that.

WOTUS

►► FROM PAGE 1

of the rule means we will continue to have uncertainty while this works through the courts."

Duvall noted that the federal government's General Accounting Office has found the rule was issued with the help of illegal "covert propaganda" by the Environmental Protection

Agency (EPA).

"Ninety-two members of Congress, 22 states, numerous cities and counties and dozens of industry groups have all stood up and said no to this rule," Duvall said. "Courts have ordered the rule temporarily halted because of the harm it will cause. But somehow, the president and the EPA just keep pushing. But we won't stop either. We will not rest until this rule is gone."