

Building Small Farm Partnership Efforts

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OPENING REMARKS

I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Denis Ebodaghe for inviting me to attend and participate in this conference. And I also thank Lincoln University and the University of Missouri for hosting this conference and those USDA agencies and other organizations for their sponsorship. All of you represent true partners and friends to the 1890 land-grant universities, the institutions I represent as the first regional research director, and the land-grant family as a whole.

As I think of friends, it reminds me of a small community, any small community of approximately 1,000 people. In this community there was a church where most of the people attended. In this church the preacher and the song leader were not getting along. This began to spill over into the worship service. One week the preacher preached on commitment, and how we should dedicate ourselves to service. The song leader then led the song, "I Shall Not Be Moved."

The next Sunday, the preacher preached on giving and how we should gladly give to the work of the Lord. The song leader then led the song, "Jesus Paid It All."

The next Sunday, the preacher preached on gossiping and how we should watch our tongues. The song leader then led the song, "I Love to Tell the Story."

The preacher became very disgusted over the situation, and the next Sunday he told the congregation he was considering resigning. The song leader then led the song, "Oh, Why Not Tonight."

As it came to pass, the preacher resigned and the next week informed the church that it was Jesus that led him there and it was Jesus that was taking him away. The song leader then led the song, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." Oh yes, what a friend we do indeed have in Jesus.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Based on that friendship and whatever beliefs we have in powers beyond this Earth, and actions and reactions of

people on this Earth, we are able to develop various partnerships. Some more stable than others; some short-lived not by design but due to actions and reactions of those involved; some long-lasting and very productive; and some long-lasting but not so productive. In the land-grant community, there are examples of all kinds of partnerships, ranging from local to state to regional to national to international. How are these partnerships developed? By people getting together who have a common interest, a common goal.

Let me be more specific about how partnerships are developed in the land-grant community. All of the land-grant institutions and state-supported colleges and universities do (or can) belong to the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC). In NASULGC there are councils, commissions, boards, and committees on organizations and policies (COPs), most if not all chaired by faculty, staff, and administrators, and with a significant number of members, from the land-grant community. These groups establish committees, task forces, etc. designed specifically to develop partnerships. For example, in NASULGC, as previously stated, there are the COPs: ESCOP - Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy; ECOP - Extension Committee on Organization and Policy; ACOP - Academic Committee on Organization and Policy; and ICOP - International Committee on Organization and Policy.

I will briefly tell you about one of the COPs, ESCOP, and how you as small farmers contribute to and influence what is done/pursued/accomplished. ESCOP has a partnership subcommittee. This subcommittee's number one goal is to establish partnerships where the bottom line results in (to name a few):

- Maximum productivity from existing resources
- Increased resources
- Greater returns on the investment of taxpayer dollars
- Better meeting the needs of society especially the farming community

Membership on this partnership subcommittee includes

representatives from all of the other COPs, other representatives from the land-grant institutions and non-land-grant colleges and universities, representatives from USDA and other federal agencies, and representatives from the private sector including CARET - Committee on Agriculture Research, Extension, and Teaching - a committee whose members include farmers, farm organization members, farm businesses and other businesses, politicians, and other appropriate groups. Through CARET and other farm organizations and businesses, small farmers' voices can be heard and will do make a difference in policies and programs that have a direct impact on the farming community.

PARTNERSHIP OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS/IMPACTS

What then are some of the outcomes/outputs/impacts/ results of some of the partnerships that have been established by land-grant institutions? Here are a few (all broadly stated):

- Land-grant institutions have become national leaders in all phases of agriculture, which have led to an American agriculture that is second to none in the entire world.
- Land-grant institutions have developed programs to assist the farming community in production, marketing, management, planning, etc. designed for sustainability, protection of the environment, and maximum returns on investments.
- Land-grant institutions have developed various

research, extension, and education centers of excellence to make holistic services easily accessible to the farming community.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

What I have attempted to share with you today is that through partnerships, greater returns are made and society gets the benefits. And that the land-grant institutions are in various partnerships with USDA and others to design and implement policies and programs to protect our natural resources and the environment and at the same time sustain an agricultural production system that is second to none. You as farmers - small and large alike - have a voice, and you should make it heard. You can do so with your vote and participation as a member of various committees, boards, and other groups that represent farmers at all levels of government and other entities.