



Volume 7, Number 5, May 3, 2019

by Larry A. Quinn



CARAH HART REFLECTS ON ECUADORIAN AGRICULTURE — On a bus traveling from the lowlands of Ecuador toward the Quito airport, **Carah Hart** (Red River Farm Network, Grand Forks, North Dakota) reflected on her trip. “It has been one great week reporting agriculture’s business. Looking out the window, there’s the lush green vegetation of a cloud forest. The climate is warm and humid. My hair has gone from straight to frizzy. I also smell like bug spray, sweat and dirt,” Hart noted. “Telling the story of local farmers intertwining in Ecuadorian agriculture was the opportunity of a lifetime,” she said. In January, Hart joined 12 members of the Red River Valley Ag Peer Group for a weeklong tour of the country. This was her first international reporting experience. The group learned all about local agriculture and consumed more quality chocolate and floury corn than ever thought possible.

The tour began in the highlands. After climbing hills and exploring the architecture of Quito, the group visited the equator and sampled high-quality coffee and chocolate. The next few days were filled with a look into Ecuador’s agriculture extension/research system and their maize, wheat, and potato production. There also were tours of a flour mill and cookie production facility. Midweek, the group started travel into the lowlands. “Infrastructure challenges were evident after a several-hour traffic jam caused by a landslide. Agriculture looks a lot different in the lowlands,” Hart observed. Bananas, fresh flowers, and cacao are grown in the area where humidity is high. The cacao is made into high-quality chocolate. Coffee beans also are produced

in the lowlands. Trips to the local farmer's market were common. "When people think of South American agriculture, they may not think of Ecuador. Yet, it is an interesting growing region. The climate varies. In the highlands, near Quito, it feels like spring. In the lowlands, near Santo Domingo, it feels like summer. There is a wet and dry season," she noted. The Ag Peer Group toured during the wet season.

Being right along the equator, a tour guide explained Ecuador doesn't experience tornadoes or hurricanes because of its location. Ecuador also has diverse soils. In the highlands, near Quito, the soil consists of volcanic ash with about six percent organic matter. During tours, the group walked in muddy fields, but no mud stuck to their shoes. They also observed a slight sparkle to the soil. "Traditions impact Ecuador's agricultural production. Many farmers grow crops or raise livestock a certain way because that's how their family has always done it. Production is not always efficient. There are few who are exploring new ways to produce food and testing different methods to boost yields, at least in the highlands. Genetically Modified Organisms also aren't being used in the highlands of Ecuador," she said. It's common to see corn plots popping up in the middle of Quito or randomly out of the city. The plots are in different growth stages and much taller than Iowa corn. The Ag Peer Group visited many farms growing maize. "There's not much wheat production in the country, but it's a great spot to learn more about yellow rust. Many farmers grow crops just to feed their families.



At meals, fresh fruit, juice, and guinea pigs are usually available. Everyone in the group tried guinea pig (pictured left) at least once. It was common to have the option of soup at breakfast along with other items. A typical lunch and supper could consist of floury corn and pork. Ecuadorians also love their soup. When they serve it, soup is offered with popcorn (popped or



just the kernels) and sometimes fresh avocado. Potato soup is a popular choice," Hart explained.

Throughout her tour, two reports aired on the Red River Farm Network (RRFN) each day, along with three Facebook Live broadcasts. "Limited Internet access on the road made evening and morning work hours very important. Taking in the surroundings was also very different while reporting. I got to know some of the farmers and translators well because of interviews," she added. After returning home, the Ag Peer Group continues to use RRFN's reports to document the trip. They are sharing reports with sponsors and farm groups to continue telling the story. This has caught the attention of a few USDA officials. Hart hopes there will be more opportunities for international reporting in the future. The Red River Valley Agriculture Peer Group plans to do

more international travel. Since 2017, a diverse group of about 30 young ag professionals meet several times each year to learn from one another and grow in their leadership. “There is hope these young farmers will transition into more industry leadership,” Hart concluded. [Listen to Hart’s Ecuador reports.](#)



ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE HONORS JOHN R. BLOCK — The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) and partners dedicated a plaque to honor former Illinois Director of Agriculture and former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture **John R. Block** on April 22, 2019. The plaque with his likeness was unveiled inside the IDOA building. Block is an Allied Industry member of NAFB. He received the Dix Harper Meritorious Service Award in 2000.

UPDATE ON GENE HEMPHILL — **Tom Brand**, NAFB Executive Director, reminds members **Gene Hemphill** has had a connection to NAFB members since the 1980s. “From his time working for Secretary **John R. Block** at USDA, to a career at Ford and New Holland, to serving on the NAFB Foundation Board of Directors, Gene has been a great friend to many in our association,” Brand said. As friends and colleagues of **Gene Hemphill**, his family wanted to provide this information to NAFB members:

Sadly, Gene had a hemorrhagic stroke on February 14, 2019. For a time, he needed a ventilator and then developed ventilator-induced pneumonia. It was touch-and-go for a while. He was moved from the hospital to a rehab hospital about two weeks ago and is now at Conestoga View (a rehab/nursing home facility in Lancaster, Pennsylvania) and receiving physical therapy. The therapists are working with him on various issues. The one thing he can do is talk; however, his cognitive ability has been impaired. The long-term prognosis is uncertain. His family in the area

is visiting him on a regular basis. The doctors feel that stimulation is important to his progress, so his family is taking photos to him to help him with his memory. Please keep Gene and his family in your prayers. If you have the opportunity, the family would greatly appreciate a visit or a card (and photos, if you have any) sent to his home address: 622 Merchants Square, Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17601. His daughter, Megan, will get them to him.

“Please take a few minutes to write Gene a note and encourage him in his recovery. I know hearing from you will mean a lot to him,” Brand added.



LOUISIANA AGRICULTURE HALL OF DISTINCTION — Four agriculture industry leaders recently were inducted into the Louisiana Agriculture Hall of Distinction in Baton Rouge. Pictured from left to right: Award Recipients **Dr. Grady Coburn**, **Linda Zaunbrecher**, **Lee Trichel** (who accepted for her late father **Jack Hamilton**), and **George LaCour, Jr.**; and Award Sponsor **Don Molino**, Senior Farm Broadcaster, Voice of Louisiana Agriculture Radio Network. The four inductees bring the membership into the Hall of Distinction to 18. The Louisiana Agriculture Hall of Distinction is a joint venture of the Louisiana Radio Network, Louisiana Farm Bureau, Louisiana State University AgCenter, and the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

HOOSIER AG TODAY ACQUIRES MICHIGAN AG INFORMATION NETWORK — Hoosier Ag Today (Zionsville, Indiana) recently announced the acquisition of ownership and management of the Michigan Ag Information Network (MAIN). Beginning May 6, 2019, Hoosier Ag Today will assume program production and distribution. Programs will continue to be referred to as the Michigan Ag Information Network. “We decided several months ago we would take as much time as necessary to find an organization that would care for Michigan agriculture and our radio partners the way we do,” said **Pat Driscoll**, MAIN. “It is with great pride, and a huge sense of relief, that someone so close to home and so close to our family for decades will be taking the helm. **Gary Truitt** and his Indiana-based team have layers of special connections to this state’s agriculture and the Driscoll family.”

Hoosier Ag Today (HAT) is an Indiana-based farm network with more than 70 affiliated radio stations. Formed in 2006, the ownership and management of HAT have more than 70 years of experience in network management and local station operation. “It is our intention to put all of our energy and experience to work to build on the foundation that Pat Driscoll and his team have laid,” said Truitt, president and founder of Hoosier Ag Today. “I have known and worked with Pat for many years and am proud to say I had the good fortune to be mentored by his father **Bob Driscoll** early in my career.” HAT’s broadcasters are members of NAFB and have received numerous industry awards.

HAT is recognized as being a leader in the development of digital and social media content that reaches the agricultural community. This expertise will be used to develop a variety of digital and social channels to reach Michigan agriculture. Pat Driscoll will remain as a contributor and consultant, providing invaluable direction and insight as the network’s programming and coverage is expanded. Michigan-based content will continue to be a centerpiece of MAIN programs. **Terry Henne**, farm director at WSGW (Saginaw, Michigan), will continue to provide in-state reports daily; soon a team of farm broadcasters and sales representatives will be based in Michigan.

NEW OWNERSHIP FOR RADIO OKLAHOMA AG NETWORK ANNOUNCED —The Funk Companies announced in early April the purchase of the Radio Oklahoma Ag Network from its owners, Watermark Farm Company. **Bob Funk Sr.** said of the purchase: “Radio Oklahoma Ag Network has



been the trusted source for agricultural news and information in the state of Oklahoma, and I am excited for our organization to be a part of this venture.” Funk is the owner of Express Ranches, one of the top seedstock ranches in the United States. **Tim West**, the former owner of the network and general manager, will remain with the company in his present role.

Legendary Director of Farm Programming **Ron Hays** (pictured left) also will remain with the company in his present role. Hays, in his 45th year of farm broadcasting, will be backed by Associate Director of Farm Programming **Carson Horn** (right) and Market Specialist **Dave Lanning**.

Commenting on the ownership change for the Radio Oklahoma Ag Network, Hays added, “Mr. Funk’s Express Ranches is the premiere purebred cattle operation in the U.S. To be in the same corporate family will be both exciting and challenging as I look forward to finding ways to enhance our product offering and brand in the cattle industry and other segments of Oklahoma agriculture. I am especially excited to work with Mr. Funk in furthering one of his greatest loves, the Oklahoma Youth Expo, often called the World’s Largest Junior Livestock Show. Under Mr. Funk’s leadership as the Chairman of the Board, the OYE featured more than 7,000 4-H and FFA members showing more than 13,000 head of livestock and earning almost two million dollars in prize money, premium sale dollars, and scholarships this year.”

The Radio Oklahoma Ag Network consists of 45 radio affiliates from across Oklahoma and surrounding states. It produces valuable programming to radio stations via agricultural newscasts, market reports, market analysis, and a full range of digital products. Hays’ daily email is Oklahoma’s daily report on farm and ranch news, and it has 5,000 subscribers. Hays and Horn are Broadcast Council members of NAFB. Hays also is a past NAFB President (1991) and member of the NAFB Hall of Fame.

ERIN NASH RECEIVES NAMA AWARD — Erin Nash, NAFB Marketing and Communications Manager, recently received the National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) R.C. Ferguson Award. The 2019-20 NAMA President, **Scott McClure** from the Brighton Agency in St. Louis, presented Nash the award at the 2019 NAMA Spring Conference, held in April in Kansas City. This award recognizes a long tenure of service and diligent and dependable performance. Also, the award is presented for



meritorious service to NAMA over an extended period of several years; it denotes those individuals who have become the backbone of the organization. Nash has been a driving leader for NAMA, especially the Student NAMA Committee, which she has served for several years. Her dedication is remarkable and, though she is no longer committee chair, she continues to invest completely. “Erin is a valuable asset to NAFB, and it’s great to see her recognized by NAMA for the long-term contributions she has given to the industry,” said Tom Brand, NAFB Executive Director. **R.J. Ferguson** was one of the seven original founders of NAMA and served as its executive director from 1969-74. He remained active in NAMA at the age of 94. After retiring from *Successful Farming*, most of his energies were devoted to motivating college students to become leaders.



GRANDPA NEWS — Patrick Cavanaugh (California Ag Today, Clovis, California) proudly announced that his daughter **Erin Sanders** and son-in-law **Nick** are the parents of **Madeline Monet Sanders**, born April 25, making Patrick a grandfather.

WE WANT YOUR NEWS – Send us your stories and photos for future newsletter issues. Contact me at larryaquinn@outlook.com or call me at **703-819-6532**. *Airing on the Side of Agriculture* is included in the blog section of NAFB.com. For an archive copy of any past issues, go to **Membership** and click on *Airing on the Side of Agriculture*.

NAFB Grave Markers Now Available

NAFB honors deceased members by offering a token of appreciation for their membership and service to farm broadcasting. NAFB members and guests may order grave markers to display on their own gravestones or the grave of a loved one. These markers also may be displayed in an office, flower garden, or other prominent locations. NAFB grave markers are available in two styles:

Option 1



NAFB mounted placard

6" wide x 4" high

Option 2



NAFB placard on metal stake for ground mount

6" wide x 21" tall

Orders may be placed on the [NAFB website](#). The price for either option is \$100 each, which includes shipping & handling. Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover are accepted payment methods.

Need more information?

Contact NAFB Membership Manager Mary Reder at phone (816) 431-4032.