

Trumpeting Agriculture

President Donald Trump promotes rural development initiative in speech to Farm Bureau members.

President Donald Trump Jan. 8 unveiled a major initiative designed to strengthen a rural economy that has lagged urban areas in recovery from the Great Recession of 2007-2008. Trump signed two executive orders funding and streamlining the expansion of rural broadband access after an address to 7,400 farmers and ranchers gathered at the American Farm Bureau Federation's 2018 Annual Convention.

In addition to economic development, Trump touched on issues of particular importance to agriculturists, such as regulations, labor and trade. He praised farmers for their enduring values.

"We are witnessing a new era of patriotism, prosperity and pride — and at the forefront of this exciting new chapter is the great American farmer," he said, adding that farmers "embody the values of hard work, grit, self-reliance and sheer determination."



"To level the playing field for all of our farmers and ranchers, as well as our manufacturers, we are reviewing all of our trade agreements," President Donald Trump told AFBF members. "On NAFTA, I am working very hard to get a better deal for our farmers and ranchers and manufacturers."

The president spent much of his address decrying the costs of excessive regulation and tallying the rules his administration has moved to eliminate.

"We are also putting an end to the regulatory assault on your way of life, and it was an assault," he said. Trump singled out the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule, now being withdrawn following an executive order he signed in the first weeks of his administration.

"It sounds so nice. It sounds so innocent, and it was a disaster," he said. "People came to me about it, and they were crying — men who were tough and strong, women who were tough and strong — because I gave them back their property and I gave them back their farms. We ditched the rule."

Trump acknowledged controversy over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other trade agreements that account for roughly a quarter of U.S. agriculture revenues.

"To level the playing field for all of our farmers and ranchers, as well as our manufacturers, we are reviewing all of our trade agreements," he said. "On NAFTA, I am working very hard to get a better deal for our farmers and ranchers and manufacturers."

Trump promised the farm bill would continue to provide a safety net for farmers who are now entering their fifth year of declining incomes.

"I look forward to working with Congress to pass the farm bill on time so that it delivers for all of you, and I support a bill that includes crop insurance," he said.

AFBF President Zippy Duvall said Trump's visit marked a watershed in D.C. politics.

"Farmers and ranchers have too long faced burdensome regulations," Duvall said. "This president understands the toll government overreach has taken on ordinary business and is moving swiftly to clear the way for prosperity. We are moving into yet another year of economic difficulty. Relief could not have come at a better time."

Editor's Note: This article was provided by the American Farm Bureau Federation.

D.C. Relations

Farm Bureau's Duvall praises 'fresh air' in D.C.; calls for better immigration, trade, farm bill.

American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall called on farmers and ranchers to redouble their efforts to advocate for agriculture, even as the current administration has begun moving to undo some of the regulations that have burdened them for years.

"We have had a seat at the table with the Trump administration," Duvall told nearly 7,000 farmers and ranchers gathered for the organization's annual convention in Nashville, Tenn. "Folks, I can tell you that it has been a breath of fresh air to be able to advocate for getting things done ... instead of having to constantly defend agriculture against a steady stream of challenges from our own government."

In his address Duvall covered the gamut of major issues that began to move in recent months.

"Probably the biggest challenge we faced in recent years was the Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule," he said.

"That overreaching regulation would have allowed the federal government to dictate not just how you farm, but whether you could farm at all. Thanks to your engagement, and thanks to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, the old rule is being reconsidered, and we are urging the agency to propose a new rule ... one that draws clear lines that protect waters without regulating farm fields.

"It's thanks to your engagement that Congress passed tax reform last year, giving farmers a new 20% deduction on their business income, doubling the estate tax exemption, preserving tax credits that farmers depend on, and lowering the individual tax rate," he said.

Duvall underlined the importance of trade to American farmers.

"As I have traveled, I have discovered that even some within agriculture don't understand what's at stake if we lose our trade agreements. Trade should not be a dirty word, because without those global



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markets our already-depressed farm economy would go down even more. We sell about half of what we produce to foreign markets around the world. If we lose those markets, where is that agricultural production going to go? Ag trade is an American success story."

Immigration remains a key issue with American farmers.

"We also have some work to do on immigration and ag labor," he said. "This is yet another issue that has been overtaken by politics, but I have met many farmers and ranchers across the country who deal with the reality of farm labor shortages on their farms. Everywhere I go, no matter which region or state, farmers tell me this is the number

Canadian ag minister says trade, NAFTA are essential to prosperity

Trade relationships are the foundation for creating economic prosperity between nations, Lawrence MacAulay, Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, said at the opening session of the American Farm Bureau Federation's 2018 Annual Convention & IDEAg Trade Show in Nashville, Tenn.

MacAulay, the first Canadian ag minister to speak to Farm Bureau members at an annual convention, said trade, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and building on common interests are the three areas upon which the United States and Canada should focus.

"The closer the U.S. and Canada work together to address common challenges, the more we can grow our economies," he said. "No two nations depend on each other for economic prosperity more than the U.S. and Canada."

Since 1994, trade among NAFTA partners has tripled, and agriculture and food exports from the United States to Canada and Mexico have quadrupled.

"The American Farm Bureau knows how vital NAFTA is to our industry," said MacAulay. "We must continue to ensure that North America remains a major building block in our shared

economic prosperity. If we grow our trade relationship, we will grow our economies together."

Speaking on NAFTA renegotiation, MacAulay said the main objective is to

do no harm to agriculture.

"Can NAFTA be updated? Of course, but it's like an old tractor in the barn," he observed. "We can make it better, but let's not destroy the tractor."

one problem they face — not enough ag workers to get their crops out of the field.

"Last year, Congressman Bob Goodlatte of Virginia introduced a bill that would let existing workers apply for visas to stay in the U.S. and keep working on our farms and ranches. We need Congress to pass that bill so we can keep from losing ag production to other countries that have better access to labor."

The farm bill, meanwhile, is expected to pass Congress sometime this year. Duvall reminded Farm Bureau members it remains a top priority at a time when farmers and ranchers are facing the worst outlook since the collapse of the farm economy in the 1980s.

"The fact is, the farm bill is a food-security bill for everyone," he said. "It's for consumers, and it's for conservation. It's for rural development. It's for energy security. It's for research so we can continue to increase production and meet future demand. And, yes, it is and should continue to be for those low-income Americans who need extra help to put food on their table."



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