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Iowa Farm Bureau Wraps Up Summer Policy Conference in West Des Moines

WEST DES MOINES, Iowa – August 31, 2012 – Iowa Farm Bureau voting delegates shared concerns about crop quality and insurance as they gathered in West Des Moines August 30-31 to set state and national legislative policy for 2013. The drought-stricken crops and low river levels also brought additional discussion of the importance of maintaining the condition of the Mississippi River and its important role in transporting grain.

“What a difference a year can make; last year’s conference focused on the flood conditions in the western part of the state, while this year’s delegates are keyed in to the drought and its effects on the Mississippi River’s ability to move grain on the eastern side of the state,” said Craig Hill, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF) president. “Our unique grassroots policy development process truly represents the concerns of our members and where they live and farm.”

Iowa’s largest grassroots farm organization called for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to prioritize funds for cleaning the channels of the Mississippi River to navigate the current low water levels to allow large barges to continue moving through the waters. The river represents one of the nation’s largest methods of grain transportation.

IFBF delegates gather each year to discuss and set state policies which impact not just farmers, but all Iowa taxpayers. In addition, national policies approved this week will be ratified and sent up for national debate in January at the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) annual meeting in Nashville.

Another lively discussion at the IFBF Summer Policy Conference concerned the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) closing of several Farm Service Agency offices. “We support consolidation of government service facilities to create efficiencies, but there has to be careful consideration, because if farmers have to drive 50 miles back and forth to conduct essential business, those closures quickly become inefficient, both to the government and the folks who rely on the services,” said Hill.

Farm Bureau voting delegates moved to continue support of the Renewable Fuels Standard

and increase the use and development of renewable fuels.

Iowa's Transportation Infrastructure Funding also found consensus among IFBF farmers, who agreed that additional revenue for the state's roads and bridges should be generated from an increase in the state fuel tax and that hybrid and electrical vehicles should contribute their fair share to the repair of the very roads they share with all Iowans. "Since the Transportation Infrastructure Fund is likely to come up in our 2013 legislative session, we believe Iowa lawmakers will take careful consideration of that issue and appropriate funding levels," said Hill.

The IFBF Summer Policy Conference is a step in Farm Bureau's grassroots policy development process and is subject to national debate during American Farm Bureau Federation policy discussions in January. All state Farm Bureaus meet in January to finalize the organization's national policies.

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