

USFRA Reveals Vision and Initial Focus

Organized to be a united voice of agriculture, USFRA announces founding board and executive committee.

Today's agriculture continues to be attacked by a number of different groups. Unfortunately, as the majority of the U.S. public has become further and further removed from the farm, they tend to believe the groups attacking agriculture, according to the U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance (USFRA). This new alliance is comprised of most of the leading national farmer- and rancher-led agricultural organizations.

USFRA believes the actions of these groups have led a number of agricultural organizations to fund programs that bolster the image of agriculture and enhance public trust in our food supply. While these individual efforts have been helpful in answering some of the criticism, there is a growing need for all of agriculture to coordinate messages and reach out even further to the consuming public through consumer influencers and thought leaders.

"We in production agriculture recognize the immediate need to build consumer trust in today's U.S. food production system," said newly elected USFRA Chairman Bob Stallman, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation. "We also recognize the need to maintain and enhance the freedom of American farmers and ranchers to operate in an economical, sustainable and responsible manner. The sun rises today on a new, collaborative and coordinated effort by many segments of production agriculture to tell our great story as never before."

At a news conference introducing the USFRA founding affiliates and board participants, Stallman recalled a historic meeting that took place Oct. 12 in St. Louis. Twenty farmer and rancher organizations in attendance agreed to form USFRA to develop and implement a well-funded, long-term, and coordinated public trust campaign for American agriculture.

Visions and goals

Stallman stated the Alliance's vision is to enhance consumer trust in today's U.S. food production system, to maintain and enhance the freedom of U.S. farmers and ranchers to operate in a responsible manner, and to strengthen collaboration with the food production, processing and distribution systems.

According to Stallman, USFRA will focus

its initial efforts on the following measurable goals:

1. Increase consumer, consumer influencer and thought leader trust and confidence in today's agriculture.
2. Serve as a resource to food companies on the benefits of today's agricultural production.
3. Work with leading health, environmental and dietary organizations to demonstrate the benefits of today's agricultural production.
4. Increase the role of U.S. farmers and ranchers as the voice of animal and crop agriculture on local, state and national food issues.

"This is an exciting time for U.S. agriculture. It represents the first time all of production agriculture has come together for a common purpose," said Stallman. "It won't be easy. Changing consumer perceptions is a big challenge. We plan to use our strategic vision to focus our energies."

In 2011, Stallman indicated, USFRA will continue to identify any current efforts to enhance public trust in today's agriculture already undertaken by agriculture and food industry organizations that may fit strategically within USFRA's vision and goals. USFRA recognizes that many of these current efforts have already made strides forward, and it anticipates future successes for them.

Going further

However, USFRA also anticipates identifying gaps in the broad consumer education efforts that exist today. It will be imperative that USFRA closes those gaps and builds a public trust in today's agriculture campaign that will allow its supporting organizations to operate as needed, while still pooling resources to maximize efficiencies and effectiveness of a consumer influencer and thought leader campaign, said Stallman.

At this time, 23 different farmer- and rancher-led organizations have joined the alliance to pool resources:

- American Egg Board (AEB)
- American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF)
- American National Cattle Women (ANCW)
- American Sheep Industry (ASI)

- American Soybean Association (ASA)
- American Sugar Alliance
- Beef Checkoff (CBB)
- Federation of State Beef Councils (FSBC)
- National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG)
- National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA)
- National Cotton Council (NCC)
- National Corn Growers Association (NCGA)
- National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF)
- National Pork Board (NPB)
- National Pork Producers Council (NPPC)
- Southern Peanut Producers Federation (SPPF)
- U.S. Poultry and Egg Association (USPOULTRY)
- U.S. Grains Council (USGC)
- United Egg Producers (UEP)
- United Fresh Produce Association (United Fresh)
- United Soybean Board (USB)
- U.S. Soybean Federation (USSF)
- Western Growers (WGA)

Founding leadership

Organizations participating on the USFRA Founding Board include, in alphabetical order, AFBF, the Beef Checkoff, Federation of State Beef Councils, NCBA, NCGA, NPB, NPPC, USPOULTRY, UEP and USB.

The following individuals are serving as the founding board of directors for USFRA: Philip Bradshaw, USB; Austin Brown III, Beef Checkoff; Scott George, Federation of State Beef Councils; Gene Gregory, UEP; Dallas Hockman, NPPC; Dale Norton, NPB; Forrest Roberts, NCBA; Bart Schott, NCGA; Bob Stallman, AFBF; and John Starkey, USPOULTRY.

The following USFRA Board members were elected by their peers at the initial USFRA Board meeting Friday, Nov. 5, to serve as the inaugural USFRA Executive Committee:

- Chairman — Bob Stallman, AFBF
- Vice Chairman — Phil Bradshaw, USB
- Secretary — Bart Schott, NCGA
- Treasurer — Dale Norton, NPB
- At-Large — Gene Gregory, UEP
- At-Large — Forrest Roberts, NCBA

Stallman said other business conducted by the USFRA Founding Board Nov. 5 included approving motions to further establish USFRA as a credible and operational entity. Stallman also indicated that participation in USFRA projects by federally authorized checkoff programs is pending USDA Agricultural Marketing Service approval.



Editor's Note: This article was distributed as a USFRA release by the NCGA.