



L-R: Laura Kington, Angela Huffman, conference attendee

Organizing Farm Communities to Stop Rep. King's Attack

by Laura Kington

a campaign to stop HR 4879/3599, harmful legislation introduced as an amendment to the

powerful team at Family Farm Action and OCM to stop King's legislation from going through.

From the hyper local Eastern Kentucky Farmers Conference, to the state-focused Ohio Ecological Food and Farming Association conference and the Michigan Family Farms conference, as well as state

Please see KINGTON on page 2

As a seasonal farm employee and food system advocate, my post-grad years have consistently revolved around three seasons: planting, harvesting, and conference-ing.

The last two years, I've worked at a flower farm on the outskirts of Columbus, Ohio, the city where I grew up and where I remained after graduating from the Ohio State University's College of Food and Ag., and the year prior to that I had my first season farming on a mixed vegetable CSA farm in eastern Iowa. Through the winters, I've organized with college students for the Real Food Challenge, with farmworkers of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, and this year I've joined the team at the nascent political partner to OCM, Family Farm Action.

Alongside the Organization for Competitive Markets, Family Farm Action is helping to coordinate a farmer and rancher-led

upcoming Farm Bill by Iowa's Representative Steve King. Misleadingly named the Protect Interstate Commerce Act, King's legislation would wipe out state and local ability to have unique regulations and supports for agriculture, an attack on family farmers and rural communities who depend on both farmer support and consumer protection at the state and local level. More than 80 food and farm focused organizations have joined our coalition to fight back.

King's legislation, which would wipe out state and local laws impacting food and agriculture, is an affront to this livelihood strategy and to the vast and diverse communities of farmers who gather each winter across the country to share skills and knowledge, motivate each other to keep working, and dream up visions for the future of agriculture.

As an organizer with Family Farm Action working to spread the word about King's harmful legislation, I've had the chance to attend six food and farming conferences this

winter. The more strangers I've talked with, the more stories I've heard from farmers about how the King amendment could tip them over the delicate balance between being able to continue their way of life and losing the family farm, the more resolute I've grown in my dedication alongside the

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MEMBERSHIP

Report

by **Pat Craycraft**

JOIN TODAY – Thank you to all who have renewed your 2018 memberships this year. If you have not renewed or joined OCM in 2018 – it's not too late. We hope that you will support OCM and make 2018 a record making year for membership. Please tell others about OCM and invite them to be a part of our organization.

Attention Allied Organizations – please consider an Association Membership with

OCM at the \$200, \$500 and \$1,000 levels and receive the newsletter, action alerts, membership in the OCM National Collaboration and Action Toolkits. Higher member levels include two conference registrations, a booth at our Annual Convention as well as recognition. Please consider these new options for OCM memberships.

All memberships are available online at www.competitivemarkets.com or by sending a check to our Post Office Box. If you have any questions about joining OCM or about your current membership, please contact Pat at pcraycraft@competitivemarkets.com or 402-817-4443.^{PC}

KINGTON (continued from page 1)

and national Farmers Union conventions and the national summit of the newly formed HEAL Food Alliance, a highly diverse swath of farmers and conference attendees agree that King's attack on farmers and rural communities must stop.

For family farmers and farmers who are at a social disadvantage due to their race, scale, or marketing model, the King amendment would mean stripping supports for niche markets available through local food promotion programs or special placement at farmers' markets.

For farmers and their advocates seeking to build a more ecologically sound agricultural system that reduces damage to local soil and waterways, the King amendment would wipe out environmental standards that impact the use of harmful chemicals and state laws that support farms practicing conservation through buffer zones.

And for those seeking a more equitable food system for underserved consumers and food chain workers, the King amendment could undermine important progress like the Good Food Purchasing

Program and progress towards state policies around overtime pay or minimum wage for farmworkers.

At every conference focused on food and agriculture, there is necessarily an acute sense of place: each is distinct in terms of geography, agricultural niches, environmental challenges, and social strifes faced by farmers and their communities. This attention to diversity, to finding one's niche, is an attribute that family farmers and ranchers have used to persist through generations of policy shifts impacting how we are expected to do business.

King's legislation, which would wipe out state and local laws impacting food and agriculture, is an affront to this livelihood strategy and to the vast and diverse communities of farmers who gather each winter across the country to share skills and knowledge, motivate each other to keep working, and dream up visions for the future of agriculture.

Stand with family farmers and ranchers in opposition to King's legislation by signing the online petition at www.stopkingsattack.com and email me at laura@farmaction.us for more ways to get involved.^{LK}



FROM THE **PRESIDENT**

Time for Farmers to Unite

by **Mike Weaver**

For too many years, or should I say decades, small family farmers have been battling the mega corporations that have taken over agriculture in this country and, indeed, throughout the world. Yes, we have won a battle here and there, but many times the companies have gone to Congress and paid for a change in a law or regulation to get their way, again leaving farm families standing out in the cold.

While we may have stemmed the tide of corporate takeover, we haven't stopped it. And we can never out-spend Big Ag. Our only plausible alternative is to unite all sectors of agriculture and convince Congress we intend to change things using our votes. One of the most satisfying trips I made to Washington, D.C., was several years ago, and what made it great was bringing to light a reality for a U.S. Senator. During a "face to face" (an actual meeting with the Senator himself, not an aide), we were trying to relate the dire straits most small farmers are in. The Senator kept saying something to the effect "...now we have to take the company issues into consideration...", essentially implying that their wellbeing was his main concern. I had heard more of "the companies" than I cared to, and upon leaving I looked him straight in the eye

and said: "Senator, those companies may be paying your bills but they can't vote for you." That was the only thing I remember during the meeting that made him think. And I hope it makes you think too about the power of your vote.

I don't foresee in my lifetime enough things changing in the marketplace and economically for small family farmers unless we do come together—every ag sector, including beef, dairy, poultry, grain, cotton, pork, and anyone else we can get to join us. We must demand the changes that will make our operations profitable again and help us keep our kids on the farm.

OCM has been working on most of the major issues and attempting to bring about the changes we need. But we need your help. We're not asking you to give up your current association activities or to stop any initiatives that are effective. We are asking that, in addition to your current activities, you join us and help form a force that is big enough, and, therefore, effective enough, to bring about change for the better.

Please take the time to go to our website at

competitivemarkets.com and take a look at the areas we are working on. We don't expect everyone to jump in and help on all the fronts we are involved in but you can pick out one or two and assist. Be it with a membership or contribution, help with a mailing, organizing your friends and neighbors to hold a local rally or a call in to Congress.

There are many things you can and must do if, like us, you don't wish to see the extinction of the small American family farm in our lifetime.^{MW}

Our only plausible alternative is to unite all sectors of agriculture and convince Congress we intend to change things using our votes.



New OCM State Policy Report Series

by Angela Huffman

Following up on OCM's 2017 national policy brief, "Consolidation, Globalization, and the American Family Farm," we have launched a new policy reporting series highlighting these issues at the state level. We outline the plight of family farmers and the rural communities they call home, showing how specific policy decisions made at both the state and federal level have driven the wealth off the farm, out of rural communities and into the pockets of a few global corporations.

In January, at a briefing for Missouri legislators at the state capitol, we presented the findings of our first state-level report and called for immediate action to help level the playing field for Missouri family farmers. A central concern is a 2013 law allowing international companies to own

Missouri's agricultural land. Following the passage of that law, Chinese company Shuanghui International Holdings Ltd. purchased Smithfield Foods, giving Chinese-sponsored business entities control of about 25 percent of Missouri's pork production. The day following our briefing at the Missouri Capitol, legislation was introduced which would repeal the 2013 law and prohibit any alien or foreign businesses from acquiring agricultural land in the state. Representatives from Family Farm Action, Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Friends of Responsible Agriculture, Missouri Farm Bureau and others have testified in favor of the legislation.

In March, we released our second state-level report, focusing on North Dakota. The report paints a picture of rural

communities struggling as farming is increasingly industrialized and consolidated, to the point of creating near monopolies. As a result, family farmers, once the economic engine of North Dakota are being lost. Only one in 10 farmers in North Dakota are considered young farmers with few returning to an industry where the outlook is so grim. At our legislative briefing at the North Dakota Capitol, there was a strong turnout from both sides of the political aisle. We'll continue to work with North Dakota legislators on policy when the legislative session begins in early 2019.

Our next report will focus on Ohio and will be released later this Spring. Read our reports online at www.competitivemarkets.com/category/policy-research.^{AH}



Serious Abuses of Ohio Beef Checkoff Dollars Show Need for Reform



Photo credit: Laura Hancock, cleveland.com

In February, the Organization for Competitive Markets and Ohio Farmers Union released a briefing paper outlining how federal and state funds are being used to prop up and fund a trade and lobbying entity. The Ohio Beef Council, an agency of the Ohio Department of Agriculture, is funneling taxpayer dollars through payroll expenses and rental costs to fund the trade and lobbying group, Ohio Cattlemen’s Association. Further, the state agency raises funds for the Ohio Cattlemen’s Association Political Action Committee (PAC) to influence elections and legislation. It also makes annual cash payments of at least \$14,000 per year to the national trade and lobbying group, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. As set out in the new briefing paper, the state-supported funding is in violation of both state and federal law.

“For years we have shared these concerns, but they have only fallen on deaf ears at the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Last month at our Ohio Farmers Union convention, we passed a resolution to put a stop to these taxpayer abuses.”

Joe Logan, President of Ohio Farmers Union and Board Member of OCM, said, “For years we have shared these concerns, but they have only fallen on deaf ears at the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Last month at our Ohio Farmers Union convention, we passed a

stop to these taxpayer abuses. We can only hope, based on the evidence in the briefing paper, others in our government will hear the cry of Ohio’s cattle producers and answer the call to clean up this mess.”

The new briefing paper outlines the following taxpayer abuses and seeks the

following government action:

Abuses

- Department of Agriculture agency

Ohio Beef Council employees go to work every day for the Ohio Cattlemen’s Association, a state trade and lobbying organization.

- State and federal funds are offsetting the organizational overhead costs for the Ohio Cattlemen’s Association.
- The Ohio Beef Council promotes and collects donations for the Ohio Cattlemen’s Association’s Political Action Committee (PAC).
- State and federal funds are being directly contributed to the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, a national trade and lobbying organization.
- The only reports available to the cattle producers who pay the mandatory fees are self-reports by the Ohio Beef Council. There is a lack of taxpayer transparency on how the checkoff funds are being expended.
- The state and federal checkoff funds are not appropriated by the legislature nor audited by the state auditor, leaving little if any government oversight of the mandatory checkoff fees.

Recommended Actions

- Federal and state checkoff funds should be paid directly to the appropriate federal or state treasury and then be audited by the corresponding federal or state auditing agency.
- The Ohio Department of Agriculture should immediately segregate all activity between the Ohio Beef Council and the Ohio Cattlemen’s Association. Policy should be established that clearly outlines:
 - o No state employee should report to a lobbying entity office for work.
 - o No state or federal funds should be used directly or indirectly to offset a lobbying entity’s overhead costs to include office rent, equipment costs, salaries or any incidental costs incurred by the lobbying entity.
 - o All government funds should be expended pursuant to state standard contracting processes.

To read the full briefing paper, visit www.competitivemarkets.com/category/policy-research.



CAPITOL ROUNDUP

by **Joe Maxwell**

ON THE HILL

Checkoff Reform: By the time you read this, the new Farm Bill may very well be moving through the legislative process. Therefore, to make sure you are up to date, please follow us on Facebook, Twitter, or watch for OCM emails. We will need your help if we are to get across the finish line on our checkoff legislation. To help you prepare for your contacts with Congressional offices visit www.competitivemarkets.com/toolkits and learn more about The Opportunities for Fairness in Farming (OFF) Act, S. 741 and H.R. 1753, and The Voluntary Checkoff Act, S. 740 and H.R. 1752. Ask your U.S. Senators and Representative to co-sponsor these bills. We will not end the abuses without you taking the time to let your elected officials know how you feel about the checkoff programs. Let us know that you did reach out to your U.S. Senators and Representative so we can drop by their offices in Washington D.C. and follow up with them.

GIPSA: We have filed our briefs in our litigation against USDA and Secretary Perdue for having withdrawn the Farmer Fair Practices Rules (GIPSA). President Trump can end this litigation by simply signing an executive order reinstating the rules. It looks like Perdue is clearly working against family farmers and independent ranchers. This issue is in President Trump's hands, and for

those of you who use Twitter, please tweet @realdonaldtrump and urge him to #implementGIPSA now.

SBA Poultry Grower Loans: Since our last publication, we have had a victory. The Small Business Administration's (SBA) Inspector General issued a report that found

poultry processors/integrators exercise so much control over their contract poultry growers that the grower can no longer be seen as an independent small business. The \$1.8 billion that SBA has loaned to growers to build the facilities for the large integrators/processors has done nothing more than provide government financing to some of the largest corporations in the U.S. and the world. JBS is the largest poultry processor in the U.S. and is a Brazilian company. In response to OCM's and others' efforts, Senator Booker took quick action and added an amendment to the Small Business 7(a) Lending Oversight Reform Act requiring SBA to report how it is implementing the OIG recommendations. Thank you, Senator Booker.

IN THE STATES

Virginia SB 374/HB 1348: Beef Checkoff Increase and Corporatization: We did have a limited victory in Virginia. While we would have rather seen this legislation fail, the sponsors did listen to our grave concerns and amended the bill to only allow for a \$0.25 checkoff increase (instead of \$.75) and returned the authority to appoint members to the state beef council to the Governor. At least we stopped the Cattle-men's Associations' power and money grab. Thanks to all who helped. ^{JM}

Poll Results: Farmers Overwhelmingly Oppose Bayer-Monsanto Merger

In February, OCM and 50 allied farm organizations circulated a poll on the pending Bayer-Monsanto mega-merger. Thank you to all of you who made your voices heard. Cumulatively, the farmers who responded to the poll

cultivate close to two million acres and represent all sectors of farming.

The results are in, and American farmers are overwhelmingly opposed to the merger.

Please see POLL RESULTS on page 7

Our New Filing Against USDA: Farmers Detail Harm Suffered at Hands of Big Ag Corporations

by Angela Huffman

In December 2017, we sued the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for illegally withdrawing critical protections intended to shield family farmers and ranchers from predatory and retaliatory practices by big agribusiness corporations. These protections were known as the Farmer Fair Practices, or GIPSA Rules. In March 2018, we filed a new brief in our suit, detailing for the court the experiences of farmers and ranchers suffering harm from tactics such as discrimination and blackballing at the hands of large agricultural corporations. The GIPSA Rules would have allowed farmers and ranchers to fight back against these abuses.

For example:

- **Mike Callicrate of Colorado** was retaliated against by all four of the major meatpackers after speaking out about unfair practices. First, they lowballed him on price, and then they refused to buy cattle from him at all. Mike was forced to shut down his operation and was unable to seek justice without adequate marketplace safeguards in place.
- **Jonathan and Connie Buttram of Alabama** were retaliated against by poultry corporations for working to secure better treatment for contract poultry growers. The corporations threatened them, discriminated against them, and cheated them out of tens of thousands of dollars in pay for their hard work. Then they blackballed them, so their children

won't be able to carry their family farm into a fourth generation.

- **Jim Dinklage of Nebraska** felt the sting of retaliation and predatory practices from a meat-packer when he stood up to them several times after being shorted on payment for his cattle. These corporations don't like it when livestock producers push back or question their ways; it's their way or the highway. They blackballed Jim in his professional business as an agent for all-natural feed additives.

As we geared up for this lawsuit, we talked with dozens more farmers and ranchers with heartbreaking stories of the injustices they've faced, but they couldn't speak out due to the threat of retaliation by the large corporations they deal with.

Will you stand with Mike, Jonathan, Connie, Jim, and those whose stories can't be told? Please help us make sure the public truly understands what's at stake by donating to our awareness campaign. We can't waste this opportunity to shine a spotlight on corporate agribusiness abuses, nor the government's complicity.

With your support, we will keep fighting through the courts to ensure family farmers and ranchers have a fair chance to produce food for our communities. Together, we can take back an agricultural marketplace that works for America's farmers and ranchers, not against them^{AH}

POLL RESULTS (continued from page 6)

According to the poll, of the farmers who responded:

- 93.7 percent are concerned about the proposed merger of Bayer and Monsanto (82.8 percent are very concerned/10.9 percent somewhat concerned)
- 93.7 percent of farmers are concerned that the proposed Bayer-Monsanto merger will negatively impact independent farmers and farming communities (83.9 percent are very concerned/9.8 percent somewhat concerned)

We took the poll results and your concerns directly to the U.S. Department of Justice and urged them to say NO to this unprecedented consolidation of corporate power. A week later, **news broke that Department of Justice insiders are expressing concerns about allowing the merger to proceed.** This is good news for family farmers, and we couldn't have gotten the Department of Justice to take notice of how this merger will affect your livelihood without your survey responses.

Meanwhile, the European Union has conditionally approved the deal, so it is up to us to keep the pressure on the U.S. Department of Justice and urge them to block the merger. We won't stop fighting to reign in corporations and their economic power to allow an opportunity for U.S. farmers and ranchers to compete in fair and open markets. See the full poll results at www.competitivemarkets.com/category/press-releases.^{AH}



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OCM is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization supported by membership contributions, donations, and foundation support. All donations are tax deductible.

Individual Membership

- \$50 Member: Receives bi-monthly newsletter
- \$125 Voting Member: Same benefits as \$50 level, plus voting rights
- \$500 Sustaining Member: Same benefits as \$125 level, and receives strategy and progress updates
- Other Donation: Amount \$_____

Associate Organization Membership

- \$200: Organization receives bi-monthly newsletter, action alerts, membership in OCM National Collaboration, action toolkits
- \$500: Same benefits as \$200 level, plus two conference registrations
- \$1,000: Same benefits as \$500 level, plus a booth and recognition at annual conference

All members will receive the bi-monthly newsletter electronically, unless you mark this line for a mailed copy: _____

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