

Opinion & Mailbox

Farming provides ever-fresh hope

A MIDST the anger, fear and furor over deteriorating economic conditions, I find a ray of hope, and it is in the future of farming.

I saw it in the eyes of the young men I interviewed for this month's story about yield monitors and mapping. They have that competitive gleam that lets you know they are thinking ahead.

Our Say

"Anything you can do to get a leg up," says Chad Wilt, who farms near South Charleston. He has a plan.

I read it in a press release from the American Farm Bureau Federation in

which 85% of the farmers ages 18 to 35 indicated that they are better off now than they were five years ago. In the release, Mathew Meals, chairman of the group's Young Farmer and Rancher Committee and a first-generation crop farmer from Newville, Pa., says this: "In good times as well as bad, optimism is the No. 1 job requirement for being a

successful farmer."

I heard it in the report Bobby Moser, vice president for agriculture at the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, gave to Sen. George Voinovich, R-Ohio, at the senator's ag forum. He said 94% of the college's graduates last year had jobs when they walked across the stage to be handed their diploma.

The figures were backed up by Joe Needham, vice president of the grain division of the Andersons, who added, "We like to hire OSU grads, but you better get to them by January. After that, they often have something lined up."

I felt it when Jack Fisher, executive vice president of the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, told the same group that it is time for Ohioans to step into a leadership role for American agriculture.

He's right — we have people on the committees of most of the national commodity groups. We have Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, on the Senate Agriculture Committee and Rep. John Boccieri, D-Alliance, on the House Agriculture Committee. Fisher's own federation is one of the nation's largest and most award-winning Farm Bureau groups.

I expect it every year when I meet the new officers of the Ohio FFA. Young people who have a passion for their chosen path — who have the training and drive to make things better.

For all that's wrong on Wall Street and all that's troubling on Main Street, the farm fields are green this spring, and agriculture offers the optimism that we can turn this world around.

Nominate a farm family

Since 1984, we have partnered with the Division of Soil and Water of the Department of Natural Resources to honor the state's farm families for their work to preserve and maintain our natural resources. It is time again to nominate deserving families for the Ohio Conservation Farm Family Award.

A farm family may nominate themselves or another farm family. An agricultural or conservation agency or organization may also place nominations.

Five area finalists will be chosen from around the state. These top Conservation Farm Families will be recognized at a ceremony during the Farm Science Review in September. They will also receive a \$400 check courtesy of the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation and be featured in the September issue of *The Ohio Farmer* magazine.

Applications for the award are due by May 1 to our office. Contact your local Soil and Water District for an application or go to download one online at www.ohiodnr.com.

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