



The Hythe Vail | Vail, CO | July 29 – August 3, 2022

Speaker Biographies



ASA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Luther Markwart – ASA Chairman
Executive Vice President
American Sugarbeet Growers Association

Ryan Weston – ASA Vice Chairman
Chief Executive Officer, Florida Sugar Cane League
Washington Representative, Rio Grande Valley Sugar Growers, Inc.

Cassie Bladow – Secretary/Treasurer
President
U.S. Beet Sugar Association

Jack Pettus
Vice President of Government Relations
American Sugar Cane League

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The American Sugar Alliance is a national coalition of sugarcane and sugar beet producers, including sugar farmers, sugar processors, sugar refiners, sugar suppliers, sugar workers and others dedicated to preserving a strong U.S. sugar industry. The American Sugar Alliance works to ensure that sugar farmers and workers in the U.S. sugar industry survive in a world of heavily subsidized sugar. Only through a united effort can these dedicated Americans continue to offer a plentiful, secure and reasonably priced sugar supply. The American Sugar Alliance provides the backing and support to meet this national need. For information on the Symposium or membership in the American Sugar Alliance, please contact Vickie Myers, Executive Director, at 2111 Wilson Blvd., Suite 700, Arlington, VA 22201, telephone 703-351-5055, info@sugaralliance.org.

www.sugaralliance.org

Luther Markwart
Executive Vice President
American Sugarbeet Growers Association

Raised on a family dairy farm in eastern Michigan and grew sugarbeets for 9 years as a 4-H project. His grandparents and parents raised sugarbeets beginning in 1933.

Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Michigan State University.

Executive Vice President of the Farmers and Manufacturers Beet Sugar Association in Saginaw, Michigan 1979-1982, representing all sugarbeet growers in Michigan and Ohio.

Executive Vice President of the American Sugarbeet Growers Association in Washington, DC since 1982, representing all sugarbeet growers in 11 states.

Advisor to the U.S. Congress, the Department of Agriculture, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and other federal agencies that have direct or indirect impact on the domestic sugar industry.

Directly involved in the formulation and passage of the sugar provisions of the last eight farm bills (1981, 1985, 1990, 1996, 2002, 2008, 2014 and 2018).

Advisor to USDA and USTR for international trade negotiations, beginning with the International Sugar Agreement in Geneva in 1982; the North American Free Trade Agreement; the Uruguay Round of the GATT; the Doha Round of the WTO, and pending and ongoing regional and bilateral free trade agreements. Served six years on the USDA Agricultural Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) for Sweeteners, then served on the Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee as an advisor to Secretaries Ann Veneman and Mike Johanns and USTR Ambassador Zoellick. He was reappointed to the ATAC for Sweeteners in 2015 by USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and USTR Michael Froman and currently serves on the committee. He was involved in the antidumping and countervailing cases against Mexico and the negotiated suspension agreements between the two countries.

Served eight terms as Chairman of the industry-wide American Sugar Alliance (1989/90, 1994/95, 2000/01, 2004/05, 2011/2012, 2015/16, 2017/18, 2021/22).

Served as Co-Chairman of the Sugar Industry Biotechnology Council since 2003 (19 years) leading the first successful introduction of sugar produced from genetically engineered sugarbeets or sugar cane in the world. 2017 recipient of the prestigious Savitsky Award for his leadership in introduction, adoption and defense of biotechnology in the beet sugar industry. The Savitsky award is the highest award given by the American Society of Sugar Beet Technologists.

Member of the Agriculture CEO Council (Washington, DC) 2018 - present

Served as President of the Commodity Club of Washington, D.C., 1996/97

Served as President of the New York "Sugar Club," 2005/2006.

Contributing editor for sugarbeet trade magazines; *The Sugar Producer* and *The Sugarbeet Grower*.

He lives in McLean, Virginia with his wife, Terri, and three children, Christian, Lauren and Megan.

Ryan Weston

Chief Executive Officer, Florida Sugar Cane League
Washington Representative, Rio Grande Valley Sugar Growers, Inc.

Ryan joined the Florida Sugar Cane League and Texas and Hawaii Sugarcane Growers in 2006. He advises and provides strategic planning for his growers and mill and refinery employees on the domestic sugar program, international trade and other issues that impact the sugar industry and production agriculture. He represents the industry before Congress and the Administration and at U.S. and international trade ministerials.

Ryan is Vice Chairman of the American Sugar Alliance which represents all U.S. sugar production and the majority of U.S. sugar refining. He serves on the Commodity Futures Trading Commission's Agriculture Advisory Committee and on the U.S. Department of Agriculture and United States Trade Representative's Agricultural Trade Advisory Committee (ATAC) for Sweeteners.

Ryan worked for the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Agriculture for over 10 years and organized more than 50 hearings and completed two Farm Bills. He specialized on farm and conservation programs, trade agreements, derivatives trading, rural development, energy and specialty crops. He staffed Committee Members during negotiations for the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000, the 2002 Energy Conference and the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 Conference in addition to the 1996 and 2002 Farm Bill Conferences.

His Hill career began with Chairman Pat Roberts and continued with Chairmen Smith, Combest and Goodlatte. He served as Subcommittee Staff Director for Chairman Ewing and ended his Committee work as Subcommittee Staff Director for Chairman Frank D. Lucas. Ryan's only departure from the Agriculture Committee was in 1996 when he served as Agriculture Legislative Assistant to Speaker Boehner.

Ryan has served on the Florida State Society's Board of Directors and is a past President of the Agribusiness Club of Washington, DC. He has been presented with awards from the National Association of Wheat Growers and Pheasants Forever and was a past co-nominee as Futures Magazine "Impact Person of the Year".

He enjoys golf, hunting, fishing, skiing, snowboarding and almost any other outdoor activity in his spare time. In the case of inclement weather, any book focused on history will do.

Ryan and his wife, Carmen, live in Arlington, Virginia. Ryan was raised on a cattle ranch near Springview, Nebraska where his parents still live and where he enjoys working whenever possible. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from Nebraska Wesleyan University with a major in finance and a minor in political science. Carmen is an elementary school teacher.

Jim Wiesemeyer
Washington Policy Analyst
Pro Farmer/ Farm Journal

From his office near Washington, DC, Mr. Wiesemeyer contributes daily to Pro Farmer's online website at profarmer.com, providing members with the latest information on agricultural policy and trade developments. He also is a twice-weekly participant in Farm Journal's Agri-Talk radio program, has his own podcast called Signal to Noise and serves as a Washington analyst for Pro Farmer and Farm Journal.

Since 1978, Mr. Wiesemeyer has frequently reported on and interviewed senior government officials, including Presidents Reagan and Carter, as well as USDA Secretaries since Early Butz. He has traveled extensively in his assignments and is a frequent speaker on farm policy and trade issues. Wiesemeyer rejoined Pro Farmer a few years ago, after serving as their Washington consultant for 19 years while at Informa Economics, and before that as an employee of Pro Farmer, then owned by Oster Communications. Mr. Wiesemeyer also is one of the writers for the Agriculture Letter, formerly the Kiplinger Ag Letter, now owned by Farm Journal Media. Mr. Wiesemeyer also was the Washington bureau chief for Futures World News (FWN), formerly owned by Oster Communications. Prior to ProFarmer, he was a Washington editor with Doane's Agricultural Report and Washington editor and managing editor of the Washington Farmletter.

Brian Grunenfelder
Trade Advisor, American Sugar Alliance;
Chairman, ATAC for Trade in Sweeteners & Sweetener Products

Brian Grunenfelder has served as Trade Advisor to the American Sugar Alliance, the national coalition of growers, processors, and refiners of sugarbeets and sugarcane since January 2019.

Brian joined USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) in 1984. He served in a variety of trade policy-focused positions over his 27-year career with FAS, including Acting Deputy Administrator, Office of Agreements and Scientific Affairs; Assistant Deputy Administrator, Office of Negotiations and Agreements (ONA); and Director, Asia and Americas Division, International Trade Policy.

From 2011-2016, Brian served as Deputy Assistant U.S. Trade Representative in USTR's Office of Agricultural Affairs. In addition to his portfolio of responsibilities that included South Korea, Colombia, and Peru, Brian served as a lead negotiator in the agriculture market access group negotiations with Japan as part of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) initiative.

Daniel Whitley
Administrator
Foreign Agricultural Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Daniel Whitley began serving as the Administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service in July 2021.

Prior to this role, Daniel served as the Associate Administrator for policy and analysis where he led the Global Market Analysis and the Trade Policy and Geographic Affairs units. In that capacity he led the agency's efforts to analyze agricultural export markets and policy formulation to advance American agricultural interests. He has over 20 years of experience at USDA and began his career as an intern with the Farmer's Home Administration in a rural Louisiana field office; later, he joined the Economic Research Service before starting his tenure with FAS in 2001. Since joining FAS, Daniel has served in a number of leadership positions including Deputy Administrator of Global Analysis. In that capacity, he represented the U.S. government in key international forums including the World Trade Organization, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and the International Grains Council. Daniel is a native of Baton Rouge, LA and holds a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics from Southern University in Baton Rouge and a master's degree in Agricultural Economics from Louisiana State University. He currently lives with his family in Washington, DC.

Rob Johansson, PhD
Director of Economics and Policy Analysis
American Sugar Alliance

Dr. Johansson serves as the Director of Economics and Policy Analysis for the American Sugar Alliance, the national coalition of sugarbeet and sugarcane growers, processors, and refiners. There he analyzes sugar supply and demand fundamentals as well as domestic and foreign sugar and general agricultural policies, including Farm Bill topics and international trade negotiations.

Previously, Dr. Johansson was the Chief Economist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He served in that role from January 2015 to January 2021. As Chief Economist, he was responsible for the Department's agricultural forecasts and for advising the Secretary of Agriculture on programs, regulations, and legislative proposals. During that period, Rob was the Chairman of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation Board of Directors and also was responsible for setting up the Farm Production and Conservation (or FPAC) mission area in 2017 – combining NRCS, RMA, and FSA.

Rob has held positions at the Office of Management and Budget, the Congressional Budget Office, and the White House Council of Economic Advisers. He received his B.A. in economics from Northwestern University and then served with the U.S. Peace Corps from 1990 to 1995. After returning to his home State of Minnesota in 1995, he received his Ph.D. in Agricultural & Applied Economics from the University of Minnesota in 2000.

Jeff Dobrydney
Senior Vice President, Head of Futures & Options
JSG Commodities

Jeff has been with JSG Commodities since 2005, when he started as an Assistant Trader. Born and raised in Milford, CT and a graduate from Jesuit schools Fordham University and Fairfield Prep, Jeff has solidified his role within the Sugar trading community covering both the USMCA and World futures markets which includes penning a daily report. He is now the Sr. Vice President of JSG and Heads the Futures & Options desk that executes trades for Sugar, Cocoa, Coffee and Grains for a wide array of clientele. Jeff also served as the President of the Sugar Club of New York and is a featured speaker at the annual Datagro conference in New York. A resident of Trumbull, Connecticut with his wife and two girls, Jeff also serves on Trumbull Little League's Executive Board of Directors, is in his 6th year coaching travel softball and is also the principal trumpet player at Trinity Church in Trumbull.

Barbara Fecso, PhD
Branch Chief of the Commodity Analysis Branch
Economic and Policy Analysis Division
Farm Production and Conservation Business Center
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Dr. Fecso is the Branch Chief of the Commodity Analysis Branch, Economic and Policy Analysis Division, Farm Production and Conservation Business Center, U.S. Department of Agriculture. She is responsible for overseeing the administration of the domestic sugar, dairy, livestock, cotton, peanuts, grains and oilseeds programs. She provides guidance to the Secretary of Agriculture on the formulation and implementation of national policies and procedures, as well as economic and budgetary impact analysis of those programs.

Barbara has over twenty-seven years of government service in USDA with an emphasis on program analysis, operations and budgetary analysis. She initially spent five years with the Natural Resource Conservation Service as a program analyst for conservation technical assistance, watershed, and animal waste management programs. She then spent two years as a wheat and pulse crop analyst at the Farm Service Agency before shifting to sugar. She was named Director of FSA's Dairy and Sweeteners Analysis branch in 2014 and played a critical role in the negotiation of the current sugar trade agreement with Mexico. In October 2018, she was named Branch Chief under USDA's reorganization and now oversees 10 economists who cover over 30 commodities, including dairy and the livestock disaster programs.

Barbara received a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from Purdue University at West Lafayette, Indiana, in 1994. She was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, and lived for almost twenty years in central Illinois. She has three children and now resides in Arlington, Virginia, with her husband.

Randy Green
Principal, Watson Green;
Consultant, Sweetener Users Association

Randy Green, a partner at Watson Green, has seen food and agriculture policy from all sides, having served in both the executive and legislative branches of government and in the private sector. Over his career he has been closely involved in the development of five multi-year farm bills, as well as major legislation affecting derivatives, financial reform, food safety and nutrition. Randy came to Washington in the 1980s to work for Representative Charles Stenholm (D-Tex.) and later served Senator Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) on the staff of the Senate Agriculture Committee. With the exception of two years as a deputy under secretary of agriculture, Randy served on the agriculture committee staff continuously from 1989 to 1999. The last two years he was chief of staff. In 1999 Randy became a senior government relations representative at McLeod, Watkinson & Miller, a DC firm specializing in agriculture and agribusiness law. Earlier in his career, he managed government relations for the American Soybean Association and was director of the Wheat Export Trade Education Center.

Carrie Vicenta Meadows
Vice President of Government Affairs,
U.S. Beet Sugar Association

Carrie Vicenta Meadows serves as the Vice President of Government Affairs for the U.S. Beet Sugar Association. Carrie has spent her career working on agricultural policy. Prior to joining the U.S. Beet Sugar Association, Carrie served as the Agriculture Advisor to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler. As a senior advisor at EPA, Carrie led the office that served as the primary advocate and liaison for U.S. agriculture at EPA. Before joining EPA, Carrie was a 16-year veteran of Capitol Hill where she held positions including Chief of Staff to Congressman Dan Newhouse (WA-04), and Legislative Director and agricultural policy advisor to Congressman Bob Goodlatte (VA-06). Carrie is a native of Lynchburg, Virginia, and a graduate of James Madison University.

Patrick Frischhertz
Farmer,
St. Louis Planting, Inc.

Patrick Frischhertz is a sugarcane, soybean, and wheat farmer from Plaquemine, Louisiana. He was born and raised in southern Louisiana. He graduated from Louisiana State University with a BA in History and Education in 2007. Also, while attending LSU (2003-06), he was a four-year member of the Track and Field team. Patrick is a graduate of the Loyola University of New Orleans, School of Law with a Juris Doctor in 2010.

Shortly after graduating from law school, Patrick married his wife, Sarah, and joined her seven-generation family farm. Patrick currently farms with his mother and father in law and acts as the farm's general manager, overseeing the day to day operations of their 3,400 acre sugarcane farm. Patrick is also a graduate of the LSU Ag Center's Leadership Program, Class XIV and a graduate of the LSU Ag Center's Sugarcane Production School.

Patrick currently serves on the Board of Directors for the American Sugar Cane League and as the Chairman of its National Legislative Committee. He serves on the Board of Directors of the Iberville Parish Farm Bureau Office and as the Vice President of the Edward J Gay P&M Co., a close family held land management company that leases and manages agricultural land to St. Louis Planting Inc., their family farm. Lastly, Patrick is a member of the Louisiana State Bar Association and licensed to practice law in Louisiana.

Patrick and his wife, Sarah, currently reside in Plaquemine Louisiana with their two children, Elliott and Sophie Frischhertz.

Rebecca Larson, PhD
Lead Research Agronomist
Western Sugar Cooperative

Dr. Rebecca Larson has spent more than 20 years working in the beet sugar industry. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Ecology and Field Biology from St. Cloud State University in 1999 and went on to receive her doctorate in Plant Science with an emphasis in Plant Pathology and Biochemistry from Montana State University in 2003. The work from her dissertation led to patenting and commercialization of a novel disease control agent which landed her induction into Montana State University's Inventors Society in 2014. Early in her career Dr. Larson established a proteomics program at the USDA-Agricultural Research Service when working for the Agency as a Plant Physiologist. Her work elucidated the biochemical foundations of plant resistance/tolerance in sugarbeet. The findings were extensively published in the peer-reviewed literature and created the foundation of her expertise in integrated pest management. Looking to expand her knowledge in applied agronomy, plant breeding and crop protection, Dr. Larson moved to private industry where she ultimately joined the North American R&D Leadership Team at Syngenta overseeing end-to-end research activities for Diverse Field Crops, which included sugarbeet. In 2015, Dr. Larson joined Western Sugar Cooperative and currently serves as Vice President of Governmental Affairs and Chief Scientist.

During her tenure with Western Sugar much of her work has been sustainability focused. She developed and implemented a Sustainability Management System and Continuous Improvement Program. She led the farmers through on-farm sustainability certification, making Western Sugar the first verified supplier of 100% sustainably produced sugar in the Americas. Dr. Larson also spear-headed the first life cycle assessment of sugarbeets in North America to create the foundation for continuous improvement and research investments for the cooperative. Her efforts today focus on optimizing nutrient use efficiency, improving and maintaining soil health, and the commoditization of ecosystem services.

Dan Yeoman

Managing Director, Soil & Water Outcome Funds;
CEO, ReHarvest Partners

Dan leads ReHarvest Partners and co-manages the Soil and Water Outcomes Fund with AgOutcomes, a subsidiary of the Iowa Soybean Association. The Soil and Water Outcomes Fund provides financial and technical assistance to growers who implement new conservation practices that generate environmental outcomes. SWOF secures funding for grower payments from carbon and water quality purchase agreements with private and public entities looking to achieve their sustainability and conservation goals. In his role, Dan leads business planning, new customer relationships, outcome customer contracting, and capital strategy. Dan helped to launch and capitalize ReHarvest and has served as ReHarvest's Chief Financial Officer and the Chief Financial and Strategy Officer at Quantified Ventures, ReHarvest's parent company.

Dan's background includes management consulting with McKinsey & Company and corporate finance with General Electric and Genworth Financial. Dan has an MBA from Duke University and a BA from Wesleyan University and resides in Washington, DC with his wife Beth and four kids.

Alissa Marturano
Sustainable Sourcing Global Director
Mars

Alissa Marturano acts as the Sustainable Sourcing Global Director at Mars Wrigley. In this role, Alissa and her team work in partnership with commercial buyers to develop holistic sourcing strategies that define opportunities to address sustainability challenges and initiate programs towards achieving Mars, Incorporated's Sustainable in a Generation Plan. Alongside expert partners, supply chain actors and industry, Alissa and her team work on driving long term impact and unlocking systemic change that benefits people and the planet. Alissa has been with Mars for 11 years and is based in Hackettstown, NJ. Prior to Mars, she received a Master of Environmental Management degree from Duke University, where she discovered her passion for corporate sustainability.

Rep Collin Peterson
Former Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture

Congressman Collin C. Peterson represented Minnesota's Seventh District from 1991 to 2021. He served as Chairman and Ranking Member of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee from 2005 to 2021 and was instrumental in writing and passing four farm bills. He is a nationally recognized expert on agriculture policy and has a strong reputation for his steadfast commitment to bringing everyone to the table while offering positive and practical solutions to difficult problems.

Congressman Peterson grew up on a farm near Moorhead, Minnesota and was active in 4H, high school music and sporting activities, and working on the farm. He earned a BA in Accounting and Business Administration from Minnesota State University Moorhead, served in the National Guard, and went on to become a Certified Public Accountant in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. He was elected to the Minnesota State Senate in 1976 and served for 10 years with a focus on the agriculture and tax committees.

Mr. Peterson is currently President and founder of his government affairs and public policy firm, The Peterson Group. He also has a partnership with Combest Sell and Associates in Washington D.C. to advise and consult on policies that bolster U.S. agriculture and rural America.

The Honorable Robert Bonnie
Under Secretary
Farm Production and Conservation
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Robert Bonnie is the Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation at USDA. Prior to his confirmation he served as Deputy Chief of Staff and Climate Advisor at USDA.

Before joining USDA, Bonnie was at Duke University first as a Rubenstein Fellow and later as an Executive in Residence at the Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions working on conservation and environmental issues in rural America.

In 2020, Bonnie also worked with the Bipartisan Policy Center on its Farm and Forest Carbon Solutions Initiative. He was Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment at USDA from 2013 to 2017, and a senior advisor to Secretary Tom Vilsack from 2009 to 2013.

Prior to joining USDA, Bonnie was vice president for land conservation at Environmental Defense Fund where he focused on developing incentives to reward stewardship on private lands. Bonnie has master's degrees from Duke in forestry and environmental management. He lives with his wife, Julie, and daughter, Lilly, in Loudoun County, Virginia.

Courtney Gaine, PhD, RD
President & CEO
The Sugar Association

Courtney Gaine, Ph.D., R.D., is the President and CEO of the Sugar Association in Washington, D.C. Prior to her appointment in January 2016, Dr. Gaine served as the Vice President of Scientific Affairs. Before her positions at the Sugar Association, Dr. Gaine served as senior science program manager at the North American branch of the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI North America), a public, nonprofit scientific foundation that advances the understanding and application of science related to the nutritional quality and safety of the food supply. Prior to ILSI, Dr. Gaine held positions of project director, nutrition and wellness, at the nonprofit organization Convergence and science manager at FoodMinds, a public relations firm. She began her career in academia as an assistant professor at East Carolina University. A native Washingtonian, Dr. Gaine obtained her Ph.D. in nutritional sciences and biochemistry and bachelor's degree in dietetics from the University of Connecticut, where she was also a co-captain of the UConn women's basketball team.

Jack Bobo
Director, Global Food and Water Policy
The Nature Conservancy

Jack previously served as CEO of Futurity, a food foresight company and is the author of the 2021 book 'Why smart people make bad food choices.' Recognized by Scientific American in 2015 as one of the 100 most influential people in biotechnology, Jack is a global thought leader who has delivered more than 500 speeches in 50 countries on the future of food. He previously served as the Chief Communications Officer and Senior Vice President for Global Policy and Government Affairs at Intrexon Corporation. Prior to joining Intrexon, Jack worked at the U.S. Department of State for thirteen years as a senior advisor for global food policy. An attorney with a scientific background, Jack received from Indiana University a J.D., M.S. in Environmental Science, B.S. in biology and B.A. in psychology and chemistry.

Bart Fischer, PhD
Co-Director of the Agricultural & Food Policy Center
Texas A&M

Dr. Bart Fischer currently serves as the Co-Director of the Agricultural & Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University and as a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics. His applied research focuses on solving real-world policy problems for agricultural producers and on anticipating potential policy changes for Congress to consider.

Before joining the university, Dr. Fischer served for more than 8 years at the Committee on Agriculture in the U.S. House of Representatives, most recently as the Deputy Staff Director & Chief Economist under the leadership of Ranking Member K. Michael Conaway (TX-11). He was involved in every major agricultural policy development in Washington, D.C. over the past 8 years, including helping craft and pass the 2014 and 2018 Farm Bills. He is the 5th generation to be raised on his family's wheat, cotton, and cattle operation in Southwest Oklahoma, and he continues to be actively involved.

Education

- Texas A&M University | Doctor of Philosophy | Agricultural Economics | 2016
- University of Cambridge | Master of Philosophy | Land Economy (Environmental Policy) | 2005
- Oklahoma State University | Bachelor of Science | Agricultural Economics | 2003
- Oklahoma State University | Bachelor of Science | Business Administration (Accounting and Finance) | 2003

Rob Johansson PhD
Director of Economics and Policy Analysis
American Sugar Alliance
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Tanner Ehmke
Lead Economist, Dairy and Specialty Crops
Knowledge Exchange Division
CoBank

Tanner Ehmke is lead economist for dairy and specialty crops in CoBank's Knowledge Exchange research division, where his focus is on providing market and industry research for the dairy and specialty crops sectors. Prior to joining CoBank in 2015, he marketed seed for his family's seed company in western Kansas, where his family has farmed since 1885.

Mr. Ehmke previously was a commodities analyst at an agricultural market research and advisory firm in Chicago, a commodity markets reporter for Dow Jones at the Chicago Board of Trade, and an agricultural journalist covering crop production and farm business management. He continues to maintain an active role in farming today.

Mr. Ehmke holds a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics and a master's degree in agricultural business, both from Kansas State University.

Cassie Bladow
President
U.S. Beet Sugar Association

Cassie Bladow is the President of the U.S. Beet Sugar Association. She provides leadership in navigating issues of importance to the nation's beet processing cooperatives. She previously served the association as director of government affairs and as vice president.

Cassie has served as an advocate for agriculture throughout her career. Prior to rejoining the U.S. Beet Sugar Association, she was chief of staff for Senator John Hoeven. She grew up on a sugarbeet farm in Minnesota and is a graduate of North Dakota State University.

Senator John Hoeven (R-ND)

Ranking Member, Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Commodities, Risk Management and Trade;
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food
and Drug Administration and Related Agencies; Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources;
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

On January 5, 2011, John Hoeven was sworn in as North Dakota's 22nd U.S. Senator, following ten years of service as the state's governor. Senator Hoeven's priorities in the Senate include working to implement national policies similar to the ones driving North Dakota's economic success. He is committed to creating a business climate that fosters job growth and robust economic activity. Equally important to the senator are measures to reduce the nation's budget deficits and debt. He believes a commonsense approach that fosters free enterprise and empowers people to innovate and invest will strengthen our national economy and create jobs for our country in a sustainable, ongoing way.

As a senator, Hoeven has been leading efforts to develop a comprehensive national energy plan similar to North Dakota's EmPower North Dakota, a comprehensive plan that encourages an all-of-the-above approach to development and includes both traditional and renewable resources. Hoeven believes such an approach will lead to jobs, economic growth and true energy security for America. The senator's work includes serving as the leading advocate for approving the Keystone XL pipeline and advancing measures that will eliminate outdated and unnecessary regulations that are prolonging the approval process and discouraging investment and innovation.

In addition, as a member of both the Agriculture Committee and the conference committee that negotiated the 2014 final farm bill, Hoeven played a crucial role in crafting and passing a long-term farm bill that provides the nation's producers with the certainty they need to plan for the future, as well as new tools to manage risk with enhanced crop insurance. The senator continues to work to make sure the farm bill is implemented in a timely and effective way.

Prior to his election to the Senate, Senator Hoeven served as governor of North Dakota for a decade. Under his leadership, the state expanded and diversified its economy and gained thousands of new jobs. North Dakota's wages and personal income today continue to grow faster than the national average, and in recent years the state has led the nation in export growth. North Dakota regularly balances its budget, has set aside more strong reserves for the future, cut taxes, and invested in priorities like education, law enforcement and infrastructure.

As governor, Hoeven also placed a strong focus on developing North Dakota's vast energy resources. Beginning in 2002, he initiated EmPower ND, a comprehensive energy plan for the state that includes all energy resources as well as a conservation component. Today, North Dakota stands as an energy powerhouse and one of the largest energy producing and exporting states in the nation. Currently, North Dakota produces more than one million barrels of oil a day and ranks as the second largest oil-producing state in the country.

Senator Hoeven was born in Bismarck. He earned a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College in 1979 and a master's degree in business administration from Northwestern University in 1981. He served as executive vice president of First Western Bank in Minot from 1986 to 1993, and served on many civic, community, and economic development groups. From 1993-2000, he served as president and CEO of the Bank of North Dakota, which grew from \$900 million to \$1.6 billion under his leadership.

Hoeven and his wife Mical (Mikey) live in Bismarck. They have two children, Marcela and Jack, and seven grandsons, Crew, Jaxen, Nash, Kip, Hart, Rhett and Dane.

Jack Pettus
Vice President of Government Relations
American Sugar Cane League

Jack Pettus has worked in the Washington, DC, policy arena since 1987, serving in the late 1980s on the legislative staff of the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture and for a federal commission to improve the risk management tools available to farmers. Jack has been an advocate and consultant to barley growers, rice farmers, cotton warehouses, a technology start-up and numerous global commodity trading companies. Jack has represented the Louisiana sugarcane industry since 2001 and has served as Vice President for Government Relations for the American Sugar Cane League and as a member of the Executive Committee of the American Sugar Alliance since 2006.

Jack resides in Alexandria, Virginia, with his wife, Laura, and their k9id, Dexter.

Parish Braden
Republican Staff Director
House Committee on Agriculture

Parish Braden currently serves as Minority staff director for the House Agriculture Committee under Ranking Member Glenn “GT” Thompson of Pennsylvania. He has more than a decade of service in the U.S. House of Representatives, having previously served as staff director and deputy staff director at the House Natural Resources Committee under Chairman Rob Bishop of Utah. Prior to his work on House committees, he served in various legislative and communications roles, including communications director and policy advisor to Rep. Glenn Thompson, and as a press secretary at the Republican National Committee. Originally from Maryland’s Eastern Shore, Parish began work on Capitol Hill in 2005 serving as legislative assistant to then-Rep. Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD).

Jennifer Tiller
Republican Deputy Staff Director
House Committee on Agriculture

Jennifer Tiller serves as the Deputy Staff Director of the House Committee on Agriculture under the leadership of Ranking Member Glenn Thompson (R-PA). Previously, Tiller served as both Deputy Staff Director and Senior Professional Staff for Chairman K. Michael Conaway (R-TX). Tiller has worked on a variety of legislative efforts affecting U.S. agriculture and domestic nutrition programs, most notably the 2018 Farm Bill and various pandemic-related aid packages. A Syracuse, New York native, Tiller holds a Master of Public Administration from Marist College and a Master of Business Administration from Syracuse University.

Josh Tonsager
Democratic Majority Staff Director
House Committee on Agriculture
Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management

Josh Tonsager is the staff director of the General Farm Commodities and Risk Management Subcommittee of the House Agriculture Committee under Chairman David Scott. Previously, he was the Vice President of Policy and Communications for the National Association of Wheat Growers and a Legislative Assistant to former U.S. Senator Tim Johnson of South Dakota. He began his career with the National Farmers Union after receiving his Bachelor of Business Administration in Economics and Political Science from the University of South Dakota. He comes from a family farm near Oldham, SD.

Carley Esser
Professional Staff
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

Carley Esser currently serves as professional staff for the U.S. Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee under Ranking Member John Boozman. She handles Title I commodities, disaster programs, and crop insurance.

Formerly, Esser was the senior legislative assistant for Missouri Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler where she handled the agriculture committee portfolio in addition to trade, energy, environment, education, foreign aid, transportation and infrastructure policy portfolios since 2018.

Other experience in the industry includes a stint with U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Grains Council in their Global Strategies department, and extensive involvement with the National FFA Organization and Agriculture Future of America (AFA) organizations.

Esser graduated with a degree in Agricultural Education from the University of Missouri where she was able to work with agriculturalists across her home state.

Drew Lingle
Agriculture Legislative Assistant
Senator Kevin Cramer (R-ND)

Drew Lingle is a Legislative Assistant for United States Senator Kevin Cramer (R-ND). In his role, he supports Senator Cramer's work as a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and his position as the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure. Drew also handles the agriculture and energy portfolios where he works with a broad spectrum of stakeholders and federal agencies to advance policy on behalf of North Dakota.

North Dakota's economy is driven by agriculture and energy, and Drew is blessed to be able to help advance policy which strengthens his home state. Since joining the office of Senator Cramer, Drew assisted in passing the largest surface transportation reauthorization in history, which many consider to be the cornerstone of the historic Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act – otherwise known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Drew's recent work includes assisting Senator Cramer in his fight against federal overreach on issues related to the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Endangered Species Act, Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act.

A native of Bismarck, North Dakota, Drew attended Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) and graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor's Degree in History in 2018. During his time at MSUM, Drew was also an All-Conference Defensive End on their NCAA Division II football team. Drew and his wife Madison reside in Arlington, Virginia.

Kyle Varner
Democratic Majority Professional Staff
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

Kyle Varner serves as a Professional Staff for Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow on the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, where he works on issues related to commodity programs, crop insurance, and energy. Prior to joining the Committee, he earned his bachelor's degree in agriculture and natural resource policy from Michigan State University. Varner grew up on a family farm in Mid-Michigan.

Trevor White
Republican Professional Staff
House Committee on Agriculture

Trevor White serves as Professional Staff on the House Agriculture Committee handling the commodity policy, crop insurance, disaster aid and credit portfolio for Ranking Member Glenn 'GT' Thompson (PA-15). During the 2018 Farm Bill he was the lead negotiator for House Republicans on the provisions in Titles 1 and 11. Prior to joining the Agriculture Committee in March of 2017, Trevor spent over 8 years working with Combest, Sell and Associates, an agriculture policy focused lobbying firm. Trevor was raised on a cotton farm in New Home, TX. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics from Texas Tech University and a Master's degree in Applied Economics from Johns Hopkins University.