

Indiana Farm Bureau

NEWS RELEASE

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Farmers must speak out, IFB president says

The only way farmers can prevail against anti-agricultural groups is to speak out – to tell their story, said Indiana Farm Bureau President Don Villwock, delivering his annual address on Dec. 10 at IFB’s annual convention.

“I don’t know how to say it more clearly: Our future as farmers is at stake. The lives of hungry people here in the U.S. and around world are at stake,” Villwock said. “I would hate to see America’s most efficient, competitive and sustainable industry lost to lies, mistruths and ignorance, knowing that we sat idly by and watched it happen.”

The theme of this year’s convention, held Dec. 10 and 11 in Indianapolis, was “You Life, Your Story,” and that was also the theme of Villwock’s speech.

“I think agriculture has a great story to tell,” he said. “But others have taken our positive image agenda away and are telling distorted lies and portraying a false image of agriculture.”

Agriculture, Villwock said, has made great strides toward sustainability while becoming even more efficient in producing the food needed by a hungry world. Crop farmers use techniques such as filter strips, no-till and reduced-till agriculture, soil sampling, crop rotations,

and precision placement of fertilizer to make sure it goes only where and at the rate that it's needed.

“These are just a few of the practices farmers all across the country are using to make their grain farms more sustainable and environmentally friendly while still increasing needed production to feed a starving world,” said Villwock, a grain farmer from Knox County.

Villwock added that when he visits livestock farms, he is equally impressed with the vast improvements they have made to make their farms environmentally friendly while improving their animals' well being. Climate-controlled buildings keep the animals comfortable and protected from predators and pens and stalls in buildings are designed by animal scientists with animal safety and comfort in mind.

“Permits are a requirement for large animal facilities, and all of them have to be engineered to be zero – repeat, zero – manure discharge buildings and storage units – unlike your local city or town that can legally dump sewage into our rivers and streams,” Villwock said.

“Our livestock farmers are truly ‘Champions of Animal Care,’” he said.

“I think an Ohio egg farmer, Gary Stoller, said it best about America's biggest misconception on today's agriculture,” Villwock noted. “He said, ‘Some believe that 2 million farmers can feed 300 million people using the same technology that 30 million farmers used 50 years ago to feed 180 million people.’”

“Please seize the opportunity to get involved – this is the time, this is the place,” he told the assembled farmers. “Please tell everyone that you know, everyone you can, about your farm and agricultural experiences. After all, it is “Your Life” and “Your Story.”