

2017 **Annual Report**



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Because I've got MY WEED CONTROL—UNDER CONTROL.

THIS IS MY FIELD.

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XTEND
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Low-Volatility Dicamba

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A special thanks to Monsanto for sponsoring the 2017 ARA Annual Report

MONSANTO



Chairman's Message



Tim McArdle
Executive Vice President
Brandt Consolidated

Dear Ag Retailers, Distributors and Suppliers,

2017 marked the 25th anniversary of the formation of the Agricultural Retailers Association. ARA was founded in 1992 following the merger of two organizations: the long-standing National Fertilizer Solutions Association and the upstart National AgriChemical Retailers Association.

The resulting organization, ARA, became a stronger, focused and unified voice for the agriculture retailer industry. To honor the occasion, past chairmen and board members from ARA, NFSA and NARA gathered for a reception and recognition ceremony at the ARA Conference and Expo, November 28-30, at the historic Arizona Biltmore Hotel.



As I look back on my term as Chairman of the Board of Directors, I am proud of the focus and commitment of the board, committees, and staff to advocate on behalf of the ag retail sector. ARA worked tirelessly this year and successfully defended ag retailers' freedom to operate. That is close to the bottom line for all of us. This unified voice in Washington D.C. is critical to our future and there is no voice more clearly heard than the ARA.

Prioritizing and concentrating on critical industry issues, such as safe handling of fertilizer, environmental regulation and transportation better equips ARA and the industry to address legislative, regulatory and public challenges now and in the future.

Retail is rapidly evolving. Regulation, consolidation and changes in farmer needs and attitudes will require leading organizations to adapt. I look forward to proudly continuing my involvement with ARA because I am confident the organization will help retailers and suppliers find opportunities and meet the challenges ahead.

ARA remains dedicated to its mission: advocating, influencing, educating and providing services to support a profitable business environment for ag retailers and our farmer customers. Commitment to this mission requires engagement from industry leaders like you. I hope you will continue to be involved as a board or committee member, event or program participant or supporter.

If you are not a member or not currently participating in ARA activities, there are many ways to get involved, including attendance at the ARA Conference & Expo, November 27-29, 2018, at the Boca Raton Resort in Boca Raton, Fla.

Contact ARA President and CEO Daren Coppock at (202) 457-0825 or dcoppock@aradc.org to find out more.

Sincerely,

Tim McArdle
Executive Vice President, Brandt Consolidated



Serving as the ag retail and distribution industry's voice, the Agricultural Retailers Association advocates before Congress and the Executive Branch to ensure a profitable business environment for members.

ARA Celebrates Silver Anniversary

The Agricultural Retailers Association formed in 1992 when the long-established National Fertilizer Solutions Association (NFSA) and newcomer National AgriChemical Retailers Association (NARA) merged.

NFSA contributed a strong networking and professional development component, and NARA was an active voice for farm supply dealers in Washington, D.C. In addition to overlapping membership, the organizations shared a desire to represent the distinct interests of agricultural retailers, independently of fertilizer, seed and chemical suppliers. The combined organization, ARA, became a stronger, more focused and unified voice for the ag retail industry.

Here are reflections from leaders in ag retail about the organization's benefits and milestones.



GLEN BRANDT

Brandt Consolidated Co-Founder and President
The association's biggest asset, to me, was bringing people together and exchanging ideas. For the first (National Fertilizer Solutions Association) meeting I attended, I went to Cincinnati in the late 50s. You got to meet people in the seminars, and it opened your eyes and your brain to say, 'Gee, why didn't I think of some of these things?'



SCOTT RAMSDELL

Ramsdell F&M President
I've met a lot of good people. One of the nice things on a board that size is you have CEOs of billion-dollar companies and you have presidents of little itty-bitty main street, podunk companies. And it's good to get the two together because they get to recognize that we all have the same intent, but how to get there is different.



HAROLD COOPER

Premier Companies, President
We ultimately defended our industry and forced OSHA to reconsider that the agency had overstepped its bounds, ignored normal rulemaking and applied a regulation—Process Safety Management—that was not valid. Eventually, we were victorious in getting it repealed. Had it not been for ARA, our industry would have had to accept this injustice.



DAVE DUFAULT

J.R. Simplot Company, Vice President and General Manager, AgriBusiness Retail Division
Whether you're manufacturing, wholesaling, retailing or delivering the product, let's tell the story about what we're doing today to make sure West, Texas, never happens again. It took a lot of conversation and healthy debate to come together, but that was and is the whole goal and objective behind ResponsibleAg.



BOB WILLARD

Willard Agri-Service, Vice President
I went on the road with Jack Eberspacher. We went to visit lots of the larger nationals. I found out that they were just like me, even though they ran billion-dollar companies and I ran a million-dollar company. Their problems were pretty much the same as my problems. I also learned that Jack was a wonderful salesman. In fact, I told him if he ever got tired of this association work, I'd put him on the road for us.



TIM MCARDLE

Brandt Consolidated, Executive Vice President
One primary reason it's been very important [to be involved in ARA] is because of our relationship with the government, our relationship with regulation, and our relationship with legislation. We delve into chemicals and fertilizers and many things that are regulated by many agencies. Having a unified voice within ARA to say, 'Let's plead our case, let's talk about what we're doing right, and tell the agencies' so we can get better regulation that fits our businesses and satisfies the need for oversight. ARA is the perfect voice for that.



JAY VROOM

President and CEO CropLife America
I served as CEO for the National Fertilizer Solutions Association from 1984 to 1988. One of the most distinct things out of my memory of that era—and I think it still is true today for ARA—is the family fabric that's there. Not only that the industry is family but also that the family members of the representatives on the board would show up at the events and board meetings. We got to know each other's families and the staff's families. And to me, that's a reminder of the strength of American agriculture.



DAN WEBER

Land O'Lakes, Retired
The need for ARA is not going to change. If you're not trying to influence regulations, rules and laws that affect the way you're doing business, then you get whatever Washington wants to push down. By being part of the process, we can affect those rulings and those laws. The changes are not going to diminish. It will continue to be critical that we're involved.



DE WILLARD, Willard Agri-Service Chairman

The more meetings I went to, the more people I met. I made many friends over the years, and when people are not your direct competitors, they're always willing to share information. I made many trips to see what other operations were like to see if I can steal any ideas from them. I got quite a few! To meet other people, to learn, I don't know where else you can go and get this kind of information.

Strategic Priorities 2014-2019

The Agricultural Retailers Association continues to concentrate on advocating for ag retailers, communicating our message, building the industry's image, improving member services and developing effective alliances.

PUBLIC POLICY

- Maintain advocacy as ARA's highest priority.
- Enhance resources in technical/regulatory areas by engaging outside resources.
- Involve members and their staff more deeply in advocacy.
- Seek opportunities to showcase ag retail to legislative/regulatory audiences.
- Identify opportunities to replicate sound state legislation; harmonize conflicting state and federal requirements.
- Increase eligible ARAPAC donations and campaign contribution activity.

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

- Develop an Integrated Marketing Communications Plan to tie our communications and brand together.
- Push ARA communications and engagement more deeply into member companies.
- Deliver custom content to members based on profile preferences.
- Strive for personal communications with members separate from renewals.
- Develop an orientation program for new primary members.
- Redesign and upgrade ARA website.
- Seek opportunities to conduct regional meetings in conjunction with state affiliates and/or other national organizations on topics of local interest.
- Develop and provide a listing of staff member responsibilities for members.

INDUSTRY IMAGE

- Stand up to challengers – confront anti-agriculture advocates who inaccurately portray our industry.
- Provide a Community Relations Toolkit for retailers to polish their image in their local communities.
- Promote and recognize members who excel in cultivating industry image in their communities.
- Equip members to advocate on key policy issues in their local communities and within their companies.
- Continue to promote excellence in the industry with awards such as Retailer of the Year.

MEMBERSHIP AND SERVICES

- Consistently communicate the value of ARA membership.
- Continue to pursue new members.
- Streamline the renewal process.
- Maintain quality of existing affinity programs, leadership training and professional development; seek opportunities to expand and create new programs.
- Quantify and promote "DC Help Desk" to members.

ALLIANCES

- Recruit unaffiliated state/regional organizations.
- Maintain effective working relationships with state affiliates and national allies.
- Partner through coalitions to leverage efforts.
- Develop international partnerships.

For a more detailed description of these strategic objectives and the tasks associated with them, please go to: www.aradc.org/strategicplan



2017 Public Policy Review

Federal Government Goes Back to the Basics: Regulatory and Tax Reform Highlight Major Policy Successes

President Donald Trump's first full year in office resulted in positive changes in key federal agencies impacting agricultural retailers and distributors.

Broadly, agricultural retailers saw a shift away from heightened enforcement to outreach and compliance assistance for regulated industries.

Executive Orders: Focus on Reducing Regulation and Controlling Regulatory Costs

In his first week in office, President Trump issued Executive Order 13771 "Reducing Regulation and Controlling Regulatory Costs."

The EO pushed for the elimination of two existing regulations for every new rule issue. The goal was to prevent over-regulation, which has a negative impact on the nation's economy. According to the White House, in the first eight months of 2017 federal agencies issued 67 deregulatory actions and only three regulatory actions. The deregulatory efforts by the Trump Administration have reportedly created more than \$8.1 billion in present-value cost savings for regulated industries and American consumers.

On February 24, 2017, President Trump issued Executive Order 13777 "Enforcing the Regulatory Agenda." This EO directed the head of each federal agency to designate an agency official as its Regulatory Reform Officer (RRO) who would be responsible for ensuring regulatory reforms are carried out consistent with applicable law.

The RRO leads a Regulatory Reform Task Force within each agency, which identifies regulations that eliminate jobs or inhibit job creation; are outdated, unnecessary, or ineffective; impose costs that exceed benefits; create serious inconsistencies or otherwise interfere with regulatory reform initiatives and policies.

EPA Launches Back to the Basics Agenda

In April, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt launched his "Back to the Basics" agenda,

which reflects efforts by the Trump Administration to refocus federal agencies to intended missions, return power to the states, and creates an economic environment where jobs can grow. The EPA agenda focused on the three E's: environment, economy and engagement.

The Agricultural Retailers Association worked closely with EPA to help steer the agency back towards a science-based, risk-based approach.

Additionally, EPA declared an end to the "sue and settle" era, which may mean fewer regulatory requirements imposed through litigation.

In April, EPA asked for public comment on rules that were not working for the regulated community. The agency received more than 60,000 comments. ARA urged the EPA's regulatory reform agenda to include the following:

- Restoring the principle of scientific, risk-based regulation as required by the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act
- Restoring science and predictability to the pesticide registration process
- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Pesticide General Permitting requirements
- Waters of the U.S. Rescind and Replace
- Pesticide Registration Improvement Act
- Annual Pesticide Production Reports – EPA Form 3540-16
- Agricultural Worker Protection Standard
- Certified Applicator and Training Rules
- Risk Management Program
- SARA Tier II Reports (40 CFR 370.20)
- Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasures
- General Duty Clause
- Focus on Compliance Assistance

Restoring Science, Risk-Based Approach to FIFRA and Pesticide Products

ARA remained actively involved in industry efforts to maintain the availability of essential pesticide products in the U.S. marketplace.

2017 Public Policy Review *Continued*

Under the Trump Administration, EPA denied a petition requesting the agency revoke all tolerances for the pesticide chlorpyrifos and cancel registrations for all related products.

This was one of the first major steps by the agency to return pesticide registration and re-registration decisions based on the widely-accepted scientific practices using a risk-based approach, as required under the FIFRA.

EPA announced chlorpyrifos will remain registered for use as it continues to undergo registration review, a program that re-evaluates all pesticides on a 15-year cycle. The statutory deadline for the agency to evaluate potential risks posed by chlorpyrifos is October 1, 2022.

ARA participated in a broad ag industry coalition urging the EPA to take this action and believe it was a major step in the right direction for the agency.

Most pesticide products currently under registration review have been safely and widely used to control pests and weeds by America's agricultural industry for decades. They are used in integrated pest management and resistance management programs. Very few alternative and effective products would be available if glyphosate, neonicotinoids, pyrethroids, and sulfonylureas were needlessly removed from the marketplace.

EPA NPDES Pesticide General Permit

For nearly 30 years, the Clean Water Act and FIFRA coexisted. In 2009, the federal courts overturned EPA's 2006 rule exempting aquatic pesticide applications from CWA's NPDES permit.

Strong bipartisan support in the House and Senate continues to exist for a legislative fix proposed by Rep. Bob Gibbs (R-Ohio) and Senators Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) and Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.).

Gibbs' NPDES bills passed the House by wide margins in the last four sessions of Congress. ARA continues to press for passage of HR 953 and S. 340.

Waters of the United States (WOTUS)

The Clean Water Act was passed in 1972, two years after EPA's creation. In the law, "navigable waters" is only defined to mean "waters of the United States." No further definition or explanation was given.

The term "navigable waters" is very important to all CWA permitting and regulatory schemes. The term is pervasive in the CWA, where it's used 87 times.

Federal agencies first introduced a regulatory definition of "Waters of the U.S." in 1986. It was implemented consistent with subsequent U.S. Supreme Court decisions and guidance documents.

In 2015, the revised WOTUS regulatory definition had received a nation-wide stay by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit.

ARA continues to be an active member of the Water Advocacy Coalition, which is committed to the protection and restoration of America's wetlands and waters but has consistently opposed the 2015 regulation because it's inconsistent with Supreme Court precedent, fails to preserve the States' authority to regulate non-navigable waters, and fails to provide the needed clarity and certainty for both regulators and the regulated community.

In February 2017, President Trump issued an executive order directing EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers to review, rescind and revise the 2015 rule. The agencies began the review process of reviewing the 2015 rule and considering a revised WOTUS definition consistent with the EO.

On January 22, 2018, the Supreme Court held that the courts of appeal do not have original jurisdiction to review challenges to the 2015 rule. The case is now being considered in a federal district court in North Dakota. In response to the court decision, on January 31, 2018, EPA and the Corps issued a final rule extending an applicability date to the 2015 rule to February 6, 2020.

This will allow the agencies to maintain the legal status of the regulations pre-2015 implementation while they consider possible revisions to the regulations. ARA strongly supports this approach by the agencies and looks forward to working with them on a favorable resolution to this important regulation.

EPA Certified Applicator and Training Rules

In January 2017, the EPA published a final rule revising the regulations related to the certification of applicators of restricted use pesticide. ARA submitted comments during rulemaking in support of more uniform and rigorous requirements for applicators using RUPs to alleviate burdensome and unnecessary buffer zones placed on FIFRA labels.

ARA also raised concerns that the initial proposal did not provide enough flexibility to the states in establishing minimum continuous education units and how they categorized aerial applicators as "high-risk."

The final rule includes increasing applicator competency standards, establishing nation-wide minimum age for certified applicators and persons working under their direct supervision, establishing maximum recertification interval of five years for commercial and private applicators, requiring specialized certifications for specific application methods (fumigation and aerial), and requires noncertified



Alec Sheffer, Director of Retail Sales for Agri-AFC in Montgomery, Ala., addressed the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry May 25, 2017. He appeared before the committee during a hearing titled: "Examining the Farm Economy: Perspectives on Rural America."

applicator training before they can use RUPs (under the direct supervision of a certified applicator).

In June, EPA extended the effective date of this rule to May 22, 2018. The agency has also initiated a process to potentially revise the minimum age requirements due to concerns expressed by several state agencies and farm groups.

EPA Risk Management Program

On January 13, 2017, EPA published a final regulation related to the Risk Management Program. The new RMP rule imposes significant costs on multiple industries, compromises facility security and provides no substantive increase in safety.

The current RMP regulations work extremely well and will continue to drive safety improvements, as well as protect employees and their local communities.

ARA supported EPA's move last year to delay the new RMP requirements until February 19, 2019, to allow time for the new administration to reconsider revisions.

The new RMP rule would impact more than 3,000 agricultural retail facilities that store and handle anhydrous ammonia. ARA members had participated in a Small Business Entity panel during the rulemaking process, but their recommendations were not followed.

ARA's had also requested the agency use a federal advisory of technical experts from industry stakeholders and federal, state and local officials, but this request was rejected as the agency indicated they did not have the financial resources or time as they needed to quickly issue new regulations.

Third Party Audit requirements could also prove to be problematic as it could reduce the pool of qualified auditors. DHS has raised concerns with the information sharing provisions included in the regulations.

ARA looks forward to working with EPA officials to reconsider these unnecessary changes to the RMP regulations and

include more targeted regulatory updates where the benefits outweigh the costs and are supported by the regulated industries.

Rural Infrastructure Needs

ARA is an active member of the Rebuild Rural Infrastructure Coalition, which is comprised of more than 200 organizations focused on rural communities. Transportation infrastructure improvement to highways, bridges, railways, locks and dams, harbors and ports is the most obvious need in rural communities.

ARA participated in key discussions and multiple meetings with Trump Administration officials from the White House, DOT, and USDA. In addition, the Rebuild Rural coalition worked with committees (House Transportation and Infrastructure; House Agriculture; Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation; Senate Agriculture) with jurisdiction over a comprehensive infrastructure proposal.

The Trump Administration's \$1 trillion infrastructure plan released in early 2018 would allocate 25 percent of the total funding for rural infrastructure projects, including a focus on rural broadband and waterway transportation investment. Both the House and Senate held a number of hearings focused on this important issue. ARA is hopeful a Congress will act on infrastructure investment legislation in 2018.

Electronic Logging Devices

A major focus for ARA in 2017 related to repealing, replacing, suspending, or modifying federal transportation regulations. The new Electronic Logging Device mandate became a front and center issue.

ARA worked with lawmakers including Rep. Brian Babin (R-Texas) and other impacted industries to postpone the new ELD requirements to give the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration more time to address compliance-related issues and grant a more complete year-round ELD exemption for agricultural

2018 FARM BILL

- Agricultural retailers and distributors play a vital role in the nation's food security by providing essential crop inputs, crop consulting services, and custom application services.
- Crop insurance serves as a vital safety net for farmers.
- Conservation and technical assistance programs promote use of precision agriculture technologies.

ARA Position

- Support a Farm Bill that protects crop insurance safety nets.
- Support improving certification process for Technical Service Providers and include 4R nutrient management in NRCS stewardship program plans.
- Support National Agricultural Statistical Service Conservation Effects Assessment Project.
- Maintain current acreage dedicated to conservation programs (CRP/CSP) and protect working lands.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE / TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

- Transportation infrastructure (highways, bridges, locks and dams, rail, harbor and ports) and rural broadband deployment are most obvious needs for rural communities.
- Federal investment, public-private partnerships, easing regulations and revising outdated statutory requirements will ensure efficient use of funds and timely completion of projects.
- Current federal minimum age (21) to obtain a CDL has a negative impact on driver recruitment. Businesses are not able to hire young adults making an initial career choice.
- New Electronic Logging Device (ELD) mandate is unnecessary cost and burden on the industry with minimal safety benefits.

ARA Position

- Support funding opportunities for rural broadband and transportation infrastructure projects while lessening regulatory burdens.
- Support pilot program lowering federal age requirement to obtain a CDL from 21 to 18 years old for short-haul drivers transporting farm supplies and/or agricultural commodities to increase number of available commercial drivers.
- Support ELD exemption for all agricultural operations.

CFATS REAUTHORIZATION

- Agricultural retailers store and sell fertilizers subject to DHS's Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS).
- CFATS legislation securing chemical facilities expires in December 2018.

ARA Position

- Support short-term reauthorization (four to six years) that recognizes industry-led security measures such as ResponsibleAg and provides clear and consistent federal definitions for ammonium nitrate and ammonium nitrate mixtures.
- Maintain notice-and-comment rulemaking requirements of the APA for any changes to Chemicals of Interest found in CFATS Appendix A.



operations, including farm supply transporters. ARA submitted an ELD exemption petition requesting a five-year waiver.

Other Transportation Issues

ARA continued to push for other reforms such as a pilot program to lower the federal age requirement to obtain a commercial drivers' license from 21 to 18 for short-haul drivers transporting farm supplies in interstate commerce; increasing the truck weights for federal interstate highways; and revising the Entry-Level Driver Training program requirements for restricted CDLs from farm-service related industries.

Another major area of concern related to deteriorating rail service by major carriers such as CSX Transportation, as well as efforts to seek rail-to-rail competition through expanded reciprocal switching.

ARA maintained an active involvement with the Agricultural Transportation Working Group and the Shipper Coalition for Railroad Competition in continued efforts to promote necessary accountability, transparency and reforms to the rail industry via the Surface Transportation Board, which has regulatory oversight over these types of transportation issues.

ARA joined other industries in submitting comments to the STB on the CSX's disruption problems, as well as the agency's Competitive Switching proposal. In addition, ARA supported nominees for the STB who have the knowledge and expertise to make fair-minded decisions that advance efforts to modernize the agency and provide their proper regulatory oversight role.

Tax Reform

In December, following months-long debate, President Trump signed the long-awaited tax reform legislation.

The plan included a flat corporate tax rate of 21 percent, repealed the corporate alternative minimum tax, lowered individual tax rates, allowed deduction of state and local taxes and miscellaneous itemized deductions, repealed of like-kind exchange rules, deduction of qualified business income earned for pass-through entities, increased deduction on estates, and a major change to the domestic production activities deduction (DPAD), also known as Section 199, among other various changes.

Section 199A, included in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, created unintended consequences in grain marketing and was quickly slated for a fix, which was passed in March 2018.

Before and after passage of the tax reform bill, ARA maintained its position in favor of protecting the original Section 199 deduction, which promoted a competitive and fair playing field for private, public and cooperative business entities.

Farm Bill

Agricultural retailers and distributors play a vital role in the success of the nation's food security. Retailers also provide their farmer customers with crop consulting services and custom pesticide and fertilizer application services. The following are issues of importance to ARA, and have been conveyed to congressional staff as such for inclusion in the 2018 Farm Bill:

“The Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act of 2011” (H.R. 953) to stop CWA liability for applicators applying pesticides in compliance with FIFRA.

On November 1, 2011, pesticide applicators and farmers became subject to the Clean Water Act's CWA requirements for the use of a product already approved for use by EPA under FIFRA.

Although terrestrial agriculture pesticide application is not included in EPA's general NPDES permit, agriculture cannot escape liability concerns due to the lack of clarity around the CWA's jurisdiction. On May 24, 2017, the House passed H.R. 953 with bipartisan support by a vote of 256 to 165 (Roll No. 282).

Preserve the crop insurance program and important safety nets; Improve preventative planting dates.

To provide a reliable inventory of crop production inputs to farmers, agricultural retailers take on a significant amount of risk. Crop insurance gives input suppliers the reassurance that repayment for crop inputs supplied at the beginning of the growing season is likely. However, Congress should ask USDA to consider changes to the crop insurance program, like extending the preventative planting date, to reflect the advances in improved technologies. These changes would help provide farmers and suppliers with more certainty while perhaps saving money expensed on crop insurance payments.

Retail Exemption in OSHA's Process Safety Management Standard

Agricultural retailers selling anhydrous ammonia have been exempt from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Process Safety Management Standard (PSM) under the “retail exemption” since the Standard's inception in 1992. The definition of a “retail facility” was outlined in 1992 to mean “an establishment...at which more than half of the income is obtained from direct sales to end users,” otherwise known as the “fifty-percent” rule. These facilities are already required to comply with OSHA standards at 29 CFR 1910.111, for the storage and handling of anhydrous ammonia.

REGULATORY REFORM FOR AGRICULTURAL RETAILERS

Issue Summary

- NPDES Pesticide General Permit (PGP): Pesticide applicators are subject to court-created requirements to obtain a Clean Water Act NPDES permit for lawful applications near ‘waters of the U.S.’ for products already closely reviewed and regulated for use by EPA with stringent FIFRA label restrictions.
- OSHA PSM retail exemption: Since 1992, agricultural retailers selling anhydrous ammonia have been exempt from OSHA's Process Safety Management Standard under the “retail exemption,” defined as “an establishment... at which more than half of the income is obtained from direct sales to end users,” otherwise known as the “fifty-percent” rule.

ARA Position

- Support bipartisan legislation (HR 953 / S 340) that protects users from NPDES permit's duplicative requirements and legal liability.
- Support codification of the PSM definition of “retail facilities” using the “fifty-percent” rule.

PRO-GROWTH ECONOMIC AGENDA FOR RURAL AMERICA

Issue Summary

- Tax reform legislation passed by Congress will increase agriculture production and alleviate undue burdens such as the costly estate tax.
- Support federal policies to increase domestic energy production, reduce U.S. manufacturing costs, and promote development and use of renewable fuels.
- Free and fair trade of agricultural products, equipment, and crop input materials (pesticides, fertilizers, seeds) creates opportunities for the benefit of American agribusinesses and farmers.
- The current H-2A ag guest worker visa program is broken and only available for part of the agricultural industry.

ARA Position

- Support a fix to the tax reform package reinstating the Domestic Production Activities Deduction (DPAD), otherwise known as the Section 199 deduction.
- Support domestic energy production, and fair-trade agreements, including NAFTA.
- Support a new, usable guest worker visa program that works for all of American agriculture.



2017 Public Policy Review *Continued*

To prevent OSHA from removing agricultural retailers, also known as farm supply dealers, from the retail exemption, Congress should codify the definition of “retail facilities” using the “fifty-percent” rule as it has been since the inception of the PSM regulations.

Maintain current acreage dedicated to conservation programs and protect working lands.

Agricultural production must increase to meet the food and fiber needs of a growing population, feed needs for the livestock industry and the supply needs for the biofuels industry. Additionally, CRP participants should also be allowed to opt out early from part or all of their contracts. In many instances, the CRP contracts are too long and do not provide the flexibility for landowners to properly take advantage of new market opportunities in the production of corn, soybeans or other crops that can be used for additional feed, food, feed, fiber, or the production of ethanol, biodiesel or other forms of renewable energy.

Support the statistical survey work carried out by the National Agricultural Statistical Service on Conservation Effects Assessment Project administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

CEAP is a relatively new effort by NRCS and is rapidly becoming one of the most important tools that NRCS has available to demonstrate how much conservation work is being done on the nation’s agricultural land and what that work is accomplishing. The survey work conducted by NASS is essential to the success and quality of the CEAP effort. CEAP is a highly efficient and cost-effective way to demonstrate the outcomes of the conservation practices used by farmers and ranchers. CEAP also enhances NRCS’s ability to help ensure that farmers and ranchers are working on top resource challenges.

Streamline certification process for the Technical Service Provider Program. ARA supports the continuation of the TSP program; however, we believe there should be an easier pathway for retailers to be certified by USDA-NRCS.

Currently, the certification process is cumbersome for many retailers and certified crop advisors and we would like to see significant reforms to this process to ensure greater ease of conservation and nutrient stewardship plan implementation. Crop consultants, CCA’s, and other ag retailers have a long historical business relationship, established trust and credibility with their farmer/grower customers and it would greatly improve conservation efforts to certify more TSPs.

Agricultural Workforce Needs

The agricultural community is dependent on a sustainable workforce. According to Department of Labor statistics, H-2A visas increased more than 43 percent from 2015 to 2017.

Every farm worker engaged in high-value labor-intensive crop and livestock production sustains two to three off-farm jobs. However, the industry is missing out on numerous opportunities because of labor shortages and the current H-2A visa program is unworkable.

The H-2A program is inflexible and requires the cooperation of multiple federal agencies, which makes the program complicated and often unworkable. Agriculture needs a nimble agricultural guest worker program.

The necessity of a dependable agricultural workforce and a rigid H-2A visa program results in the need for a new approach. ARA encourages Congress to establish a comprehensive immigration reform policy that provides for a usable ag guest worker program with a reliable verification system, secures the borders, and provides current farmworkers the opportunity—with the support of an employer sponsor—to apply for legal status.

A market-based solution is the best way to achieve these goals and will provide the agricultural industry with the legal, reliable, long-term workforce it needs. Any statutory cap on the number of available visas would only limit the future growth of the U.S. agriculture sector. Securing the borders is essential, but it cannot be the only component of immigration reform. An American Farm Bureau Federations study in 2014 found an enforcement-only approach would cause agriculture to lose access to its workforce and result in agriculture output falling by \$30 to \$60 billion.

A legislative solution with an employer “safe harbor” for good faith reliance combined with an adjustment of status will ensure the agricultural industry is provided with an experienced workforce today and tomorrow.

Representative Goodlatte introduced the Agricultural Guestworker Act (AG Act) of 2017 to address these problems. ARA has watched this legislation closely as it has been included in broader immigration reform packages.

CFATS Reauthorization

The Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards are intended to protect facilities that possess certain Chemicals of Interest from security vulnerabilities and prevent terrorists from obtaining those chemicals to conduct malicious behavior. CFATS legislation was most recently reauthorized in 2014 and is set to expire on December 18, 2018.

CFATS has greatly matured since it was last reauthorized. The program now has a well-defined universe of facilities that may be vulnerable to security breaches. Although the CFATS achievements over the last four years are noteworthy, the program can always be improved.

As Congress considers reauthorization, ARA has urged recognition of ResponsibleAg; clear and ubiquitous definitions of ammonium nitrate and ammonium nitrate mixtures; grant CFATS reauthorization for not more than six years; and maintain notice-and-comment rulemaking requirements of the Administrative Procedures Act for any changes to the Chemicals of Interests found in CFATS Appendix A.

ARA Recognizes Legislators for Efforts Supporting Agriculture



Left: ARA Vice Chairman Troy Johnson with Wilbur-Ellis, Immediate Past Chairman Tim McArdle with Brandt Consolidated and Chairman John Oster with Morral Companies, present Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) with the Legislator of the Year Award during a meeting at his office on February 6, 2018.

Right: ARA President and CEO Daren Coppock presents the Legislator of the Year Award to Rep. Brian Babin (R-Texas) on February 6, 2018.

Agricultural industry continues to face federal regulatory challenges. Thankfully, agriculture’s allies in the U.S. House and Senate have stepped forward.

The Agricultural Retailers Association recognized two legislators who led efforts to defend the industry’s freedom to operate: Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) and Rep. Brian Babin (R-Texas). Both were named ARA’s 2017 Legislator of the Year.

ARA recognized the Congressmen for leading legislative relief on regulatory issues such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s illegal Process Safety Management retail exemption enforcement memo and the Department of Transportation’s new Electronic Logging Device requirements.

“Farmers and ranchers respect the land, their neighbors, and the rules,” Lankford said. “But they want the rules to be fair, and they want their voices to be heard. Regulators that live their lives on concrete should listen to the insight

of families who live on the soil before they make policy decisions about agriculture. Agribusinesses should not have to battle their federal government over-burdensome regulatory guidance.”

Babin has been an outspoken critic of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s Electronic Monitoring Device mandate and supporter of ARA’s position on an agricultural exemption to ELDs. In addition to cost concerns for small businesses, he worries about the cyber and physical security risks posed by ELDs.

“Every day in Washington brings another story about hacking by domestic, foreign and non-state actors bent on theft or terrorism,” he said. “Creating a digital footprint from an ELD, most of which are ‘self-certified’ and assembled from Chinese components, on a truck carrying potentially hazardous materials such as anhydrous ammonia or ammonium nitrate fertilizer is the last thing we should allow.”

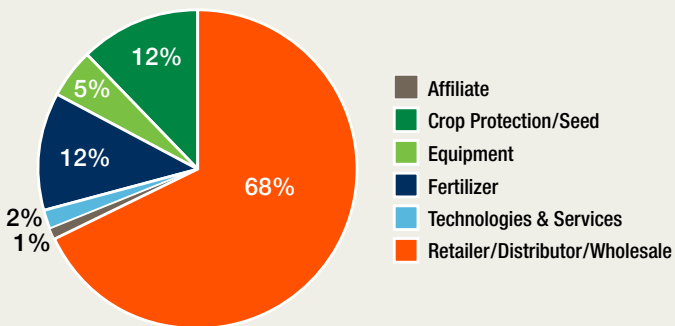
Membership Services Programs and Events

Key components of membership, including communications and advice regarding important industry issues, opportunities to influence legislation, a comprehensive online membership directory and numerous other resources are available through the ARA website (www.aradc.org). A variety of educational and networking opportunities continue to be available to members, as well.

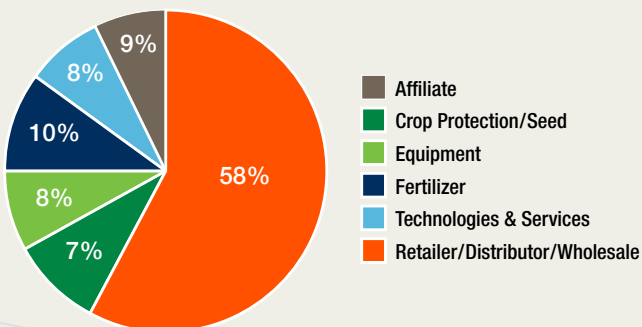
Membership Development

In 2017, ARA dues collection exceeded \$2.25 million in a challenging and changing ag economy. The total revenue from dues collected, \$2,256,392 was down again slightly from a record high \$2,352,058 in FY16. Retailer share of total membership dues collected bumped up slightly to 68 percent while suppliers contribute 31 percent. Consolidation at all levels of the supply chain continues to be the great challenge in 2017 and will continue to be a challenge for the foreseeable future.

FY 2017 Percentage of Membership Dues Collection



FY 2017 Percentage of Membership Enrollment



ARA membership also includes benefits such as the ARA Crisis Management Workshop, discounts on background screening services from GIS, and training materials such as *Safety on the Road*, a safety video for custom application vehicle drivers.

Become a Destination Employer

The Agricultural Retailers Association proudly partnered with Ag1Source and Destination Employer Services to offer our members tailored candidate measurement and selection services.

The processes combine a proven approach to measure the qualities you desire in candidates with the added support of a dedicated adviser to integrate these deliverables into any organization.

Go to www.aradc.org/ag1source for more information.

Community Relations Toolkit

In the course of hosting ARA’s Crisis Communications Training, attendees often asked how they can create and build community goodwill – a strong reputation that can withstand a crisis situation – for their local facilities.

ARA responded by creating a how-to kit designed to provide ag retailers, distributors and suppliers with a blueprint to create awareness, improve public opinion and cultivate a positive image of their facilities.

Included in the online toolkit are videos, documents, templates and checklists to help inform your efforts to create community goodwill. ARA invites and encourages you to share your success stories and ask questions in the discussion groups. Learn more at www.aradc.org/goodwill.

DC Help Desk

Based on feedback from the 2014 Strategic Plan, ARA launched a DC Help Desk. This system can assist members seeking advice on regulatory issues or challenges.

In 2017, ARA staff opened nine cases and closed all but one – a request to the Department of Justice regarding crop inputs for cannabis production. Cases ranged from questions about hours of service rules to setting up meetings with federal regulatory agencies.



Members may call the office and staff will direct you to the appropriate internal contact to solve your problem or answer your question, usually within 48 hours for frequently asked questions. This service is available to our members at no additional cost.

Safety on the Road

Custom Application Vehicles (CAVs) have come a long way since their advent in the 1950's. Today CAVs are vital tools to the success of agricultural retailers.

Safety on the Road is a 32-minute training program geared to the safe operation of CAVs on roads and highways to and from the field. This professionally-produced DVD covers the basic safety issues that operators may encounter such as: preventing rollovers, nighttime operation, narrow roads and steep shoulders, navigating highway traffic and safely making left turns.

To order, go to www.aradc.org/safetyvideo.

GIS Surety Services

To assist members with background screening compliance, the ARA partnered with General Information Services, Inc. (GIS) to provide discounted, best-in-class criminal background, drug and medical screening services to ARA members.

GIS is one of the largest organizations in the background screening industry with a national criminal database containing more than 500 million records. This national criminal database pulls information from more than 1,000 sources including a variety of national security sources.

Services offered through the partnership include drug and alcohol testing, DOT-compliant physicals, DOT driver qualification file management, background checks and license verifications.

For more information, go to www.aradc.org/GIS

YRC Freight

ARA members can save as much as 40 percent on LTL shipping throughout North America with YRC Freight. YRC, the result of the merger of Yellow and Roadway

Transportation, invented lighter than load freight. They specialize in palletized shipments more than 150 lbs. and offer ground and air expedited and guaranteed solutions, making them a perfect solution for ag retail freight needs.

To learn more about the ARA program benefits and features, contact your YRC Freight Association Representative at (800) 647-3061, email associations@yrcfreight.com or go to www.aradc.org/YRC

Security Vulnerability Assessment

The Security Vulnerability Assessment, updated in 2014, is a tool for retail facilities and terminals to use to identify and assess potential security threats, risks and vulnerabilities.

Developed by Asmark Institute with the help of the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA), CropLife America (CLA) and The Fertilizer Institute (TFI), this web-based tool meets the Center for Chemical Process Safety (CCPS) design criteria for conducting security vulnerability assessments. Retailers who use this program to assess facility and Hazmat transportation security can do so with confidence that their assessment is based on sound risk assessment principles.

For more information or to access login credentials, go to www.aradc.org/sva or contact David McKnight at David@aradc.org or (202) 595-1710.

CDMS Guide

CDMS provides ARA members with free access to GUIDE, the most robust and reliable crop protection app available. GUIDE provides access to agronomic and product compliance information through a user-friendly interface. The database contains information on crops, rates, target pests, geographies for use, label types, pre-harvest intervals, worker safety, shipping, usage directions and regulatory information directly to your smartphone or tablet.

Downloading the free app from the mobile store of your choice and call CDMS at (800) 237-2367 for access. Users will be provided a token specific to ARA in order to take advantage of this offer. Once registered and configured, ARA members will have access to all product updates, notifications and information.

Membership Services Programs and Events *Continued*

Agrian Label Database

Available to members through the ARA website, the Agrian Label Database is backed by hundreds of supporting manufacturers, the Agrian's label database contains more than 6,100 manufacturer-guaranteed products. Every entry includes the manufacturer's label and supporting documents including MSDS, Section 24c, 2EE and organic certificates. The database is available anywhere with an internet connection.

Midwestern Ag Retail Forum

The Midwest Ag Retail Forum, hosted by the Kansas and Oklahoma Agribusiness Retail Associations and the Agricultural Retailers Association, attracted more than 30 attendees July 27 at the Doubletree Hotel in Wichita. This was the third in a series of regional meetings ARA started with state associations as part of the 2014 Strategic Plan.

Kansas Department of Agriculture economist Kellen Liebsch keynoted the event. Her presentation centered around the economic impact of agriculture on Kansas, but also touch on similar figures for Oklahoma during the meeting.

Other speakers included OARA Executive Director Joe Neal Hampton and KARA Executive Director Tom Tunnel, as well as ARA Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Counsel Richard Gupton, each of whom addressed relevant state and federal regulatory and legislative issues facing agricultural retailers.

ARA encouraged members to send employees who may not normally attend national industry meetings. The meeting was compact, allowing participants to drive in for it then drive back home on the same day.

Planning is underway for the next regional meeting September 10, 2018, in Northwest Ohio.



Leadership at its Best

The Agricultural Retailers Association's Leadership at its Best Program, sponsored by Syngenta, is a professional

development program designed for emerging industry branch, marketing and sales managers. The training segments, hosted in Washington, D.C., February 14-16, 2017, focused on advocating the agricultural industry's perspective on policy issues to agency leaders and government officials.

The Leadership at its Best Class of 2017 included eight participants from a broad spectrum of the ARA membership: Stacey Beachy, Government Affairs with Gar Tootelian, Inc.; Keith Flick, Area Sales Manager with MFA Incorporated; Brandon Schrag Field Marketer with MKC; Wesley Ward, Regional Sales Manager with Harvey Fertilizer and Gas Co.; Dwayne Young, Environmental and Safety Specialist with Helena Chemical Company; Tom Boster, Branch Manager with Mid Valley Agricultural Services; Bil Schrader, Head of Seed / Sales agronomist with Asmus Farm Supply; and Kerry Clift, Business unit manager with The McGregor Company.

To nominate an individual for Leadership at its Best, contact David McKnight, Director of Member Services at david@aradc.org.

ARA Crisis Management Workshop

ARA launched a new program in 2017, the Crisis Management Workshop, to help agricultural retailers create or refine a customized emergency action plan that is relevant, implementable, and sustainable for the needs of their business and local emergency resources.

The workshop was an outgrowth of the Crisis Communications seminar, which ARA has hosted separately since 2013. Sponsored by FMC, this day-and-a-half-long workshop was held Feb. 27 – March 1 in Las Vegas.

The hands-on workshop was attended by 14 individuals who work in an environmental health and safety capacity. Led by Dr. Jaye L. Hamby, a leader in agricultural education, the day and a half program featured industry best practices, interaction scenarios, and a template Emergency Action Plan.

The content of the workshop will revolve around three fundamental principles of crisis management: plan preparation (PREPARE), actions and activities required to manage a crisis (RESPOND), and requirements to keep a crisis plan sustainable (SUSTAIN).

For more information, contact David McKnight, Director of Member Services (david@aradc.org).

ARA Management Academy

Purdue University hosted more than 30 agribusiness professionals during the ninth annual ARA Management Academy January 31-February 2, 2017, in West Lafayette, Ind.



The academy, a joint effort between ARA and Purdue University Center for Food and Agricultural Business, was created to help leaders develop decision-making and management skills.

The three-day workshop is led by award-winning Purdue faculty members. Using a blend of lectures, breakout sessions and group discussion, the program is structured to encourage networking and idea-sharing with industry peers from across the value chain.

ARA's Director of Operations, Bryna Hautau, and Public Policy Counsel, Kyle Liske, attended this year's annual ARA Management Academy at Purdue University.

Participants were led in discussion by University faculty on driving economic forces, financial management, and employee management. Retailers also had the opportunity to engage with large producers from South Dakota. ARA President and CEO Daren Coppock addressed the group and stressed the importance of the Academy at an evening dinner.

The next ARA Management Academy will be held January 29-31, 2019, at Arizona State University in Tempe, Ariz.

Strategic Decision Making

ARA partnered with Purdue University to offer Strategic Decision Making, a course designed for agribusiness executives. This three-day seminar provides participants with the knowledge and tools needed to analyze and execute challenging strategic choices. Participants will learn

how to clarify specific decisions needed, list alternatives and manage the risk involved.

Matthew L. Waters, an attorney and 2014 attendee, has been representing agribusinesses and farmers for 25 years, but recently shifted his practice from litigation to business advising and consulting.

"The program gave me the resources to slow down and fully examine the aspects of the decision at hand before making a call," he said. "It also helped me locate and find solutions to possible risks in advance, rather than having to mitigate problems on the fly."

Led by Purdue faculty, Strategic Decision Making offers participants an opportunity to bring a major company decision to work through the program's decision framework.

The course, attended by more than 20 ag retail leaders, was held June 13-15, 2017, at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind. The next available course will be June 12-14, 2018. For more information, go to <http://agribusiness.purdue.edu/>.

Webinars

ARA hosted several webinars in 2017 including two on dicamba. The webinars featured representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency and Dr. Stanley Culpepper of the University of Georgia to help educate the industry on the new products and potential issues to watch for during the application process. ARA continues to monitor critical issues and provide relevant and timely education through its webinar platform.

ARA Conference and Expo



The Agricultural Retailers Association celebrated 25 years of service to support sellers of seeds, nutrients, crop protection products, farm equipment, precision technology and agronomic services during the ARA Conference and Expo, November 27-29 in Phoenix at the Arizona Biltmore Resort.

The program featured a pre-conference session on dicamba with differing perspectives from respected weed scientists Dr. Ford Baldwin, with Practical Weed Consultants, and Dr. Stanley Culpepper, professor and Extension Agronomist in the Crop and Soil Science Department at the University of Georgia.

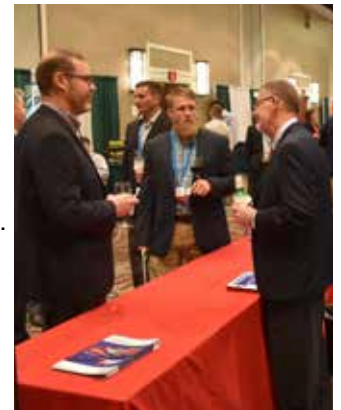
The general session kicked off with presentations by DowDupont Agriculture Division Leader Jim Collins and Geopolitical Strategist Peter Zeihan, as well as a state of the association update from ARA President and CEO Daren Coppock.

Breakout sessions included presentations on legal liability by David Leath, partner with Petrie Dorfmeier, LLP in Fresno, Calif.; a state regulatory issues panel with agribusiness association executives from Florida, California, Oregon and Michigan; discussion of looming legal battles with attorneys from Faegre Baker Daniels and a panel of retailers highlighting the benefits of electronic inventory management. Mixed among the professional development opportunities were networking events including the ARA Invitational Golf Tournament, ARA Dinner and Auction, Rising Stars reception and a sold-out tradeshow.

The closing general session featured a lively discourse on alternative business models with Steve Watts of Farrell Growth Group; Amol Deshpande, founder and CEO of Farmers Business Network and moderator Dave Downey with Purdue University.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue closed out the powerhouse lineup of speakers as the program concluded.

The 2017 conference hosted more than 650 attendees and featured more than 70 exhibitors. The ARA Conference and Expo returns to the historic Boca Raton Resort in Boca Raton, Fla., November 28-30, 2018. The conference was last held here in 2011.



For more information about the presentations and happenings at the 2017 ARA Conference and Expo, go to www.aradc.org/ARA2017.

ARA Invitational Golf Tournament

More than 120 golfers took part in the ARA Invitational Golf Tournament November 27 at the Adobe Course at the Arizona Biltmore Country Club. First place went to Joe Hodges, Sean McCarty, Bucky Kennedy and Dave Thomas. Jennifer Munro hit the longest drive for the women. ARA Public Policy Counsel Kyle Liske hit the longest for the men. Doug Catt and Jayne Vernon put it closest to the pin. Tim Heins from Raven also hit a hole-in-one.



Perdue Encourages Ag Retailers to Get Engaged Collectively, Individually in Legislation, Regulation



PHOENIX, Ariz. – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue addressed attendees to conclude at the ARA Conference and Expo last week.

His comments, made during the closing general session on Thursday, November 30, capped off a successful conference with nearly 700 attendees and tradeshow featuring more than 80 exhibitors.

Sec. Perdue covered a broad range of issues including tax reform, deregulation, trade, food security, infrastructure, school lunches and the farm bill. He also met briefly with volunteer leaders, media and the Agricultural Retailers Association staff before and after his presentation.

ARA broadcast his comments via Facebook Live. A high-resolution video of his address is now available, along with slides, audio, and video from other #ARA2017 presenters (member's only).

Perdue, who noted his past experience in the fertilizer business and with ARA's predecessor organization, the National Fertilizer Solutions Association, talked extensively about the tax reform bill, which was under debate in the Senate. He encouraged those in the business of agriculture to contact their representatives in Washington, D.C., to communicate their corporate and individual interests.

"Farming is a great lifestyle, but you don't get to do it very long as a lifestyle if you don't make money at it," he said.

"You need to speak through your associations, but you also need to speak independently. Talk to your members of Congress and let them know what's on your mind. Weigh in on what you like about (the tax reform bill), what you don't like about it."

One way to have your voice heard is to attend the ARA Winter Board Meeting and Capitol Hill Fly-in, February 5-7, in Washington, D.C. Last year, attendees participated in more than 150 meetings with House and Senate members and staff. Save the dates! Registration will open soon.

Another opportunity to get engaged is to serve on a committee. Interested individuals may participate in public policy, member services or conference planning committees or working groups such as sustainability, transportation, tax/finance, security, biotech/seed, OSHA, and others. Contact David McKnight to learn more...

His closing comments focused on the next farm bill, calling it an evolution, not revolution.

"You're going to see a farm bill with a safety net balanced primarily by crop insurance," he said. "We want a safety net that keeps people where they can do it again, but we don't want farmers farming for the program. Your customers would much rather have a good crop at a fair price than any kind of government program."

He asked for the input of ag retailers as the farm bill comes together.

The complete audio and video of Perdue's comments to the ARA Conference and Expo are available online along with photos from the conference.

Awards



ARA Honors Rising Stars at Conference

The Agricultural Retailers Association hosted its largest class of Rising Stars since the program was launched in 2013. ARA recognized 31 top performers in the agricultural retail industry as members of the Rising Stars Class of 2017.

ARA introduced Rising Stars five years ago to foster engagement with high achievers and future leaders. This special distinction, sponsored by Yargus, provides ARA member companies with a hands-on opportunity to introduce new and emerging leaders to ARA, the conference and the regulatory forces and legislative pressures shaping how ARA reacts to key issues facing ag retailers.

The Class of 2017 includes:

- Charles Armstrong, Agri-AFC, LLC
- Holden Asmus, Asmus Farm Supply
- Robert Avalos, Crop Production Services
- Todd Christianson, Simplot Grower Solutions
- Ross Currence, S.D. Wheat Growers
- Eric Dabney, MFA Inc
- Paul Dawson, Agri-AFC, LLC
- Lee Dickerson, Agri-AFC, LLC
- Rob Dowdy, Agri-AFC, LLC
- Gary Esselink, Raven Industries
- Julia Fletcher, Crop Production Services
- Ryan Hahn, Eldon C. Stutsman Inc.
- John Hoyle, Wilbur-Ellis

- Heath Hughes, Agri-AFC, LLC
- Josh Hunter, FCI
- Shannon Jones, Simplot Grower Solutions
- Jennifer Kilber, S.D. Wheat Growers
- Zach Limbaugh, Agri-AFC, LLC
- Kevin Marshall, Simplot Grower Solutions
- Katie McWhirter, Eldon C. Stutsman, Inc.
- Samantha Murray, CDMS, Inc.
- Becca Nichols, Simplot Grower Solutions
- Joel Nieuwbeerta, Marcus Construction
- Kevin Partlow, CRF Tech
- Nathaniel Quinn, DowDuPont
- Becky Randall, Simplot Grower Solutions
- Kathryn Ruddy, FMC
- Sally Sanders, Crop Production Services
- Eric Sievers, International Raw Materials
- Trae Stewart, Agri-AFC, LLC
- Cash Veo, Wilbur Ellis

Participants were treated to a special VIP reception and dinner hosted by Yargus and recognized during the ARA Conference and Expo. Rising Stars have opportunities to participate in additional ARA committees and events including the Agribusiness Congressional Fly-in, Leadership at its Best, Crisis Management Workshop and Crisis Communications Training. For more information about how you can nominate your organization's Rising Stars to participate in the Class of 2018, go to www.aradc.org/risingstars.

Awards



ARA Recognizes Tip O'Neill with Lifetime Achievement Award

The Agricultural Retailers Association recognized the 40-year career of William "Tip" O'Neill with the Jack Eberspacher Lifetime Achievement Award November 27 during the ARA Conference and Expo at the Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix.

"As an early and outspoken advocate for ResponsibleAg, his focus has been on the good of the industry rather than proprietary business concerns," said Daren Coppock, ARA President and CEO. "He has made a lasting positive mark on the ag retail industry and on the Agricultural Retailers Association."

O'Neill downplayed his impact on the association and the industry.

"I was surprised when I got the letter because I really didn't deserve (the award)," he said. "But I am accepting this on behalf of the hardworking membership; those of you who put in so many volunteer hours."

For many years, he served on the ARA Executive Committee of the Board of Directors. He has been an active member of ARA and steadfast supporter of the fertilizer industry's advocacy and education efforts.

O'Neill, a past chair of the Fertilizer Industry Round Table and former director of The Fertilizer Institute and Fertilizer Canada, currently serves as an independent director and Audit Committee Chair for OCI Resources.

O'Neill has been with International Raw Materials since its founding in 1979. Based in Philadelphia, IRM is an international marketing company specializing in the wholesale distribution of fertilizers and industrial chemicals.



Nielsen Honored with Distinguished Service Award

The Agricultural Retailers Association presented the Distinguished Service Award to long-time board member Steve Nielsen during the ARA Conference and Expo in Phoenix.

"First thing I thought was there must be a mistake," Nielsen said. "I'm very humbled and I'm very honored to receive this award."

Nielsen has been a critical component of ARA's public policy efforts for several years.

"Leaders like Steve have battled for ARA and the ag retail industry multiple fronts," said ARA President and CEO Daren Coppock. "His assistance and counsel on several issues – including the Des Moines Water Works litigation – has been invaluable."

Nielsen, now with Nationwide Agribusiness, was previously general counsel and corporate secretary for United Suppliers. He joined the ARA board of directors in 2011. He has been an active board member during his tenure. In 2012, he participated in the Leadership at its Best program, and later served as chair of the Public Policy Committee. He frequently advocated on behalf of the industry in Washington, D.C.

Awards



Myburgh Named Operator of the Year

AGCO Corporation named Wheat Growers' Andrew Myburgh as their 2017 Operator of the Year. The award recognizes Myburgh's skills, customer service and community involvement as well as overall dedication to the profession.

One of the producers who knows and appreciates Myburgh's work is Arne Svarstad of rural Aberdeen. "He is truly a professional applicator, and we are lucky to have him," Svarstad says. "He is always looking for ways to be more efficient, has a great work ethic and is sensitive to application windows. He does his best and does it with honesty and integrity."

Along with the award, AGCO presented Myburgh with the grand prize of a new Harley Davidson motorcycle during the 2017 Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA) Conference & Expo November 29, 2017, in Phoenix.

The other three finalists were Russ Krans, Head Operator at West Central FS in Wataga, Illinois; John Manning, Operator and Shop Manager at CHS Elburn in Newark, Illinois; and Terry Wilson, Rig Operator at Ferti-Tex in Comanche, Texas.



MKC Receives Precision Impact Award

MKC was recognized for excellence in precision agriculture products and services during the ARA Conference and Expo Nov. 28 in Phoenix.

The Precision Impact award is co-sponsored by the AgPro Magazine, the Agricultural Retailers Association and SST Software.

For the past eight years, MKC, headquartered in Moundridge, Kan., has focused on growing its team to serve farmers with precision ag services. MKC serves farmers across 24 counties with 9 agronomy hubs. The cooperative has been able to build closer relationships with customers as they build out their precision ag services.

"Precision ag is important because we believe it's the future of farming," says Ross Benisch precision ag specialist. "We've seen the great value and benefits it provides. We feel it's our obligation to share that information with our growers to help them be as successful as possible."



MFA Presented Environmental Respect Award

MFA Agri-Services received the Ambassador of Respect Award for North America, one of four global environmental awards presented by DuPont in Wilmington, Del, in July. The Central Missouri retail facility was one of four named 2017 Environmental Respect Award winners in the North American region.

The other North American retail facilities recognized with Environmental Respect Awards in 2017 included Crop Production Services in Athena, Ore.; Crop Production Services in Glenboro, Manitoba, Canada; and Crop Production Services in Norwood, N.C.



Asmus Farm Supply now also has the third generation of the family in the business. From left, Harlan, Billie works in marketing and communications, Holden leads the seed treatment division, Garrett is the financial executive assistant and Amy.

ARA Retailer of the Year

Business Led by Advising

By Margy Eckelkamp, Managing Editor, AgProfessional

Reprinted with permission from the January issue of AgPro Magazine

In the late 1950s, Harvey Asmus saw an opportunity to offer farmers options to resolve existing challenges with a new technology – synthetic chemical pest control.

“The implementation of this idea was difficult because it was dramatically different than the normal practices of the time,” says Harlan Asmus, Harvey’s son. “But persistence and determination paid off, the benefits of the technology were realized by the customer, and Asmus Farm Supply was born.”

In the first year for the company, Harvey ran his business out of his pickup. Today, Harlan and his wife, Amy, are co-owners of the business, and Asmus Farm Supply (AFS) operates five company-owned stores in Iowa and Minnesota. In total, with 11 commission-based sites, the company, which is headquartered in Rake, Iowa, serves farmers in Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota and Nebraska. AFS has been named the Agricultural Retailers Association 2017 Retailer of the Year.

Focused Business. AFS has four product departments: seed, seed treatment, chemistry and crop protection, and plant nutrition.

While being focused on products and services, Harlan explains the five core values that drive the business: integrity, honesty, detail-oriented, customer-focused and teamwork.

“My father started with a mission to offer choices,” he says.

AFS currently sells products from all major crop protection manufacturers as well as many specialty and generic manufacturers. For its plant nutrition portfolio, the company focuses on liquid products. And each location sells a different offering of seed brands.

“We will represent all products to our fullest ability to answer the problem the farmer has,” Harlan says. “We work to strike a balance of taking a portfolio through our agronomy staff to the customer without dictating what answers the agronomy staff offer to a grower.”

Consultative Selling. The company’s mission statement is as follows: consulting clients with sustainable recommendations to maximize production.

All AFS salespeople are Certified Crop Advisers (CCAs). It’s common for AFS customers to have up to four agronomists consulting on their farms – each focusing on one area of AFS services.

Amy explains the CCA program ensures that agronomists have a focus area but are also well-rounded with knowledge of crop development, soil and other production aspects.

“Every CCA agrees to an ethics statement and commits to continuing education, and both of those things are extremely valuable to our business,” she says.

Adviser And Supplier. “While we offer multiple solutions based on multiple product platforms, we focus on the self-applied grower,” Harlan says. “For those customer-partners, we aim



to distribute products and chemistry to make it efficient and safe for them to apply products.”

The business’ focus has developed into its strength, Amy says.

“Retailers have different strengths, and ours is our focus,” she says. “We have developed the strengths we have, and we develop partners. We don’t do the application. We don’t do soil sampling. We don’t try to be the only partner our growers have.”

Those partners include custom-spray and aerial applicators. Product choice and product availability are key benefits of working with AFS, according to Joe Larson, who farms and operates Friesenborg & Larson aerial and custom application in Buffalo Center, Iowa.

“They always have a product on-hand,” Larson says. “And as a custom applicator, they make it easy to figure out billing for our customers. For example, when we have a partial job, we can easily figure out how much chemical was applied for each farmer, and Asmus bills them accordingly.”

Generations Of Business.

During the past 60 years, the company has expanded its footprint and continued to serve loyal customers. Some farm operations have been AFS customers for three generations, and AFS now has third-generation members of the Asmus family engaged in the business.

Harlan and Amy’s sons work in the Rake office. Holden leads the seed treatment department and is a CCA. Garrett is the financial executive assistant. Holden’s wife, Billie, does marketing and communications.

As Frost, Minn., farmer Claire Olson reflects, his farm had 400 acres when it started doing business with AFS in 1974, and today, he farms more than 5,000 acres. His first salesperson with AFS was Harvey, and he’s worked with Harlan and now works with Holden.

He’s confident AFS advises on the right chemical and the right decision.

“With resistant weeds, they have helped us understand the different modes of action. And sometimes, if I’m doubting if something is the right thing to do, I’ll call, and they are also quick to help,” Olson says.

And during its time in business, the company itself has changed a lot—in transformative ways.

“When tank mixes got more complex with up to seven products in the tank, customers were asking for more information and support,” Harlan says. “We turned the company into a knowledge-based company. We led with our knowledge.”

One example is with every receipt, AFS provides a print-out with the order to mix the chemicals.

“When we are ready, we just roll and spray. They make it easy to do what we need to do,” Olson says.

Amy says knowledge has been a conduit for sales, but the business will continue to evolve.

“For a long time, we have given away knowledge to make a sale. Going forward, it will be important for retailers to unhook knowledge and product sales. We are trusted advisers, and at some point, that will be a product itself,” Amy says.

Self-Study. For five years, AFS has conducted its First to the Field trials. Before any new practice or product is marketed by AFS, the company does a multiyear, multisite plot program. In the first year, the protocol is put on the family’s own ground, which spans a 2,500-acre row-crop farm.

If the product or practice looks promising, then the AFS agronomists put out five to eight plots with their farmer-partners in the second year. If the product or practice passes the protocol, then it’s ready for commercial launch in the third year. The team evaluates yield results as well as in-season plant development, such as pod count or standability.

“We take products as they are pitched to us and then educate ourselves on how it may work in our geography,” Amy says. “Having local field data has especially been helpful with our plant nutrition division and biological products.”

First to the Field includes five products every year. Two successes from the program include Accomplish in-furrow and Brandt Smart Trio.

Amy explains that AFS reports First to the Field results in a dedicated e-newsletter, and within 30 minutes of sending one report, three growers had called with questions.

The AFS Brand. As the family business expanded, Harlan and Amy worked for AFS locations to carry the same characteristics.

“The keys for an AFS location are a nice updated office and a clean, organized warehouse,” Amy says. “Also, you’ll find a kitchen and a gathering space.”

She says the facilities are for the employees and the farmers. For example, at the Rake office, the team, which totals 23 employees, regularly gathers for lunch in its kitchen.

“Having things tidy is nice for the grower – it shows we are safe, we manage our inventory, and it gives the customers a great experience from the time they walk in the door and drive off the lot,” Amy says.

At the Estherville, Iowa, location, a new chemical warehouse was built four years ago. It allowed the first offering of the plant nutrition division at this location. The series of heated and cold warehouses are laid out to provide ease in inventory management but also ease for the customer. One-way traffic flow means no trailer has to be backed out after being filled with product.

Similar to efforts at the Rake office and other locations, Estherville manager Brent Baddeley organizes farmer breakfast meetings every week in the winter. They include agronomic and non-agronomic topics, such as estate planning, insurance and marketing.

Product Delivery. As the company has outfitted its bulk storage with automation systems, it has equipped the facilities with similar technology, so if employees needed to transfer between locations for any reason, then they would be familiar with how to operate the systems.

At the Rake facility’s plant nutrition division, an upgraded building was finished in 2013, and it features full automation.

“With custom-blend capabilities, we can really fit any farmer’s needs from nitrogen to micronutrients,” says Cody Wirtjes, sales agronomist. “We mix what the farmer needs when they need it. And true to our mission, agronomists will recommend a dry product, even though we don’t sell it.”

Technology Innovator. All AFS warehouses have Wi-Fi. This helps with implementing a technology in which AFS is a joint venture partner—SecureTracs. The company has 8,400 tanks in the web-enabled app, which can track a tank through its entire service.

The SecureTracs system details what product was in the tank, who loaded it, who received it and when it was returned with a “check-in” inspection and notes. The system helps track that a tank has been triple-rinsed. The SecureTracs code is on the label, on the tank and correlated with the tank number.

“SecureTracs started with EPA repackaging regulations, and as a company, we maintain our own fleet of asset tanks. The system has given us and our customers assurance of how these tanks are being used. We also serve food-grade oil customers with this product,” Amy explains.



Additionally, the company has created a car wash for bulk tanks. A warehouse manager designed a protected area outfitted with spray nozzles. The tote rotates on a turntable as it’s rinsed.

Environmental Stewardship. “We talk a lot about sustainability and stewardship, and everyone has their definition. We steward products. Sustainability, I think, is about the long-term environment. I steward nitrogen in the 4Rs, so our soil and water quality is sustainable,” Amy says.

She says sustainability has to be forefront in the industry’s mind for pest management and nutrient management.

The company has invested in renewable energy and energy efficiency. In Rake, the warehouses total 50,000 sq. ft. of heated space. Overhead fans save 700 gal. of LP every week by keeping a 1-degree difference between the floor and ceiling.

Also, most of AFS’ facilities have geothermal heating and cooling systems for at least part of their footprints.

The Future And Family. “We are passionate about family, ag and business,” Amy says. “AFS is very customer-focused. We like to sit down with individual growers as much as possible. Everyone who works with AFS is part of our big family. And we care for their families. Just as a small example, we provide uniforms for all employees—it’s for their safety, so they don’t mix work clothes with the family’s laundry.”

Bil Schrader was the first non-family member hired, and he’s still with the company today as the seed department manager.

Every other year, the company organizes a team-building trip to a destination resort. Half the team goes on the trip at a time, so business can continue, but the team can take part in activities together as a group.

“I’m excited AFS will be here for the long term, and we passionately care about the industry down to the field level,” Harlan says. “We have been able to accept, adopt and accelerate change. The company has changed to keep with the times and technology and grown to service more customers.”



More than 100 ARA members and stakeholders participated in the Agribusiness Fly-in Tuesday, February 14, 2017. Griffin Evans, R.W. Griffin Company; Rep. Austin Scott (R-Ga.), House Ag Committee; Richard Gupton, ARA; Jeff Sands, Syngenta.

Retailers Storm Capitol Hill for Agribusiness Fly-in

WASHINGTON, D.C. – More than 100 agricultural retailers, distributors and suppliers took to Capitol Hill February 14, 2017 for the Agribusiness Congressional Fly-in.

Hosted by the Agricultural Retailers Association, the fly-in garnered participation from ARA members from across the country and several national and state agribusiness groups.

“Grassroots advocacy matters,” said ARA President and CEO Daren Coppock. “This is an important opportunity for our members and stakeholders to put agricultural policy issues in front of their federal legislators.”

Delegations of retailers and suppliers visited with more than 160 members of Congress and/or their staff to discuss key policy issues including regulatory reform, rollback of the Environmental Protection Agency’s Risk Management Plan final rule, elimination of the duplicative National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Pesticide General Permit and components of ARA’s pro-growth economic agenda such as tax and healthcare reform.

“I had a great day,” said ARA Chairman Tim McArdle, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for Brandt. “We had a record number of meetings overall and I felt that the members and staff we met with were open and receptive to what we had to say.”

Participating state organizations included the Florida Fertilizer and Agrichemical Association, Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association, Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Association, Kansas Grain and Feed Association, Missouri Agribusiness Association, New York State Agribusiness Association, Ohio Agribusiness Association, Texas Ag Industries Association and Wisconsin Agribusiness Association.

“This is one of the few times everybody gets together – the Biotechnology Innovation Organization, CropLife America and The Fertilizer Institute – and goes to the Hill,” said Kevin “KJ” Johnson, Director of Government and Industry Relations for the Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association. “We try to hit every Illinois delegate, and we bring all of our board members. It shows how ARA is helping Illinois ag retailers and our issues, as well as showing how all the national organizations are collaborating.”

State and national groups – including ARA, BIO, CLA and TFI – concluded the day with a reception on Capitol Hill for Congressional members and staff.

Thank You ARA Conference & Expo Sponsors and Exhibitors

More than 675 attendees took part in the 2017 ARA Conference & Expo. It remains an essential networking and professional development event for leading agricultural retailers. ARA’s board of directors and staff wish to thank all of the 2017 sponsors and exhibitors for their continued strong support.

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Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, center, walks with GROWMARK representatives Rick Nelson, left, and Jim Spradlin during a tour of the Evergreen FS Plant in Chenoa.

Ag Secretary Visits GROWMARK Facility

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue Monday visited Evergreen FS in Chenoa, Ill., August 11, 2017, as part of a five-state RV tour, titled the “Back to Our Roots” Tour. The focus of the tour is to gather input on the 2018 Farm Bill and increasing rural prosperity.

“The tour will allow us to hear directly from people in agriculture across the country, as well as our consumers – they are the ones on the front lines of American agriculture and they know best what the current issues are,” Perdue said. “We are committed to making the resources and the research available so that Congress can make good facts-based, data-driven decisions. It’s important to look at past practices to see what has worked and what has not worked so that we create a farm bill for the future that will be embraced by American agriculture in 2018.”

Evergreen FS manager Kendall Miller said having the agriculture secretary on site was a “special thrill.”

“It was very important for us, and we really enjoyed the opportunity to share the message of agriculture with Secretary Perdue and to share some of our thoughts and concerns on various topics that are important to our membership, such as the management of fertilizer and chemicals used in the business,” he said.

Perdue took a tour of the Chenoa plant before meeting area farmers and speaking with the media.

“It’s an impressive facility,” Perdue said, “and we’re happy to be here. I am an old grain guy, and I look at this facility and around the area and see great means for corn and bean production.”

Representatives from GROWMARK used the visit as an opportunity to highlight key issues for farmers and ag retailers that should be addressed in the upcoming farm bill, such as stewardship, weed resistance, energy, infrastructure, regulation, nutrient management and tax reform.

Harold Cooper, Premier Companies General Manager and past president of ARA, also participated in discussions with Sec. Perdue during a Farm Bill Listening Session earlier in the day in Indianapolis.

These tours and events highlight opportunities for ag retailers to influence and educate regulators, legislators and stakeholders about issues critical to our industry. Need assistance arranging a tour for your representatives? Contact the ARA’s DC Help Desk for assistance.

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Financials

Agricultural Retailers Association Statement of Financial Position September 30, 2017

Current Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	\$930,630
Accounts receivable	98,883
Prepaid expenses	213,726
Investments	4,365,146
Property and equipment, net	169,688
Other assets	14,161
TOTAL assets	\$5,792,234

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current liabilities:	
Accounts payable & accrued expenses	\$74,487
Deferred rent	19,284
Deferred income	1,680,968
TOTAL liabilities	1,774,739
Net Assets:	
Unrestricted	4,017,495
Total liabilities and net assets	\$5,792,234

Change in Net Assets	\$692,284
Beginning of year	3,325,211
End of year	4,017,495

Agricultural Retailers Association Consolidated Statement of Activities September 30, 2017

Revenue and Support

Membership dues	\$2,256,392
Annual conference	866,737
Royalties	21,794
Sponsorship, grants and other	174,528
PAC administration	91,417
PAC income	55,212
Other income	13,187
TOTAL revenue	\$3,479,267

Expenses

Annual conference	\$677,348
Communications	221,835
Governance	308,149
Government relations	776,260
TOTAL program services	1,983,592
Management and general	692,929
Membership services	693,205
TOTAL supporting services	1,386,134
TOTAL expenses	\$3,369,726

Net Gain from Operations	\$109,541
Investment income gain/loss	582,743
Change in net assets	692,284



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