

Local Farm Bureau looks to the future

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Foreground, **Auctioneer Ronald Farrell takes bids on a Husqvarna 455 chainsaw donated for sale at the Calvert County Farm Bureau Banquet. The chainsaw, which was purchased by Calvert County Sheriff Mike Evans, was donated by 231 Farm Center.**

Barstow, MD - Recruiting new leaders and continuing to speak out on government issues impacting agriculture—those were constant themes heard Friday evening, Nov. 4 at the annual Calvert County Farm Bureau Banquet. The event was held at the Calvert County Fairgrounds.

Chapter Board of Directors' President Susie Hance-Wells reminded the large gathering of members that the tenures of several long-time board members are coming to close, prompting a need for the county's more youthful farmers to assume leadership roles. Hance-Wells noted that one of the local Farm Bureau's most successful events, the annual Farm to Table Breakfast, raised funds for the chapter's scholarship and the local Young Farmers Committee's attendance at a convention. "I look forward to the next generation of farmers," said Hance-Wells.

Noting that all five Calvert County Commissioners were in attendance at the banquet, Hance-Wells declared "we need your help." She affirmed that the board has delivered on three of the farming community's priorities—supporting the agriculture preservation program, creating an agriculture marketing specialist position within county government's Department of Economic Development and addressing existing zoning ordinances that burden farm families.

In addition to the county commissioners, four state lawmakers—Senate President Mike Miller (D-Dist. 27), Senator Steve Waugh (R- Dist. 29) and delegates Michael Jackson (D-Dist. 27B) and Mark Fisher (R-Dist. 27C)—were also present. Hance-Wells reminded local bureau members that the organization also needs in lobbying on behalf of farmers when the Maryland General Assembly is in session.

Maryland Farm Bureau Board of Directors President Chuck Fry matched Hance-Wells' passion for vigilance going forward. Fry focused on the battles agriculture nationwide will have on its hands, including the 2018 Farm Bill. Although it has no support from the two major presidential candidates, Fry touted the controversial Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). The proposed trade agreement has solid support from the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

On their web site AFBF estimated that "annual net farm income will increase by \$4.4 billion, driven by an increase of direct U.S. agricultural exports of \$5.3 billion per year upon full implementation of the TPP agreement as compared to a scenario in which the U.S. fails to pass the agreement while the remaining member countries proceed apace. It is estimated that increased marketing opportunities for U.S. farmers and ranchers will add more than 40,100 jobs to the U.S. economy. Eliminating tariffs and other barriers on United States' agricultural products going into TPP countries, the agreement will increase trade for a range of U.S. agricultural products, including beef, pork, fruits and nuts, vegetables, soybeans, poultry, dairy, rice, cotton and processed food products."

Fry, a Frederick County dairy farmer, estimated that Maryland farmers' cash receipts would increase in the millions if TPP is approved. He lamented the present lack of centrist leadership in Washington, DC. "We need that middle leadership," said Fry. "It just kind of sucks to be a farmer today." Fry added that the best hope for getting TPP approved in Washington might be during the "Lame Duck Session."

"There's a lot of doom and gloom, but we do this because we love it," Young Farmer Committee Chairman Charles Cox. "Without agriculture we get hungry pretty quick."

Despite the concerns about farming's future and sustainability, Calvert Farm Bureau members mostly spent the three hours of the annual banquet enjoying food provided by Friday's Creek and Thompson's Seafood Catering. Additionally, 16 businesses, three farms and the local Farm Bureau provided door prizes; three businesses, three farms and a local quilter provided items that were sold by Farrell Auction Service. Several attendees participated in a "tractor race" orchestrated by Ronald Farrell of the auction service.

Contact Marty Madden at marty.madden@thebaynet.com

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