

## Maryland Farm Bureau

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## 2006 - a very good year

By Earl Hance, MFB President

2006 was a very good year and I don't mean for making wine, although it might have been, but as far as Maryland Farm Bureau is concerned. Farming has conditioned me to expect a bad year in between the good ones and I keep expecting something to happen in Farm Bureau but it just keeps rolling along. It's a true testament to our members' dedication in keeping the organization strong. Let me give you a brief overview of this year's activities.

To begin the new year we started with a change in leadership at the annual meeting in Ocean City. Mike Wilcom stepped down as vice president and was replaced by Chuck Fry. We need to thank Mike for all of his many years of very dedicated service to the organization. Mike has always put Farm Bureau as a top priority and still continues to serve at the county level and on some state committees.

In January, a very large delegation traveled to Nashville, Tennessee for the American Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting. I think it was one of the best conventions I've attended so far. The accommodations were excellent and the best part was that the convention center is attached to the Opryland Hotel so it was just a short walk from your room to any event. Again this year we were honored to receive the Navigator Award and for the second year in a row, we were the top state in membership growth. While this was an amazing honor for our members, some thought the convention highlight was getting to meet with Cal Ripkin Jr. and have pictures taken.

The legislative session was like most others - they start slow and end fast and furious. Val and Kurt did another outstanding job as did the many members that came in to testify on several issues. One highlight I would like to mention is the passage of House Bill 2 which was the result of the work done by the Agriculture Stewardship Commission. The bill put some funding in programs which should help our members meet the

challenges that they face everyday on the farm. This year we will work for additional funding so that even more can be accomplished to aid agriculture.

Also this year, the Maryland Agriculture Commission held a summit which was the final step after last year's listening sessions to gather information to develop a strategic plan for Maryland agriculture. The plan has been released and will serve as a guide to strengthen agriculture as we move forward.

Membership hit another all-time high this year - 27,520 members! Not quite my goal of 30,000 but pretty close and everyone deserves a big pat on the back. This is the third year in a row that we have hit our regular membership goal but the greatest accomplishment is that every county made their goal. It is a tribute to the work that you all do in your own counties that makes people want to join. Nationwide agents again made a tremendous effort to sign new members and they too deserve our thanks. We have already made changes to our insurance program and have the tools in place for Nationwide to again contribute to obtaining another record high in member growth this coming year.

As goes membership, so too has gone the financial strength of the organization this year. It looks like we will end with a net operating profit of over \$73,000 and an increase in net assets of over \$50,000. This is a testament to sound fiscal management by all of the staff and the board of directors. This organization is in extremely sound financial footing and is very well positioned to move forward into the future to fulfill the needs of its members.

Our administrator, Mel Hollingsworth, has been with us for a year now and is adapting very well. As Mel has learned, the Maryland way only needed minor changes so far, mostly with me. The future will certainly bring more change but only to make the organization operate more efficiently.

# THE ag agenda



By **Bob Stallman**, President  
American Farm Bureau Federation®

## 2006: A Fine Year for Farm Bureau

The year is winding down and a new one is bellowing like a newborn calf at our fence gate. As do most folks this time of year, I find myself remembering joyous occasions and achievements that greeted myself and loved ones over the past 11 months. During my reminiscing, I always include my Farm Bureau family and those endeavors that proved especially successful to strengthening our organization; and I rejoice in the year that was.

### Realm of Success

While Farm Bureau had many policy triumphs during 2006, there are several that really stand out. On the trade front, we felt a major setback early on when exports of beef to Japan were once again cut off. But holding the line, we persevered in July when exports recommenced. Agreement was also reached to resume limited beef trade to South Korea, Colombia and Peru, lifting long-standing bans.

Another highlight was the World Trade Organization's decision against the baseless European Union moratorium on biotechnology approvals. The WTO ruling, which declared the EU ban illegal, sends a strong message to other nations that protectionist behavior regarding biotechnology will not stand.

On the home front, Farm Bureau took a devastating U.S. Supreme Court decision on eminent domain and worked tirelessly at the grassroots level, telling lawmakers to Stop Taking Our Property. The STOP campaign resulted in helping 25 states pass new eminent domain legislation to protect all homeowners, farmers and ranchers.

A list of successes wouldn't be com-

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