

Aug. 3, 2020

COLLABORATION AND LEADERSHIP IT BEGINS WITH KENTUCKY AGRICULTURE



Commissioner Quarles and members of Dare To Care Food Bank show off more than 10,000 pounds of Kentucky Proud pork sausage from the iconic Purnell's "Old Folks" headquartered in Simpsonville, Kentucky. The purchase was funded by a historic donation from Kentucky Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company to Feeding Kentucky.

Patience, adaptability and persistence are words often associated with farmers. These qualities are enabling our state's agricultural sector to rise to the many challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While many are still struggling, the team at the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) have worked with commodity organizations, service providers, businesses and government officials to secure much-needed resources to keep food flowing from our farms to your family's table.

Four years ago, KDA secured a grant from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund (KADF) and began to co-host meetings with the Kentucky Association of Manufacturers (KAM).

The fourth annual series of LAND (Linking Agriculture for Networking and Development) forums opened June 18 with a focus on agriculture in the Cumberland region and will continue through Sept. 21, with the last session of the year to focus on Shelby County.

The eight regional LAND meetings this summer are intended to bolster the existing collaboration between two pillars of Kentucky's economy - agriculture and manufacturing. Each session will highlight the community's diverse resources, types of farming and value-added sectors.

The LAND forums inform Kentucky manufacturers of the plentiful raw agricultural resources available in their own backyard, highlight the economic and community benefits of sourcing local, and promote awareness of our global impact when uniting these sectors.

Our state's logistical infrastructure coupled with our array of farm products makes the international marketplace a viable option for around \$2 billion in annual agricultural exports from Kentucky. The U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) went into effect July 1, increasing market access for U.S. ag products, especially dairy, eggs and poultry. These improvements are critical to the success of our farming families - particularly during the pandemic.

Annually, Kentucky exports \$213 million in agricultural products to Canada and another \$49 million to Mexico. The intent of the new agreement is to increase those numbers. That's a goal we share at the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and is why in 2018, we led Kentucky's first-ever agriculture trade mission to Canada. As a result, we have strengthened existing relationships and are working on discovering new economic opportunities for Kentucky farm families.

COVID-19 has forced the first five LAND forums to become virtual videoconferences. While meeting via a computer was not the original plan, one advantage of this virtual format is that the forums are videotaped, enabling you to watch the discussions at your convenience on KAM's website at kam.us.com/land-forums.

The feasibility of switching back to in-person forums will be assessed closer to the date of each session using the latest public health guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The dates, venues and agendas for each program can be accessed at the previous link and there's no registration fee to participate.



Commissioner Quarles tours large-scale greenhouse AppHarvest in Morehead, Kentucky. AppHarvest is one of the many agtech businesses the Kentucky Department of Agriculture has supported over the years.



Small business owners speak with Commissioner Quarles at a LAND meeting in Shelbyville, Kentucky in 2019. LAND meetings bring together farmers and manufacturers to identify areas of collaboration.

In Kentucky, our farmers and agribusinesses take pride in our long history of providing food and fiber not only for the Bluegrass State but for other countries as well. We look forward to continued success in connecting our farmers to new and existing markets here and abroad and you partnering with us at kyagr.com.

Dr. Ryan Quarles serves as Kentucky's Commissioner of Agriculture.