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OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU

Perspective

Jan. 3, 2020

OKFB members discuss challenges in agriculture in *The Oklahoman*

In a front page story in the Sunday, Dec. 15 issue of *The Oklahoman*, two Oklahoma Farm Bureau members had the opportunity to share about the variety of challenges facing Oklahoma farmers and ranchers.

Kay County member Joseph Tripp of Blackwell and Noble County member Marty Williams of Red Rock discussed the years of bad weather, depressed commodity prices and unpredictable trade disputes that have taken a toll on farmers and ranchers across the state.

A fourth-generation farmer, Tripp raises cattle and grows wheat, soybeans and other crops throughout Kay County, Grant County and southern Kansas.

"We've cut back and we've cut back and we've cut back," Tripp said in the story. "There's only so much you can cut back on. If you can imagine, we're standing on top of a cliff and it's behind us and we're backing up and backing up, just trying to get us away from another dangerous situation.... Now our feet are at the edge of the cliff and we can't back up anymore. We can't back

up financially or cut anything anymore, there's nothing left to cut. And yet we can't seem to make any money."

On top of everything he's facing, Tripp said he also deals with the responsibility of carrying on the family farm for his children and grandchildren.

"If I lose it, there's nothing for my kids or their kids or their kids," Tripp told *The Oklahoman*. "I am a steward of what we have to pass down to the next generation so they have an opportunity to be a steward for the next generation. Once it's gone, it's gone forever."

A farmer in Red Rock, Williams farms wheat, corn, soybeans, sesame, canola and milo alongside a stocker operation.

Throughout 2010 to 2013, Williams and his wife Crystal were able to expand their family's farm and purchase additional land. But in 2015 and 2016, crop prices dropped dramatically and production costs remained high.

"All of a sudden, we couldn't pay back bills for a year, then the next year it compounded and then the next year it

compounded," Williams said in the story. "By late 2017, early '18, we were just virtually broke."

Facing the possibility of bankruptcy, Williams and his wife decided instead to work on paying back their debts.

"We just decided we got into this mess, we'll get out of it," Williams said in the story. "It's going to be a long row to hoe. My banker and I and my wife, we call it basically treading water. Right now we're treading water, but things have gotten a little better."

Despite all the tough times, Williams told *The Oklahoman* he has been able to find some bright spots.

"Every time I say it can't get any worse, somehow it does, but I really honestly think we're coasting at the low and there's at least enough things out there to be cautiously optimistic for the next three or four years," he said.

To read the full story by Darla Slipke, visit okfb.news/oklahoman2.



OKFB describes impact of low commodity prices in a Sunday issue of *The Oklahoman*

Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Rodd Moesel described the dire circumstances facing many of the state's farmers and ranchers in a story in the Sunday, Dec. 15 edition of *The Oklahoman*. The story, published on the front page of the paper, explored the impact that weak commodity prices are having on agricultural producers in the state.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service predicts net farm income at \$92.5 billion, or 25% lower than in 2013. Meanwhile, total farm sector debt nationally in 2019 is expected to reach nearly \$415.5 billion.

"It is like a slow-drip water torture," Moesel said in the story. "It isn't unusual for farmers in our part of the country to have a bad year every now and then. But we are into five years in a row that commodity pricing has been about half of what it was before."

"People can't replace their equipment, they are using up the savings they had and they are dipping into their borrowing capacity, if they still have it. I am meeting more and more young farmers who are highly leveraged who are having to sell parts of their farms to keep the rest. It is not a pretty picture at the moment."

To read the full story by Jack Money, visit okfb.news/oklahoman1.



Save the Date

Congressional Action Tour

March 23-27, 2020

Trump International Hotel • Washington, D.C.

Calendar

YF&R Convention

Jan. 17-22 • Austin, Texas

Contact: Melisa Neal 405-523-2300

State Leadership Conference

Feb. 17-18 • Oklahoma City

Contact: Emmy Karns 405-523-2300

YF&R Legislative Day

Feb. 17 • Oklahoma City

Contact: Zac Swartz 405-523-2300

Farm Bureau Week

Feb. 17-21

Contact: Marcia Irvin 405-523-2300

Farm City Festival

Feb. 26 • Oklahoma City

Contact: Marcia Irvin 405-523-2300

AFBF Young Farmers and Ranchers Conference

March 13-16 • Louisville, KY

Contact: Zac Swartz 405-523-2300

County Farm Bureaus continue to give back to their local communities



Above: For the third year in a row, Okmulgee County Farm Bureau hosted a stocking cap, glove and sock drive. This year, members collected 161 stocking caps, 174 pairs of gloves and 182 pairs of socks to be donated at public schools throughout the county.



Left: Members of the Payne County Farm Bureau board, YF&R Committee, Women's Leadership Committee and Collegiate Farm Bureau joined together to collect more than 200 new and gently used winter coats and \$250 in gift cards that will go on to be donated to the Payne County Child Welfare.



Left: During a Monday morning breakfast group in Anadarko, members of the Caddo County Farm Bureau donated scarves, caps and socks to those in need this winter. The items were donated by county board members and county Women's Leadership Committee members.

OKFB praises House approval of USMCA

Following the U.S. House's approval of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement Dec. 19, Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Rodd Moesel released the following statement:

"Oklahoma Farm Bureau members are optimistic after today's passage of the United States-Mexico-Canada agreement, and we thank all five Oklahoma House members for their active support of the agreement.

"We now look to the Senate for swift approval in January as Oklahoma

farmers and ranchers await a trade agreement that will help them receive fair prices for the commodities and products they grow and raise. Amidst very difficult times in the agricultural community from depressed commodity prices, ever-increasing production costs and natural disasters, today's approval of the historic trade deal by the House helps bring our state's farmers and ranchers a bit of peace of mind along with expanded international markets."

County Farm Bureaus to celebrate Farm Bureau Week Feb. 17-21

It's time to begin planning your Farm Bureau Week activities!

County Farm Bureaus across the state will gather to celebrate and promote the grassroots organization Feb. 17-21.

The weeklong event provides county Farm Bureaus an opportunity to promote the organization within their local communities.

To submit your county's Farm Bureau Week activities, contact Hannah Davis at 405-523-2300.

For assistance with promotional products such as newspaper ads, handouts, banners or signs for your Farm Bureau Week events, contact the OKFB Communications Department at 405-523-2300.

Member Benefits

TSC Security

TSC Security, Inc. will install a home security system at no cost in any Oklahoma Farm Bureau member's home in exchange for a three-year monitoring service agreement. Members can also receive \$200 to use toward

the purchase of additional equipment. TSC Security's monitored solutions provide Farm Bureau members with peace-of-mind. Call 866-321-4177 or visit the TSC website at www.totalsecurity.biz.

www.okfarmbureau.org/benefits

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A look back through OKFB's favorite photos from 2019

As we look back on this past year, we are reflecting on the places we visited, the people we met and the stories we helped tell. Many miles were traveled across this great state to help share the stories of Oklahoma agriculture and we have compiled some of our favorite images captured throughout the year to share with you. To view all of the favorite photos from 2019, visit okfb.news/photos19.

