



MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE, STATE FORESTER, AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEMBERS MEET WITH AGRIBUSINESS LEADERS AROUND VIRGINIA

Richmond – The Virginia Agribusiness Council concluded its eighth annual Regional Agribusiness Roundtable series of meetings on October 21 on Virginia’s Eastern Shore. Throughout five different meetings in Petersburg, Abingdon, Danville, Weyers Cave, and Painter, over 150 leaders in the agribusiness industry had the chance to discuss key issues for Virginia agriculture.

Each meeting featured the two new state agency heads, Commissioner of Agriculture Sandy Adams and State Forester Bettina Ring, within the Secretariat of Agriculture and Forestry. They were joined by several General Assembly members and some local elected officials at each meeting.

The Council began this series of meetings in 2007, when Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Todd Haymore was appointed by Governor Tim Kaine as the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The 2014 Virginia Agribusiness Council Regional Roundtables featured a return to these roots, as industry members had a chance to be introduced to two new agency heads.

Throughout the meetings, attendees and officials discussed many pressing issues for the agribusiness industry, including agriculture education, emerging markets, water quality issues, and land conservation. The attendees at the meetings were asked specifically to provide feedback to the McAuliffe Administration regarding economic development. Both Commissioner Adams and Forester Ring discussed the work their agencies are doing to help Virginia’s largest industries grow and prosper, mentioning programs such as the Governor’s Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID) and the Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) program.

“I want to thank the Virginia Agribusiness Council for once again hosting this series of regional roundtables,” said Secretary Haymore. “They’ve been invaluable to me over the years as Commissioner and Secretary in helping me better understand the issues and concerns of our agricultural and forestry stakeholders across the state. With Sandy and Bettina being new to their respective posts, I know that they feel the same way.”

Commissioner Adams said, "I would like to thank the Agribusiness Council for organizing the five regional meetings. The meetings were an exceptional opportunity for me to meet the Council's members, Virginia farmers and agribusinesses, as well as local extension agents and other partners supporting Virginia's number one industry. The questions from participants provided unique insight into issues affecting producers in each area of the commonwealth and ideas for how VDACS can better support the industry."

"It's been a terrific opportunity to meet and interact with Agribusiness Council members at these gatherings across the Commonwealth," said Bettina Ring, State Forester of Virginia. "Virginia's forest landowners and farmers play a crucial role in our economic and environmental wellbeing. Getting out and listening to them and their concerns helps us serve them better."

"We were happy to host Commissioner Adams and Forester Ring to welcome them each to their new roles," said Council President Katie Frazier. "This series of Regional Agribusiness Roundtables continues a great tradition that began eight years ago with then-Commissioner Haymore. Our conversations with these leaders and General Assembly members proved to be very productive as our industry members brought their concerns and ideas to the forefront."

This year, Farm Credit and the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association sponsored the entire series of Regional Roundtable Meetings, and other sponsors included Appalachian Mountain Spirits and Brann Malt Grain Producers, BotkinRose PLC, First Bank and Trust Company, Houff's Feed and Fertilizer, the Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association, Mr. Mike Foreman, Pacific Tomato Growers, Perdue AgriBusiness, Philip Morris International, the Pittsylvania County Office of Agribusiness Development, RockTenn, Shreckhise Nurseries, Virginia Green Lawn Care, the Virginia Forest Products Association, the Virginia Poultry Federation, and the Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives.

The Virginia Agribusiness Council is a non-profit organization committed to representing the agriculture and forestry industries in the Commonwealth through effective government relations efforts. Its membership includes farmers, foresters and other agricultural-product producers, marketers and processors, industry suppliers and commodity and industry associations. It is headquartered in Richmond.

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