

GUEST OPINION

Ag - Our Bread and Butter

As the Commissioner of Agriculture and Food, and a long-time Box Elder County farmer/rancher, I am always excited to talk about the tremendous job our farmers and ranchers do for us every day; especially our producers from Box Elder County. What profession can be more important than growing the food that keeps our county and state strong?

Before our children head off to school and we adults head to work, we must first consume a nutritious meal. Ask any physician and they'll tell us a healthy diet is important to our daily productivity and our long-term quality of life. I believe our Utah grown and raised foods are vital to this formula.

Box Elder County agriculture generates nearly \$170 million in total cash receipts and is ranked as high as third among the state's 29 counties. The county ranks number one statewide in the number of beef cattle and calves with a value of nearly \$45 million. It is second in sheep and lamb production at nearly \$6 million, and has the third largest number of milk cows in the state with 10,000 head.

Agriculture in Box Elder County is diverse and productive, from fruits and vegetables to livestock.

Box Elder County is located in one of the primary agricultural production regions in the state. Some of the major commodities grown here include alfalfa, winter wheat, spring wheat, safflower, silage corn, barley and oats.

Producers in the county also raise some unique crops. Onions are grown in the Bear River Valley from Tremonton south to the Corinne area. Many other vegetables such as sweet corn, tomatoes, squash, pumpkins and peppers are grown valley wide. In the area around Corinne it is common to see peppermint and spearmint grown for use in the commercial oil flavoring market.

The county is also famous for the Fruit Way in Perry and Willard on Highway 89. The fruit way lies along the base of the mountains and the climate is ideal for growing peaches, apricots and apples, as well as sweet and tart cherries.

Our county contributes to a statewide economic impact that Utah State University estimates to be more than \$17.5 billion when you consider direct and indirect economic contributions. Statewide approximately 80,000 jobs are tied to agricultural production and processing.

I have been in office a little over a year now, and I am especially impressed with our citizens' support for Utah agriculture. In our latest Wasatch Front public opinion poll, a whopping 95 percent of Utahns think farming and ranching are important to the future of the state and 84 percent think farmers are responsible stewards of the land.

It's clear they feel the way I do, that our local farmers and ranchers produce the most nutritious, safest and most abundant supply of food in the land. Utahns, as well as people around the country, value locally grown foods. More than eight out of 10 consumers say they want their foods to come from within the United States.

Our agency's Utah's Own Program is helping farmers and ranchers by directing consumers to products that are made from locally grown and raised ingredients. Box Elder County is home to Utah's Own companies such as Idle Isle Candy, Tagge's Famous Fruits and Veggie Farm and Blue Springs Farm. We calculate that if Utahns shifted one percent of their food dollar to purchase Utah grown prod-

ucts instead of national brands, we'd generate \$63 million for our state's economy.

Production agriculture is vital to rural communities because it helps farmers and ranchers remain profitable even in unconventional ways.

Through conservation planning, farmers help maintain productive farmlands and dynamic ecosystems. Well managed livestock grazing not only helps sustain healthy rangelands, watersheds and wildlife habitats, they also help control the spread of invasive weeds and reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires.

Agriculture has always been important to Box Elder County and the state. Our family farms are part of our heritage. They have shaped who we are, and with continued support from our leaders and consumers, agriculture will continue to shape Utah's future.

LuAnn Adams is currently the commissioner for Utah Agriculture and Food. She is a past Box Elder County Commissioner and is deeply involved in agriculture in the county.



Final Week at the Legislature

What a finish!

The final week was incredibly fast paced. This session was a great learning experience for me.

I realized that those serving are very sincere in their desire to make this state better. We just don't agree on the path to get there in every instance.

I also came to the realization that the vast majority of the new "laws" passed each year are not new at all. They are simply small adjustments to existing codes. It was a great experience and an honor to serve as the representative from District 1. Here is a recap of some of the bigger issues.

Anti-discrimination

This week saw a very emotional debate and final vote on SB 296. It passed the House late Wednesday night and was signed into law by the Governor on Thursday. I was proud to stand with all those who worked so hard to make this happen. It ensures religious liberties and protects the LGBT in housing and the workplace.

It was very historic for me to stand behind Elder L. Tom Perry and in front of many of the LGBT advocates on the stairs in the Rotunda as the Governor signed

the bill.

Transportation Funding

This was possibly the hardest decision I had to make this session. The bill came back from conference committee in the last hour of the session with a five cent per gallon tax increase, plus a provision that will increase the tax per gallon once the wholesale price of regular gas reaches \$2.45 per gallon.

I feel very sincerely that we need additional funding for transportation. I simply could not vote for an increase for an undetermined time in the future. Who knows if the \$2.45 level will come in six months or six years?

In the end, I was not able to support the

blending of the two taxes and voted no. The bill, did however, pass.

Daylight Savings

All bills dealing with changing Daylight Savings failed to advance to become law. We continue to spring ahead and fall behind.

Medicaid Expansion

No compromise was reached in the final week. We did pass a resolution asking for the legislature and the governor to continue to work on a solution.

HB296

On a personal note and closer to home, I was able to sponsor and pass HB296, which allows law enforcement to test and train drones in specific test areas, and then use those systems for search and res-

cue.

This was very important for those in our county working on establishing a test area for unmanned aerial vehicles in Box Elder County.

I also sponsored a bill that would allow businesses locating in Box Elder County to once again be eligible for tax credits under the Enterprise Zone program. It passed the House and Senate committees but failed to find enough funding to be heard on the Senate floor. I will continue to work on making this happen for the next session. Economic development is very important as our district continues to grow.

Thanks again for the opportunity to serve as

your representative in

District 1. Please continue to stay in touch as we go forward. I sincerely want to do what I can to make our state the best place to live in the

world.
*Rep. Scott Sandall
Utah House of Representatives
District 1*



the Leader

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GENERAL MANAGER/EDITOR: Ellen Cook, email: ellenc@tremontonleader.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Jessica Tanner, email: jessicat@tremontonleader.com
ADVERTISING: Andi Thomas, andit@tremontonleader.com, Becky Howard, adsales@tremontonleader.com
OFFICE MANAGER: Michele Anderson, email: classifieds@tremontonleader.com
CIRCULATION: Kristi Kent, email: subs@tremontonleader.com
STAFF WRITERS: Cari Doutre, Anniisa Porter
SPORTS: Cari Doutre, Heather Strong, Madi Cook
PRODUCTION: Jodie Valdez, email: info@tremontonleader.com

CORRESPONDENTS: BEAR RIVER CITY - Mitzi Nessler 279-8676; CORINNE - Sandra Neff 744-5513; BOTHWELL - Heather Strong; GROUSE CREEK - Tawni Blanthorn; THATCHER - Anniisa Porter, alporter@frontiernet.net; HONEYVILLE - Ellen Cook, cookclan2@yahoo.com; HOWELL - Lacie Kotter; PORTAGE - Opal Morrison; PROMONTORY - Winnie Richman 471-7296

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