



## **AFBF President calls on farmers and ranchers to unite, fight extremists**

**By Sara Wyant**

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Seattle, Washington, Jan. 10, 2010. Calling on American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) members to join forces and face opponents with a new attitude, President Bob Stallman signaled that farmers and ranchers will no longer tolerate opponents' efforts to change the landscape of American agriculture.

“A line must be drawn between our polite and respectful engagement with consumers and how we must aggressively respond to extremists who want to drag agriculture back to the day of 40 acres and a mule,” said Stallman. “The time has come to face our opponents with a new attitude. The days of their elitist power grabs are over.”

Stallman said that Farm Bureau continues to represent all farmers and ranchers, no matter their size of farm, commodity raised or political philosophy, with each making “personal and business choices” about how best to serve consumers.

“As I scan this hall, I see farmers who embrace all the tools of modern agriculture. I see people who choose modern organic production...I see folks who plant conventional seed and those who use biotechnology. I see families who raise livestock in sheltered, climate-controlled conditions. I see feedlot operators. But also among our ranks here in Seattle, I see farm and ranch families who produce grass-fed beef, free-range pork and cage-free eggs.

Despite the diversity, farmer's missions of feeding the nation and the world, caring for the environment and respecting neighbors' rights has not changed from when AFBF was founded in 1919, Stallman added. “But the ways in which farmers and ranchers carry out their mission have changed, which is not understood or respected by critics of modern agriculture.”

“We must not let the activists and self-appointed – and self promoting -- food experts drive a wedge between us,” he emphasized.

Stallman said it was more vital than ever that “we communicate about our values, that we convey how food production today is compatible with traditional ideals.”

Noting that there is a lot of talk about “sustainability,” the Texas native described the term as “the most overused and ill defined word in the policy arena today.”

“The first sustainability for agriculture has to be economic sustainability,” noted Stallman, as he drew loud applause from the estimated 4,500 people attending the group’s 91<sup>st</sup> annual meeting. “Without that, farmers and ranchers will not be on the land to provide all of the rest of the ‘sustainables’ that some are demanding.”

Stallman defended his organization’s opposition to cap and trade climate change legislation and pointed out how the bills as currently proposed would threaten our ability to increase food production.

According to the United Nations’ Food and Agricultural Organization, the world will have to produce 70 percent more food in the next 40 years to feed an extra 2.3 billion people who will share our planet, he explained.

“At the very time that we need to increase our food production, climate change legislation threatens to slash our ability to do so. The exact level of land that will shift to trees will depend on the price of carbon – a number nobody knows at this point – but USDA suggests we could easily be talking about 59 million acres.

“That’s like setting aside every acre of land used for crop and food production in California, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

“The United States would be less able to provide the world a viable hunger safety net. Food prices here at home would shoot up. The result? Less food security and our climate would not improve, not even by one degree.

“I don’t know about you, but that is not the kind of American agriculture I want to leave behind for future generations,” Stallman said.