



Who is the Alaska Farmers Union?

Why does Alaska agriculture need yet another group asking for support from the small number of producers in the far north? Can the Alaska Farmers Union (AFU) provide needed services that others do not provide? The short answer, of course, is "yes." Even if you are a member of one or more of the other farm organizations in the state, AFU is philosophically different, and on the national scene through our parent, the National Farmers Union (NFU) we have a seat when national agricultural policy is being made. With the Farm Bill being written this year in Congress, we have a direct link on the NFU Policy Committee through our Board Member Karen Olson. Our President, Bob Schumaker, participates on a regular basis with other State's Farmers Union Presidents in many conferences and direct political actions to represent our membership. Other members and Board of Director (BOD) members participate in legislative fly-ins, conferences, and meetings throughout the year. Following is a brief explanation of the tripartite mission of NFU; cooperation, education, and legislation.

Cooperation: National Farmers Union promotes rural economic and cooperative development by supporting existing agricultural co-ops and helping form new farmer co-ops and other rural businesses. The primary objective is to help family farmers and ranchers add value to the food, fiber and energy they produce. NFU assists producers to retain ownership of their commodity further into the processing channel and enhance market returns on their investment. By working together with other persons and groups, Farmers Union helps family farmers and ranchers advance their farm, ranch, co-op

and community enterprises.

In Alaska, AFU and NFU were instrumental in helping UAA and UAF to achieve funding through the Rural Cooperative Development Grant to provide coop development assistance throughout the State. Cooperative groups including the Fairbanks Community Cooperative Market, Kachemak Shellfish Coop, Naukati Shellfish Coop, Thorne Bay Biomass Coop, and many other small groups of producers and consumers have directly benefited from AFU and NFU's support of this important project.

Education: The future of family farm agriculture depends heavily upon the civic involvement of the next generation. National Farmers Union believes young people can practice good citizenship now, and not only when they reach adulthood. Farmers Union encourages this through leadership training and opportunities for young people as early as first grade. In addition to youth education programs, NFU also provides adult education on important ag related topics.

In Alaska, AFU is looking to form partnerships to bring NFU educational opportunities to Alaska through cooperation with institutions as well as some of the 501C3s that are multiplying in the small farm sector.

Legislation: NFU's government relations office serves as our members' direct link to Congress, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other key administration agencies. While NFU policy is driven from the grassroots level, the government relations staff takes the organization's

From the President ...

Well, we wound down another exciting year and have started 2011 with some herculean hurdles. First and foremost is our membership. We have some core individuals that are doing a great job but that is just it—the core is small. I always reminded of my mother telling me to save the "cores" so that we could dry the seeds. Some of those seeds sprouted while the majority didn't. You would never know today what went into the making of some of those trees but the bottom line is that extra effort pays off. So get out there and sound the drum! A second issue is getting our voice heard. Now not everyone is vocal and can attend every meeting but just attending one meeting regarding something you care about will get you in touch with others of a like mind. An issue of the AFU for many years has been the development of a Processing facility in Palmer. We have had two meetings lately that revolve around the group of individuals that would support such a facility. A message I hear coming from those meetings is that we need more land opened up. The cart/ horse dilemma. As a side note, how deep are your pipes. Here in Alaska we have our water pipes up/down to 18 feet below the surface. My brother called me a while back, none to happy he had to dig three feet at our farm in Indiana. I didn't have the heart to talk about that shovel in Alaska. Last but not least, you will see a producer survey at some point if it is included here all the better. This is to help us know where you want to go. All for now. See you at the convention.

--Bob

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priorities directly to the nation's key decision-makers. The office advocates policy positions, promotes legislation, responds to proposed rules and regulations, and brings matters to the attention of top officials through regular meetings, letters, issue briefings and other means.

AFU supports agricultural development in Alaska, particularly programs which support family farms and producer owned (cooperative) marketing and processing facilities.

At this time, AFU is beginning to engage in a membership drive. If you are an Alaska producer (farmer, mariculture, fisherman, or simply have an interest), you are welcome in our (your) organization. We intend to be more active and visible in our activities in the coming months, and we intend to bring our members more benefits to help you in your farming operation and businesses. One year's membership in the AFU is \$30. You will receive in return, a quarterly newsletter from AFU, a monthly newsletter from NFU, and also the North Dakota monthly newsletter. I have found this to be one of the most important benefits of membership. Our alliance with other state's organizations provide farmer to farmer contact, leading to opportunities for commerce and friendship with our counterparts Outside. I personally have been able to directly benefit from the knowledge imparted by the North Dakota newsletter to purchase equipment and learn about market conditions from my counterparts Outside. Please take some time to fill out the membership application and mail it to us soon. Welcome to the Alaska Farmers Union!

Producer Survey

You may be aware of efforts in the Mat-Su to develop an agricultural processing facility. We are gathering information to determine several things: 1) Who could/would use such a facility? 2) Where are we currently marketing our products? 3) Where would we like to be marketing our products? 4) What kind of facility would be most beneficial for us? This particular survey is very general and broad in scope. We really do appreciate your time and interest.

Please rate your answers 1, 2, 3, etc. with 1 being the highest or most important rating. Please also indicate if an item is Not Applicable (N/A).

1) What is your current business size? (Select only one.)

_____ Less than 1 acre _____ 1 to 3 acres _____ 3 to 5 acres
_____ 5 to 10 acres _____ 10 to 20 acres _____ 20 to 30 acres
_____ 30 acres or more _____ Home Gardener wanting to expand

2) Where would you like to be in 5 years?

_____ Less than 1 acre _____ 1 to 3 acres _____ 3 to 5 acres
_____ 5 to 10 acres _____ 10 to 20 acres _____ 20 to 30 acres
_____ 30 acres or more

3) What is your current market?

_____ Distributor Wholesale _____ Roadside Stand _____ CSA
_____ U-Pick _____ Farmer's Market (How many?) _____
_____ Large-Scale Retail

4) If you are interested in increasing or expanding your business:

_____ Consider diversifying (multiple crops) _____ Create Specialty product
_____ Consider entering new market _____ Prefer larger single crop

5) What do you feel is limiting you now in your current business?

_____ Market access _____ Capital _____ Processing location
_____ Storage _____ Advertising _____ Market Outlet
_____ Land _____ Equipment _____ Lack of expertise/knowledge
_____ Operating Costs _____ Labor _____ Other _____

6) What type of processing facility would you be interested in utilizing?

_____ Blanch/Freeze line _____ Juicing _____ DEC Kitchen
_____ Freezer Storage _____ Cooler Storage _____ Dehydrator
_____ None

7) What could an organized group do for you that you can't do for yourself?

_____ Marketing (General) _____ Processing _____ Warehouse Storage
_____ Bulk Buying _____ Large market access (Includes Export)
_____ Specialty Product Production _____ Sharing of Specialized Machinery

8) If you are interested in a processing facility, what are you willing to do? (Not including Funding)

_____ Time volunteering community outreach (telephone calls, person-to-person)
_____ Time volunteering behind the scenes paperwork/data gathering & analyzing
_____ Time volunteering at meetings with various agencies/associations
_____ Time spent writing publicity/advertising
_____ Other (Please describe) _____

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News to Share?

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