

August 20, 2019

PLOWING NEW GROUND

The state ag department promotes Kentucky farm products across the U.S. and around the world



James Ray, center, of the Henry County Economic Development Council and John Johnson, right, of USDA chat with Commissioner Ryan Quarles.

When I travel the world and ask people what they think of when they think of Kentucky, I usually get three responses: horses, bourbon, and Kentucky Fried Chicken. While we are proud of those products, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) is focused on promoting all of Kentucky agriculture to increase market access here at home and abroad. KDA officials and marketing specialists are hard at work helping Kentucky family farmers and small businesses find new markets for their products.

A few years ago, the KDA secured funds from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund to co-host regional meetings with the Kentucky Association of Manufacturers (KAM). And this year, we are grateful to have the support of not only economic leaders, but educational leaders such as the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) and ag leaders like Kentucky Farm Bureau as co-sponsors. The LAND (Linking Agriculture for Networking and Development) forums connect manufacturers to Kentucky Proud farmers and agribusinesses in an effort to encourage partnerships that

will increase income and create jobs. At a recent conference, we heard stories from Joyce Pinson, an agribusiness leader from eastern Kentucky, about her success sourcing local ingredients for her jam company and working with Bourbon Barrel Foods of Louisville to expand her market reach. These forums will continue to take place in the months of August and September. You can sign up for one of these forums at <https://kam.us.com/land-forums/>.

We are also actively cultivating new international connections. KDA has developed a relationship with the World Trade Center of Kentucky, and due to the generous support of Alltech Masterfeeds and Kentucky Farm Bureau, I led the first-ever Kentucky agriculture trade mission to Canada during trade negotiations between our two countries. We are also strengthening our relationship with the Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA) to coordinate trade advocacy for our region.

Trying to cultivate a trade relationship from scratch is hard; agreeing with a longtime trade partner should be easy. Low-hanging trade fruit is right in front of our eyes with the USMCA sitting before Congress. The potential economic impact of USMCA is considerable. According to the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), the USMCA would increase market access in Canada and Mexico by \$450 million for American agricultural exports. Consider also that the deal would open access to Canada for United States dairy, eggs, and poultry products, and keep in place the agreement that Mexico will not put tariffs on our agricultural products. This deal is a good one, and the United States should take it. As NASDA's Second Vice President, I will continue to advocate for Congress to ratify USMCA this year.

These are just a few things the KDA is doing to elevate all of Kentucky agriculture to get international acclaim. To coordinate and support these efforts, I have appointed Tim Hughes as my senior trade advisor at the Department. I encourage you to contact him at timd.hughes@ky.gov if you would like to learn more or get involved with expanding global markets for Kentucky farmers. In the meantime, we will keep promoting Kentucky horses, bourbon, fried chicken, and everything else that makes Kentucky Proud.

Ryan Quarles serves as Kentucky's Commissioner of Agriculture.