Written by Laurie Johns
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94th Annual IFBF Gathering Brings Experts to Des Moines

WEST DES MOINES, IOWA – Nov. 29, 2012 – "What would it cost, how long would it take and would the water quality improvement methods impact Iowa's economy and food costs down the road?" Those questions and more will be addressed as part of a panel discussion about Iowa's proposed nutrient reduction strategy and its role in protecting Iowa surface water and reducing the Gulf Hypoxia Zone at the 94th Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF) annual meeting in Des Moines. The December 4-5 meeting will be held at a new location this year: the newly remodeled Veterans Memorial Auditorium.

The panel will feature Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey; Dean Lemke, natural resources engineer with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS); and Dr. Matt Helmers, professor and ag engineer from Iowa State University (ISU).

"The IFBF annual meeting education seminars always draw quite a crowd because they feature expert advice and guidance on issues that today's responsible farmers need to know to be sustainable as farmers and community leaders," says IFBF President Craig Hill. "We're especially excited about the Nutrient Reduction Strategy seminar because it is a science-based, detailed study which establishes a benchmark of what strategies farmers, cities and industries in Iowa can do now to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous loss."

The water quality plan is the beginning of a coordinated, intensified effort to improve Iowa water quality and satisfy the 2008 Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan, which challenged Iowa and other Mississippi River basin states to find ways to reach a 45 percent reduction in nutrients into the Gulf, which cause concerns for marine life. IDALS, Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and ISU researchers studied the issue for two years; they'll discuss their draft plans and options for conservation with farmers at the IFBF meeting in Des Moines.

"One thing this study will illustrate is that conservation is not a 'one size fits all' issue. There are literally thousands of types of soils, multiple terrains and many land uses in this state, and we have to continue to feed a growing world from the same amount of land. This plan needs to focus on feasible solutions that help us make the real, immediate improvements our farmers are seeking, while being fiscally responsible," says Hill.

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey agrees. “We will discuss Iowa’s Nutrient Reduction Strategy which studied several science-based management practices, including cover crops, wetlands, and nitrogen application timing, and looked at their impact on food production, farm profits, and water quality,” says Northey. “Iowa farmers know the importance of protecting the land and water and have shown increasing willingness to voluntarily implement management practices to improve Iowa’s water quality and downstream waters.”

Members can register for the 2012 IFBF annual meeting at their county Farm Bureau offices. For more information about the annual meeting, visit www.iowafarmbureau.com .

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