

Virginia Agribusiness Council
We Represent Virginia Agribusiness with a Unified Voice.

MEDIA RELEASE

For Release: November 1, 2013

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SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY, CONGRESSMEN, OTHER STATE AND UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS MEET WITH AGRIBUSINESS INDUSTRY LEADERS AT MEETINGS AROUND VIRGINIA

Richmond – The Virginia Agribusiness Council concluded its seventh annual Regional Agribusiness Roundtable series of meetings on October 21 in Orange County. Throughout six different meetings in Heathsville, Suffolk, Danville, Blacksburg, Harrisonburg, and Somerset, over 150 leaders in the agribusiness industry had the chance to discuss key issues for Virginia agriculture.

Each meeting featured a panel of speakers, and these panels included Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Todd Haymore, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Travis Hill, Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services Matt Lohr, Dean of the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Dr. Alan Grant, Dean of the Virginia State University College of Agriculture Dr. Jewel Hairston, Director of Virginia Cooperative Extension Dr. Ed Jones, and Associate Director of Virginia Cooperative Extension Dr. Bobby Grisso. In addition, two members of Congress, Representative Robert Hurt (R-5th) and Representative Bob Goodlatte (R-6th), joined the discussion for two of the meetings. They were joined by several General Assembly members and local elected officials at each meeting. Following each Regional Roundtable, attendees had the opportunity to tour a local agribusiness operation.

The Council began this series of meetings in 2007, when Mr. Haymore was appointed by Governor Tim Kaine as the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services. In order to meet industry leaders from around Virginia, Mr. Haymore partnered with the Council to arrange these discussions, and after being appointed by Governor McDonnell as Secretary, he continued his participation throughout his entire time of service. The 2013 Virginia Agribusiness Council Regional Roundtables featured the most diverse panel of speakers to date.

Throughout the meetings, attendees and officials discussed many pressing issues for the agribusiness industry, including agriculture education, local marketing opportunities, international trade, progress and funding for Virginia Tech livestock and dairy facilities, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and important federal issues, such as immigration reform and the ongoing Farm Bill debate. In his last series of meetings under the McDonnell Administration, Secretary Haymore recounted the work the Governor and his administration have done to grow the industry, especially through initiatives in expanding export markets and creating the Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID).

Secretary Haymore said, "The Regional Roundtables, as always, were incredibly helpful to me and Deputy Secretary Hill as we continue our work on behalf of agriculture and forestry for Governor McDonnell. Not only were we able to talk about the support that the Governor has provided agriculture and forestry over the last four years and how the Governor's initiatives have boosted Virginia's largest industry, we were able to learn more about the important issues facing our producers and agribusinesses in key regions around the Commonwealth. I'm grateful that the Virginia Agribusiness Council membership and staff were willing to host another series of roundtables to help Travis and me better connect with our stakeholders."

“Since beginning these Regional Agribusiness Roundtables in 2007, these meetings have provided great opportunities for discussions and interactions between Secretary Haymore, state and federal policy leaders, university officials, farmers, and agribusinesses,” noted Katie Frazier, President of the Virginia Agribusiness Council. “These discussions and feedback are invaluable to all parties. As leading economic drivers in the Commonwealth, our members representing the agriculture and forestry industries appreciate the chance to interact directly with decision makers on a regional basis.”

Hosts and tours included Bays Best Feeds (Heathsville), the Southeast Virginia Agricultural Research and Extension Center (Suffolk), JTI Leaf Services (Danville), the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (Blacksburg), Farm Credit of the Virginias (Harrisonburg), Eastern BioPlastics (Harrisonburg), and Grelen Nurseries (Somerset).

This year, Farm Credit sponsored the entire series of Regional Roundtable Meetings, and other sponsors included the Virginia Cattlemen’s Association, First Bank and Trust Company, Fleet Brothers, Inc., Old Dominion Grain (a division of the Mennel Milling Company), Bayer CropScience, Birdsong Peanuts, Perdue Agribusiness, Tyson Foods, the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, Phillip Morris International, the Virginia Poultry Federation, the Virginia State Dairywomen’s Association, and Rappahannock Electric Cooperative.

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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