



Photo courtesy of University of Missouri Extension Agronomy specialist Anthony Ohmes assists southeastern Missouri producers with soybean, corn, wheat and forages questions.



AG Matters

Spring brings hope & promise to agriculture

By Chris Chinn
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 Contributed

Spring is one of my favorite seasons. I often see it as a season of hope.

After a long winter, the sun starts shining again, the grass starts turning green, and farmers are returning to their fields. The fresh, warm air is a reminder that no matter what last year brought, there is a fresh start again.

When I see spring calves running around our farm and in the pastures of our neighbors, I'm reminded of the hope they symbolize — hope of a prosperous year to come. When I see farmers planting their fields, I think of the hope they have for this year's harvest.

Spring calves and spring planting is also a sign of trust. Farmers must trust that they will get to harvest in the fall what they planted in the spring. Farmers and ranchers must trust that when their product is ready for harvest, there will be a market and a demand for it.

This year, especially, the agriculture market is showing promising signs, which gives me hope for a prosperous year.

Exports offer bright spot

USDA has forecast a record year for agricultural exports. In 2021, agricultural exports are expected to reach \$157 billion, up \$5 billion from the November forecast. This forecast is driven by higher oilseed and grain export demand. Soybeans are forecast to hit a record of \$27.4 billion, mostly due to strong demand from China.

Grain isn't the only commodity we're expecting to export more of this year. The U.S. is expected to export more horticulture, livestock, dairy and poultry products than in 2020. In addition, the nation is expected to export more than \$20 billion worth of agricultural exports to our neighbors to the north, Canada, as well as China.

After several consecutive challenging years for Missouri farmers, I'm hopeful and eager to see better markets in the future. The state's agriculture exports surpassed \$2.3 billion last year and were purchased for use around the world.

Our top five export partners for agricultural goods are Mexico, Canada, Japan, China and South Korea, in that order. In 2020, we exported \$478 million in soybeans and soybean meal, \$390 million in pork and pork products, \$225 million in prepared foods, \$210 million in forest products, \$160 million in corn, and \$148 in dairy products. Missouri farmers truly grow food for the entire world.

Infrastructure drives exports

Shortly after the ice thawed, we saw the first fertilizer barge of 2021 come up the Missouri River. Those barges will be emptied, cleaned and refilled with grain for the rest of the world.

Missouri is uniquely positioned to quickly and

efficiently export and import commodities because of access to rivers, rails and highway systems. Missouri is home to the second- and third-largest rail hubs in the U.S., 15 barge ports and 33,000 miles of state highways.

And we are within 600 miles of 51% of all U.S. households and some of America's fastest growing metro areas such as San Antonio, Austin, Nashville, Atlanta, Dallas and Houston. Having this infrastructure in place sets Missouri farmers up for future success.

Best days ahead

Spring also makes me hopeful for the agriculture industry in general. Every year, I am reminded of the resiliency of Missouri's farmers and ranchers. We've faced some hard challenges in the past few years from flooding and drought, to poor market prices and a global pandemic. Yet, farmers wake up every day, put their boots on and do the work it takes to feed a growing world.

I have so much trust in Missouri farmers to raise wholesome products for consumers' tables. We are at the forefront of technology advances, and we are good stewards of our land.

I see spring as a time of hope, but year-round, through every season, our farmers and ranchers give me the hope I need to improve Missouri agriculture for the next generation as your director of agriculture.

Bold goal, bold future

Doubling the value of Missouri agriculture by 2030

By University of Missouri Extension
 Contributed

COLUMBIA—University of Missouri Extension's bold goal for a bold future takes the old adage "go big or go home" to another level. What is the bold goal? Double the value of Missouri agriculture by 2030 while sustaining the state's natural resources.

"With agriculture Missouri's No. 1 industry, you might think there's no way we can double its value," said Rob Kallenbach, associate dean for extension in the MU College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. "But we can. Missouri agriculture has so much untapped potential, especially in new and value-added products and processing."

Vice Chancellor and Dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources Christopher Daubert has seen areas of potential firsthand. As a task force member of the Show Me Food, Beverage and Forest Products Manufacturing Initiative, Daubert helped research and develop a plan for leveraging Missouri's existing operations.

During the task force's research, one key theme to expanding Missouri agriculture frequently appeared.

"In order to grow our agricultural industry, we'll need help from partners, farmers, producers, innovators and consumers," Daubert said. "It takes an entire team. And the good news is that

Missouri has a great team as well as a powerful foundation to build on."

Not only does expanding Missouri's agricultural economy create more jobs, it strengthens small businesses, diversifies local communities, introduces new products and reduces food insecurity within the state, Kallenbach explained.

MU Extension and partners have begun to lay a foundation for achieving this "moonshot" goal. Some examples:

- Food, Beverage and Forest Product Manufacturing Initiative — Enhances value-added processing for Missouri commodities and expands food value chains on a regional and local level.
- Missouri Food Finder — Connects consumers with local food producers.
- Missouri Small Business Development Center for Agriculture, Food and Forestry — Assists farmers and agricultural business owners with strengthening established operations or developing new businesses.
- Missouri Vaccine Resources — Provides resources for all Missourians to stay safe during flu season and the pandemic. A healthy community is a productive community.
- Follow #2xAg2030 on social media — Allows Missourians to quickly see programming, impact and resources provided by specialists or county offices.

"I think it's important to remind folks that registering

for a course, calling a local county office for advice or signing up for services with the Missouri SBDC for Agriculture, Food and Forestry can greatly impact our progress toward our bold goal," Kallenbach said. "Together we're creating a stronger tomorrow for ourselves, our neighbors, our state and the agriculture industry as a whole."

Since 1914, MU Extension has provided Missourians with the latest research and information to make educated decisions in their daily lives.

"I had a friend years ago who said extension is like a repository where you can find collective knowledge of farmers, researchers and extension workers," said horticulture specialist Patrick Byers. "You put that within the context of a place like the University of Missouri, where you have the latest cutting-edge research going on, and you can develop advice and relationships with farmers that take science-based information and turn it into their realities."

Learn more about MU Extension's bold goal for a bold future at GrowAg.missouri.edu or watch the MU Extension video playlist [How Extension Is Growing Agriculture for Missourians Like You on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly/3rzcoHV) at bit.ly/3rzcoHV.

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