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NAFTA beefs up sales for America's farmers and ranchers



By Amelia Kent

Trade is a hot topic in the news today, and a high priority for America's farmers and ranchers. Not convinced global trade has a real effect at the farm level? Let's look at some ways I know trade directly impacts my farm. Thanks in part to projects funded by the Beef Checkoff, the value added to the beef industry by exports in 2017 alone was more than \$286 per carcass/animal. I know this helps my husband and me on our farm as that increases the market value on the beef cattle we raise. Think about all the parts of an animal we Americans don't use, but other cultures feast upon—that's incredible added value!

Of that \$286 per animal, 27 percent of that value is marketed to our fellow North American Free Trade Agreement countries, Mexico and Canada—totaling \$1.6 billion

in 2016 alone. In fact, Mexico is our second largest beef export destination and Canada our fourth largest. In other words, exports to Mexico account for 3 percent of all U.S. beef production. Can you imagine one country alone consuming that much of our farm-raised products?

We have increased our customer base while also keeping American-grown products affordable for consumers here at home.

Since NAFTA went into effect in 1994, agricultural exports from the United States to our NAFTA partners increased from \$8.9 billion in 1993 to \$39 billion in 2017. Yet, given the unknowns surrounding renegotiating NAFTA, our export customers may look elsewhere for ag products—and some already have. In 2017, Mexico sourced 45 percent more beef from Nicaragua and 9 percent more beef from Canada than in the previous year. In a time of expansion in the beef industry with all of agriculture being more efficient and productive than ever, these export markets are a crucial outlet for our crops and goods. Expanding our markets beyond our borders has been critical to the survivability of the American farm. We have increased our customer base while also keeping American-grown products affordable for consumers here at home.

Recently, I heard Dan Halstrom of the U.S. Meat Export Federation state: "How dark the ages can be if you don't have trade." That quote struck me as I ponder the potential of NAFTA renegotiations. I appreciate that some modern-

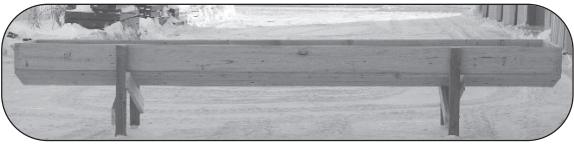
izing and updating is needed. How often do we have to update our operating systems, apps and software? In these discussions, however, we must protect the gains achieved in agricultural trade and work to remove the remaining barriers to trade with Canada and Mexico.

Let's look again at whether global trade affects your farm or ranch or community. Economics, in its simplest form is supply and demand. Global trade increases demand for beef, which raises the price. What do we feed our cattle? Corn and soybeans from other farms. Increased demand for beef means increased demand for feed, which increases the prices of those commodities. You can't deny the data. Global trade increases demand for U.S. agricultural products, which affects the farmer's bottom line, keeping that farm and others like it in business. But the ripple effect doesn't stop there—as American farms thrive, we secure our nation's food supply, support millions of jobs and help boost the nation's economy.

Amelia Kent, a member of AFBF's current Partners in Advocacy Leadership class and the GO Team, raises cattle and hay with her husband in southeastern Louisiana. You can follow Kent Farms on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram at kentfarms_la.

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Sec. Perdue administers Oath of Office to Bill Northey

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue recently administered the oath of office to Bill Northey at the Annual Iowa Ag Leaders Dinner. Northey had served as Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture, a position he had held for more than eleven years. Northey will serve as the Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Service (FFAS)* at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

"After months of waiting, I'm thrilled to finally have Bill on board at USDA," Secretary Perdue said. "The patience he displayed throughout this pro-

cess is an indicator of what kind of steady leader he will be on our team, and we are eager for him to get to work. Bill comes to us at an important time, as farm incomes are down and expected to fall further. Additionally, with work on the 2018 Farm Bill already under way, Bill will play an integral role in the advice we offer to Congress."

In addition to his long service as Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture, Northey has also held other positions of leadership in agricultural fields. He is a former president of the National Corn Growers Association and served in state and local roles for the Iowa Farm Bureau. A fourth-generation corn and soybean farmer, he and his wife Cindy have three daughters and five grandchildren.

*NOTE: As part of a reorganization of USDA, Secretary Perdue has created, the President appointed, and the Senate confirmed a new Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs, as directed by the 2014 Farm Bill. The creation of the new mission area prompted the



U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue administers the oath of office to Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Service Bill Northey.

realignment of several agencies under a newly-named Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC), the position for which Northey is intended. FPAC encompasses the Farm

Service Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Risk Management Agency. USDA is working with Congress to formally change the name of the mission area to FPAC.



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