



Message from the President

ALAN HOSKINS

Our FSA Partners

I was fortunate enough to attend a national conference with Farm Service Agency employees, members of the National Association of Credit Specialists (NACS) and National Association of Support Employees (NASE) groups. These individuals process, approve and administer the guaranteed, direct, emergency and grain facility loans programs. You also work directly with them to certify your acreage, obtain your Market Facilitation Payments (MFPs) or other similar program proceeds (when applicable) and process your ARC or PLC selection decision. Most of these people you have known for many years, go to church with, serve on community boards with and see in the grocery store, etc. In short, these are your friends and neighbors.

The individuals attending this annual meeting utilized their vacation time to participate, paid their own transportation costs to and from the meeting as well as personally buying their own meals! I have had the privilege of attending their conference for the past five years and have seen many of the same faces participating each year. Again, none of your tax dollars fund any FSA employee's participation, they make a personal investment.

Thoughts and concerns of the people belonging to these associations are very well respected within the United States Department of Agriculture. This is evidenced by the attendance of Washington, D.C. based USDA employees such as the Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation, Farm Service Agency Administrator, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations and the Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs. These high-ranking USDA officials were in attendance both to communicate information and learn the needs and concerns of those in attendance. They participated in both individual conversations and question and answer sessions. When questions could not be immediately answered, they took notes and provided follow-up commitments to customer-facing attendees. Watching the interactions, it seemed apparent the views and comments of the participants were highly valued and considered.

As we are all painfully aware, the guaranteed and direct loan programs, MFP payments, etc. are all vitally important to producers in today's challenging environment. As the number of active farmers continue to dwindle, it becomes incumbent on both active and retired producers to reach out to their individual senators and representatives to reinforce how critical the support and funding of agricultural programs is to their constituents. However, it is not their responsibility alone. Those of us serving the farmers and ranchers also have a duty to work toward making sure the needed programs remain funded in an appropriate manner. This list includes, but is not limited to; lending institutions, equipment dealers, fertilizer and chemical sellers, grain merchandisers, amongst others. Don't hesitate to reach out to those with whom you do business and ask they also participate in the political process supporting agriculture. We all have a vested interest in the success of farmers and ranchers and need to assist them in manners of this type. Let's all work in a respective manner to ensure our elected officials know the great need of today's agriculture.

I have often heard if you want to learn where an individual's true passion lies, listen to their words, observe where their time and money is spent and see if the two are congruent. This week, I observed that phrase being modeled. I heard FSA employees express concern for their customer's needs before their own, while utilizing vacation time and personal funds to ensure those thoughts were understood. They voiced the hurt they feel when producers are pained as those are typically individuals they have known a good portion of their life. Rest assured you, as producers, have people serving you who truly care about your success. Please join me, on your next trip to the Farm Service Agency office, in saying THANK YOU to the employees. We are all fortunate, especially in today's world, to have such dedicated and compassionate people working to help us succeed.