



THANK A FARMER

**Family store
Cornett Farm
Fresh continues
to grow**

INSIDE

**Recipes for Apple Potato Salad,
Strawberry Salsa, and more!**

PLUS: Grocery store and farm
part of Clark family legacy

Recipes

Apple Betty

Preparation Time: 20

Minutes

Cooking Time: 45 Min-
utes

Servings: 8

Ingredients

4-Cups Apples (sliced)

1/4-Cup Apple Juice

3/4-Cup Flour

1-Cup Sugar

1/2-Tsp Cinnamon

1/4-Tsp Nutmeg

2-Tbsp Butter or Mar-
garine

Directions

Preheat Oven: 375

degrees.

Place sliced apples in a
lightly greased pie pan.

Pour juice over apples.

Mix flour, sugar, cin-
namon, and nutmeg
in a mixing bowl. Cut
in butter or margarine
with two knives until
mixture is crumbly.

Pour crumb mixture
over apples.

Bake until apples are
tender and topping is
golden brown - about
45 minutes.



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Apple Potato Salad

Preparation Time: 10 Minutes

Cooking Time: 20 Minutes
Servings: 4

Ingredients

1-Lb Red Potatoes
(scrubbed, but not peeled)
2-Ribs Celery (diced)
1-Granny Smith Apple
(diced)
2-Tbsp Fresh dill
(chopped)
1-Tbsp Parsley (chopped)
Dressing
1-Tbsp Mustard
1-Tbsp Honey
1-Tbsp Cider Vinegar
3-Tbsp Olive Oil
Salt and Pepper (to taste)

Directions

Dice red potatoes (w/skin) in to 1/2 inch cubes and place in a pot of cold water. Cook on high heat and bring potatoes to a boil; reduce to medium heat letting them cook until fork tender (about 10-15 min.) Once the potatoes are tender, drain and let them cool (about 6-8 minutes). Transfer potatoes to a mixing bowl, and add the celery, apple, dill, parsley, and toss gently. Fold dressing mixture into the potatoes until evenly coated. Salt & Pepper (to taste)

Dressing

In a small bowl, whisk together the mustard, honey, vinegar, oil and set aside.



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CREDIT: KENTUCKY PROUD KITCHEN



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Recipes

Strawberry salsa

Preparation Time: 15 Minutes

Cooking Time: None

Servings: 7, ½ cup servings

Ingredients

1-Tbsp Olive Oil
2-Tbsp White Vinegar or White Balsamic Vinegar
½-Salt
2-Cups, Fresh Strawberries (roughly

chopped)
8-Green Onions (chopped)
2-Cups Cherry tomatoes (chopped)
½-Cup Fresh Cilantro (chopped)

Directions

Whisk olive oil, vinegar, and salt in large bowl. Add strawberries, green onions, tomatoes, and cilantro. Toss to coat. Cover and chill for 1 hour. Serve with tortilla or pita chips.



CREDIT: PLATE IT UP! KENTUCKY PROUD

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Cheese Stuffed Angus Burger

Preparation Time: 15 Minutes

Cooking Time: 24 Minutes

Servings: 8

Ingredients

1-Lb Ground Angus Beef
 1-Lb Ground Brisket
 1-Cup Feta Cheese or Blue Cheese
 ½-Green Bell Pepper (grated)
 ½-Med Sweet Onion (grated)
 Kosher Salt
 Fresh Ground Pepper
 4-Lrg.Brioche Buns (split & toasted)
 4- Green Leafy Lettuce (wash & pat dry)
 1-Lrg Tomato (sliced)

Directions

Preheat iron skillet (med-heat).
 In large mixing bowl, add ground beef, ground brisket, salt, pepper, and mix well. Then add grated onion, and bell pepper. Combine.
 Take beef mixture and make into 8 even meatballs. Take 1 meatball flattening into a patty evenly, and then add feta cheese to the center of the patty pressing down. Next, flatten another meatball and place on top of the beef with the cheese in it. Press the sides together making sure there are no holes in the 2 pieces of beef. Repeat.
 Place patties into iron skillet and cook about 10 minutes on each side or until done. Serve on toasted brioche buns with lettuce and tomatoes.



RECIPE CREDIT: KENTUCKY PROUD KITCHEN,
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Grocery store and farm part of Clark family legacy



PHOTO BY JARROD MILLS

Sue Clark stands behind the counter of the store she ran and operated for more than 40 years.

By Jarrod Mills

Staff Writer

Sue Clark doesn't remember what spurred it on, but she's always wanted to own a business. Thanks to her late husband Jack, his work ethic, loyal customers and the perfect location, Sue achieved that dream, running her own store for more than 40 years.

"I believe it was '73," she said on her family moving into the home she now sat on the front porch of, reminiscing with her son, CJ. The one-story brick house sits on the family's farm right across the street from the intersection of where three different roads converge in the Whitley County community of Meadow Creek. It was because

of that location Sue says, she told her husband that if there was ever a place and time to build a store, this would be it.

In a few short months and with a little help from a friend laying the brick, Jack built a building just a few feet from his front yard that would go on to become Clark's Grocery. As the name implied, Clark's Grocery began in 1980 as a small grocery store and fueling station. As time went on, the gas pumps were eventually removed, the store grew in size (thanks to more building by Jack) and was rebranded as Clark's Hardware and Feed Store. Sue eventually started selling fertilizer and feed produced by Jack, because

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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not only was he a builder of stores and dreams, Jack was also a farmer.

Located on the other side of the family's home is one of three farms owned by the Clarks. What started as a 200-300 acre farm eventually grew to a 1,100 acre farm, as Sue recalls her husband buying neighboring tracts of land whenever one would become available. The Clarks also own a 55-acre farm on Flat Creek and another 100-acre farm near the Cumberland River.

Before farming, Jack spent 19 years in the construction industry. Sue says that after CJ was born, Jack worked his construction job building bridges for one more week, came home and was a full-time farmer ever since.

"We've not missed a meal or missed paying a bill," Sue said. "God's blessed us tremendously with good health and just what we need."

"His daddy farmed," CJ said of his father. "It was always in the back of his mind, and it was always what he wanted to do."

In the beginning, CJ said Jack mostly raised cattle, corn and tobacco. The latter was eventually replaced with soy beans, other produce and



PHOTO BY JARROD MILLS

A metal sign hangs on one of the Clark's barns. It was created and donated by the Whitley County FFA program following Jack's passing commemorating his time serving the Kentucky Farm Bureau.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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PHOTO BY JARROD MILLS

Sue Clark and her son, CJ, stand on the front porch of the family's Meadow Creek home.

hay. Of course, the farm always sold hay whenever it had a little extra alongside everything else it produced, says CJ. He now makes it a point to have extra.

Jack would go on to expand his farm adding equipment and producing feed and fertilizer that Sue would sell in her store. As his farm grew, so did Jack's influence in the local farming sector as evident by his time serving on both the Whitley County Farm Bureau Board of Directors and the Whitley County Conservation District Board of Directors.

But it was Jack's influence on his neighbors, community and family Sue recalls when thinking about her husband. She says after her husband's passing, folks would visit her store and tell stories about Jack helping them in some way. Some of those stories Sue heard for the first time because that was the kind of man Jack was, she says - he helped out those in need without feeling the need to brag or ask for anything in return.

It wasn't long before Jack's influence and love of farming rubbed off on CJ. And while he can remember driving a tractor for the first time at the age of 6, Sue can remember CJ in diapers sitting

on his father's lap while he drove the tractor.

"He would sit on his daddy's lap and if he went to sleep or needed his diaper changed, I'd go to get him and boy, would he throw a fit," Sue said with a laugh. "He didn't want to come into the house."

Sue says CJ voluntarily skipped out on playing sports in school because practices kept him from working on the farm.

"I always wanted to be where Dad was," he said.

CJ has followed in his father's footsteps and now oversees the farm. He says when the weather is good he can usually be found in the hay field or corn field. But like any farmer knows, CJ says that when bad weather hits and winter sets in, there is still work to be done. He still has to feed the upwards of 90 cattle he looks after, produce feed for the animals, and constantly perform his own maintenance on equipment.

"You never know from one day to the next," he said. "You may start out doing one thing, and then it start raining on

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

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CJ's injury was part of the reason why Sue says she decided to close her store earlier this month. On July 2, Sue held one last customer appreciation day honoring the loyal friends and customers who had stopped by her store countless times over its 41 year history.

you and you can't do that any more. So, you have to go find something that you can do, which there's always something to do," he added. "You can work 24/7 and never get caught up."

CJ also delivers the fruits of his labor driving to nearby areas to sell hay, calves, and produce grown on the farm. In January, he suffered an injury that set him back a little bit, but he says he still managed to drive and deliver fertilizer to Somerset while on crutches.

CJ's injury was part of the reason why Sue says she decided to close her store earlier this month. On July 2, Sue held one last customer appreciation day honoring the loyal friends and customers who had stopped by her store countless times over its 41 year history.

"That part I'm really going to miss," Sue said. "But I'm loving being at home so far," she added with a laugh.

"I always thought I'd work for a long

time, which I did past what most people do," she said. "I'm 78 years old."

Since closing up shop, Sue is still working on selling and offloading the store's remaining merchandise, but that doesn't mean she's slowing down any time soon because there's always something to do, she says.

"I actually got to go down to the church and help prepare for the Bible School, which usually I never got to do," she said. "Things like that are going to be good. I think I'm really going to to enjoy it. There's plenty to do to keep you busy. I've got a lot of little chores I want to do."

"I'm going to get her a push mower here in a day or two," CJ joked. "She doesn't want to ride in the riding lawnmower, so I'm going to get her a push mower."

"I'm not going to sit down now," she responded. "I never have."

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Family store Cornett Farm Fresh continues to grow



PHOTO BY JARROD MILLS

The produce sold in Cornett Farm Fresh is picked fresh from the farm and delivered straight to the store.

By Jarrod Mills

Staff Writer

THE FAMILY

Both Rhonda Cornett and her husband, Brent, grew up on dairy and tobacco farms. The two would eventually meet at the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture where both were majored in agriculture education. And while Brent never stepped behind the teacher's desk after graduating, Rhonda did and taught at a local high school for 11 years.

Brent didn't let his education go to waste, however. Instead, he used what he learned while obtaining his degree - which includes a minor in economics - to help grow and transform his family's farm into a business that the Cornetts hope will continue to support their family for generations to come.

"He is an amazing farmer," Rhonda said of her husband. "He had

a full ride to UK. He had offers to West Point and everything under the sun and wanted to be a farmer. It's definitely his passion," she added.

Rhonda says Brent has always been financially minded, which she says has helped in growing the family's business.

"He can look at something more objectively having been off the farm for a while and seeing how other farms work," she said. "Even though you might love something, doesn't mean you should do it, which can be hard sometimes because farming is your life and your business. So, it's really hard to separate the two sometimes."

The Cornetts have two children. Jarrod, the oldest, is 17 and graduated early from high school this year. Like his parents, he's headed to the University of Kentucky this fall where he plans to major in Ag. Eco-

nomics and Farm Management. His sister, Miranda, is 15 and is heading into her sophomore year in high school.

And while both help out on the farm and in the store, Rhonda says each of her children have their preferences. Jarrod, she says, tends to enjoy working more in the store. Miranda is more horticulturally minded and prefers to work in the fields.

"She likes the farm part, the planting, all that kind of stuff probably as good as anybody," Rhonda said on her daughter. "She's very much like her daddy."

THE FARM

Rhonda and Brent have been farming together for 20 years. They

bought their family farm from Brent's parents in 2009 and started doing their own thing, Rhonda says. In the earlier days, the two focused on raising grain and burley tobacco.

"It paid my way through college, it paid his way through college, it paid a lot of bills," she said on farming tobacco. "But you know that's a dwindling industry now. Sometimes you've got to let go of what you know and try something else," she added. "If you don't change in farming, you die. You have to diversify because the world changes. If you want to grow the same thing year after year after year, it just doesn't work."

Rhonda says Brent has always

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

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Rhonda says the Cornett's have had a wholesale system set up with businesses like Kroger, Publix, and Whole Foods for a while, but that it wasn't until COVID forced the company she was working for to close that she and her husband began considering opening up a store of their own.

been willing to be innovative and as a result the two decided to shift their focus from tobacco to raising other types of crops. Five years ago, the couple planted an acre of tomatoes, a bridge crop, Rhonda called it.

"It was the most profitable crop we've ever grown, that one acre of tomatoes, per acre wise," she said.

After an initial success with their tomatoes, the Cornetts decided to go the greenhouse route, turning a greenhouse the couple had purchased from Louisville from a flower greenhouse to one that produced more tomatoes.

"Where we actually grow them in soil, they still taste like garden tomatoes. They don't taste like a hydroponic tomato or one that's been picked green and then gassed or anything like that," Rhonda explained. "It's still a vine ripened tomato grown in soil."

The Cornetts added more greenhouses to their 250-acre farm. They now use some to grow flowers in the

spring, which is also the time of year the farm's strawberries (a crowd favorite) come in. They've also diversified and have started growing cold crops like cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, sugar snap peas and beets.

"And then as it starts getting into June and July, we pretty much get into everything," noted Rhonda. "Everything will be out in the field then - tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, squash, zucchini, eggplant, onions, potatoes, okra, watermelons, cantaloupes, pretty much everything."

Rhonda says that on the 125-acres the family and the farm's workers grow vegetables, they use plastic for the most part. It's for a couple of reasons, she says. First, it helps with invasive weeds. It also helps with controlling fertilizer and the water supply through the use of drip lines located underneath the plastic. The water is brought in from nearby Raccoon Creek, a branch of the Rockcastle River.

The Cornetts also raise livestock

on their farm, cattle and hogs. The hogs stay on the farm all year round, but the cattle are moved to a farm the family leases during the summer months to free up room for additional crops and are brought back in the winter.

Growing crops and running a farm is a science, as the Cornett's can attest to. Rhonda says at their farm, the Cornett crew let some of their land lay out of use in-between growing different crops, or plant certain crops to help replenish the soil with nutrients the previous crop drew out of it. On top of that, she says she and her husband are constantly thinking ahead.

"You start planning for next year now," she explained. "Every good farmer that I know is already planning the next year when he's planting this year's crop."

THE STORE

Rhonda says the Cornett's have had a wholesale system set up with businesses like Kroger, Publix, and Whole Foods for a while, but that it wasn't until COVID forced the company she was working for to close that she and her husband began considering opening up a store of their own.

Before "jumping headfirst into a pool without knowing if there was any water," as Rhonda put it, the couple decided to start selling some of their produce out of the corner of their barn. It was strawberry season Rhonda recalled, just as the tomato and cucumber crops began coming in. It wasn't long until the size of the crowds stopping by the corner of the barn began to grow.

"The traffic was unreal," she said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



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Cornett Farm Fresh is located at 630 Bill George Road in London.

PHOTO BY JARROD MILLS

“We did it for about a month. In that month we had a thousand customers come to the farm. I was just blown away by that.”

Rhonda says she and her husband kept hearing from customers that they visit all the time asking if the couple would move their operation closer to town. Soon after, the building that once housed London Power Equipment became available. The couple signed the lease and with some help from some of their farm employees, the family was able to flip the old lawnmower shop into a produce store selling farm fresh vegetables, meat and more.

“It was a lot of late nights getting it switched over,” she said. “The building came open like the next week after we talked about moving.”

Before opening their doors at 630 Bill George Road in London, Rhonda can remember calling a friend who runs an orchard in Shelbyville. Rhonda’s friend of-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

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ferred her a list of her suppliers, but warned Rhonda that there could be a four-six week wait time before any of them could help supply her new store.

"Every one of them had their stuff in my store by the day we opened, and this was like two weeks later," Rhonda recalled. "That was God working if I ever in my life saw it. There was no way we should have been able to open and have things going by the 4th of July weekend, which was our goal.

"We literally had a full store," she added. "The day that we opened, when we opened the door there was like 20 customers within the first 10 minutes. We just stood back, Brent and I were just standing there like, 'Holy smokes, this might work.'"

Cornett Farm Fresh opened in late June last year and sells "pretty much anything that a Kroger or Walmart would have in their produce section," says Rhonda. Just like the corner of the barn, whatever the Cornetts grow on their farm, they sell in their store. And when it comes to those things they don't grow themselves, Rhonda says they bring it in from other local producers.

"We have all kinds of other Kentucky Proud items," she explained. "Like the ice cream we don't make, but there's a family in Louisville that makes it. We've got our eggs from a farmer in Clay County. We got our cheese from Wildcat Mountain Cheese."

The store also sells beef and pork raised on the Cornett's farm, and sells poultry raised by one of the store's employees. Even though Rhonda and her staff make it a point to sell Kentucky Proud and locally produced goods, she says she does

sometimes bring in items from out of state. For example, during this time of year, Rhonda will bring in peaches from an orchard in Georgia.

"And we're real honest about it," she says. We do get some stuff out of Florida from the company we're growing for just so they've got fresh sweetcorn in May when you can't get it in season here. But it's from another farmer who's just like us that we know," she clarified. "We've been on their farm, we've seen the practices that they've got in place and we can vouch for them that it's good stuff."

By bringing in the produce straight from the farm to the store, Rhonda and her team are able to offer their customers the freshest produce possible. It's why Cornett Farm Fresh's slogan is "If it were fresher, it'd still be in the field." That dedication to providing fresh produce is also why the store is closed on Mondays, Rhonda said.

"Sunday we're off, we go to church and do our family thing," she explained, saying the store tries to sell out of everything on Saturdays. "Then on Mondays we pick fresh because we don't want your food laying there from Saturday until Monday."

And the customers seem to appreciate that fact, as Rhonda says customer loyalty has "been huge" for Cornett Farm Fresh. It also helps that Rhonda's staff are willing to go out of their way to help customers,

doing things like helping someone load the produce into their vehicles after checking out.

"If you want to come in and get 10 bushels of beans and you're an elderly person, you don't have to worry about packing them to your car," she said.

Although reluctantly, Rhonda has even started live-streaming from the store on Facebook as a way to let her customers know what's in stock that day. The live streams have been a huge help for those still hesitant on leaving their homes, or for those unable to. Rhonda says those folks watching

her live-streams see what's in stock and create shopping lists for those picking up their groceries.

"At first when we started those livestreams, I hated it. I was like, 'I feel so stupid doing this,'" she recalled. "But everybody was like, 'I'm so glad that you guys do that, because I can send my list and know what you've got for the day.'"

THE KITCHEN

Earlier this year, Rhonda and her family decided to expand Cornett Farm Fresh by way of a commercial kitchen. With permission from the property owners, Rhonda and her husband bought a building from Tri-County Metal, placed it next to the store, and fitted it with all the equipment, lighting and plumbing needed for the kitchen.

With the help of Linette McPhet-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

The Cornett family: Jarrod, Brent, Rhonda, and Miranda.

ridge in the kitchen, the Cornetts are now able to bring produce straight from the farm to the kitchen to create fresh dishes, salads, desserts and more.

"Right now we're doing eggplant parmesan because we've got a lot of eggplant coming in," Rhonda explained. "We do baked spaghettis, tacos, and just whatever we've got in season in the store, we try to make something out of."

Rhonda says she doesn't want the kitchen or store to turn into a restaurant. Instead, it serves items folks can stop by and pickup for lunch or take home and heat up for dinner. When given a heads up, the kitchen can cook meals for groups, desserts for birthday parties, and most anything else one could want.

"People are too busy to have a home cooked meal anymore," she said. "We have a lot of grab and go,

take and bakes. We started doing a lot of lunches and stuff, fresh watermelon cubed up. People are just absolutely loving not having to have fast-food everyday.

"That's the neat thing," she later added. "You feed somebody something and they taste what fresh, home-cooked food is, and maybe they haven't had that since they left home from their parents house or whatever the case may be."

The kitchen has also turned into a helpful teaching tool for some of Rhonda's younger staff, she says. If there is ever a lull in the store, two or three staff members will head over to the kitchen and help McPhetridge.

"Our boys are learning to cook. A couple of them had absolutely no clue what they were doing," she said.

with a laugh. “Some of the girls have not cooked much either,” she added. “They’re all picking up some skills and learning things, which is always good.”

Rhonda says the best part of opening the kitchen is not only helping provide fresh meals for customers and local families, but it’s introducing fresh food and healthier options to local children, as well.

“We have kids that come in and the first thing they do is fly back to that cooler to see what’s in it for supper. I’ve got families that are in here three or four times a week, and that’s what they’re doing, they’re getting enough for today and tomorrow. Then they’ll come back because it’s always fresh that way,” she said, adding that even her own kids have come around to trying new things that come from the kitchen.

“My own kids trying that eggplant parmesan the other day,” she said thinking back. “My kids don’t eat vegetable, they’re like other typical kids, you’ve got to force them to eat them. But they were both like, ‘Oh my gosh, that is so good. It doesn’t even taste like a vegetable.’ Those kind of things are neat, just to get people eating different stuff.”

THE FUTURE

Looking ahead, Rhonda says she would like to keep growing the store. She says she would love to buy the



PHOTO BY JARROD MILLS

Earlier this year, the Cornetts built a commercial kitchen next to their store and now offer fresh meals for their customers.

building that houses Cornett Farm Fresh if it were ever put up for sale. She hopes to one day be able to have the kitchen connected to the store because “some people just like to watch you cook,” she says.

“They like to see what’s going on,” she added. “Where we’ve got it over there, I kind of have an open door policy. I mean you can knock and you can always stick your head in, it doesn’t bother us a bit.”

Rhonda says she would also like to someday add a

greenhouse center near the store sometime in the future. She’s already received permission and has planted a small garden next to the store. It’s currently growing mums in anticipation of the fall season.

As far as the farm, Rhonda says she doesn’t think she and her family want to expand it to more than what it already is.

“I think we like the level we’re at,” she said. “But if we grow our store, obviously we can divert more to retail and less to wholesale, kind

of keep that balance however the demand is.”

Ultimately, Rhonda hopes she and her family can continue to grow their legacy and build something that can help provide for future generations. And while she and her husband have always told their children they don’t have to farm, she wants their family farm to be an option should they decide that’s the path they want to take.

“We’re trying to build something that can support three families one day instead

of just one family,” she said. “We’ve still got a lot of years before we’re going to retire, but the kids will be back soon and there will be families coming along eventually.

“Our main goal is having something for all of us so that we can do what we want to do, raise kids and families on the farm because just in my opinion, it’s the best possible way to raise kids,” she added, noting the work ethic and maturity farm living can bring. “And we’re always going to need farmers.”



KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU

A celebration of 100 years

*LAUREL COUNTY FARM BUREAU WOULD LIKE TO
THANK OUR LOCAL FARMERS WHO HELP FEED THE WORLD*

While many things have changed since Ky Farm Bureau began in 1919 one things remains the same ourcommitment to support farmers all around Kentucky. In the 1930's one American farm was meant to feed afamily of 4, but over time that responsibility has changed. One U.S. farm feeds 165 people annually in the U.S. and abroad. The global population is expected to increase to 9.7 billion by 2050, whichmeans the world's farmers will have to grow around 70 percent more food than what is now produced.

With more than 70,000 family farms in Kentucky, agriculture is a vital part of the Commonwealth's culture values and economy. Each year farm families work together at grassroots level to identify shared challenges and achieve common goals. Kentucky Farm Bureau reflects these challenges and goals in our policies, and we're proud to advocate for farmers across the state in all we do. Why Farm Bureau? Because Kentucky's success depends onimproved farm income, better economic opportunities, and enhanced quality of life for all.



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