

NATIONAL FOOD POLICY CONFERENCE
April 21 & 22, 2015
Capital Hilton – Washington, D. C.
The Farmer Perspective Panel – 9:15 a.m., April 22
Opening Comments
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First, let me say my family eats the same food everyone else does. We buy our food at chain grocery stores, County Market (local Midwest chain store), Walmart, etc.

Even though our farm produces enough soybeans, corn and pork to feed several thousand people all the soy products they will use, all the corn products they will use plus the corn used for feed to produce all the pork they will consume. Less than 1% of the food my family eats is produced on our farm. We may plant a tomato plant in summer and occasionally we have some pork processed.

What we produce depends on a great many things.

1. What the market is telling us will be the most profitable on an acre of land. It is all about land use.
2. What the long-term effect the crop will have on the land (environment)? Is what we do sustainable for not only my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren but for their children?
3. National, state, and local farm policy is another factor, such as the Farm Bill, environmental rules, government export policy, transportation issues, financial policy, marketing rules and standards, etc.

What information do we (our farm family) need to make good decisions? Past history of our farm – production records, workload, storage, soil fertility, input costs, etc. What the markets are telling us? What crop reports both public and private are showing us for previous years' crops and this year's estimated production?

Then, when we are ready to plant, we have to decide to plant genetically modified seeds or non GMO, 30,000 corn plants per acre or 42,000 plants, 130,000 soybean seeds to an acre or 160,000, do you no till or conventional till, what data do you record and where do you store the data plus what inputs to use fertilizer, herbicides etc. which option do we chose in the farm program, how much and type of crop insurance do we buy, what percentage of coverage (65%, 70% or 85%)

At harvest, do you harvest corn at 27% moisture or do you wait until corn dries down to 17% or lower. Do you harvest soybeans at 18% moisture or let them dry down to 13%. How much do you sell at harvest do you store do you contract for future delivery, what elevator do you deliver your soybean and corn.

In our case, do we store and feed our own corn to our pigs or do we sell and buy corn to make feed for our pork production? Do we buy soybean meal for hog feed at the same time we sell soy beans, or buy as we need or contract?

There are many decisions to make in the pork side of our farming operation. Even though there are scientific studies saying antibiotics use in livestock is not causing a problems for antibiotic use in humans? Consumer groups are uncomfortable with their use, so we feed no antibiotics for growth promotion to our pigs. Occasionally a veterinarian will treat a sick animal with antibiotics.

Basically every day we have to watch for new proposed or past federal, state and local laws, rules, regulations and decide how they might affect our farm.

The big difference between farmers and policy makers is farmer have to make decision on a biological schedule where policy makers can make policy decisions that effect agriculture any time.

Over all the food policy has served the US and the world pretty well.