



MFBF Leaders Voice The Impact Of National Issues On Local Massachusetts Farmers

MARLBOROUGH, MASSACHUSETTS - March 3, 2017 - Two Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) farmer leaders participated in legislative visits this week in Washington, D.C., to discuss the national issues impacting local farmers. These issues include the H2A visa program, the potential North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) renegotiation and how to improve the next Farm Bill.

"These national topics all have close to home impacts," said MFBF President Ed Davidian, who farms in Northborough and completed these hill visits. "For example, this year we experienced a severe drought and had to rely on programs in the Farm Bill to provide us with some relief to help us stay in business.

"While some of these drought relief programs worked like clockwork, others did not. We have to communicate with the legislators about the challenges we found when working through these programs and provide them with constructive suggestions on how to make programs more usable for Massachusetts farmers."

The hill visits were part of the American Farm Bureau Federation's 2017 Advocacy Conference that is held annually in Washington, D.C. The purpose of this conference is to give Farm Bureau leaders, members and staff the opportunity to be advocates for agriculture through interactive workshops and training sessions. Topics discussed at the conference included an outlook on the Farm Bill and agriculture; political issue briefings on regulatory reform, immigration reform and tax reform; and advocacy training.

MFBF Treasurer and Middlesex County farm manager Mark Amato with Davidian represented the interest of Commonwealth farmers at the conference and during hill visits. Amato, who serves on AFBF's Labor Committee, used this conference as a platform to discuss the H2A temporary visa program for agricultural workers.

"We have faced a critical shortage of U.S. workers for many years, as U.S. citizens are largely unwilling and unable to engage in the rigorous work required by farmers. The guest worker program doesn't have the infrastructure in place to respond to the marketplace," Amato said. "This situation makes U.S. farms and ranches less competitive than foreign farmers and less reliable for the American consumer. Securing a legal, reliable and experienced workforce for our nation's farms and ranches is essential to agriculture and the U.S. economy."

To learn more about MFBF's position on the issues, please visit: www.mfbf.net.

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The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation is a non-profit organization representing nearly 6,000 family members across the Commonwealth. MFBF is an advocate for farmers, run by farmer members who develop policies through its grassroots process. Its mission is "to protect the rights, encourage the growth, and be of service to its members, in the best interest of agriculture."

For more information about the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, please visit www.mfbf.net.

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