

**TALL Cohort XVIII**  
**Session 4 – Washington, DC, Maryland, Pennsylvania, & New York**  
**“National Government: Issues and Policies”**  
**Jayci Bishop #4**

April brought about our fourth session as a TALL Cohort. Prior to this trip I hadn't had the opportunity to see much of Washington, DC, or the other states on the itinerary. When I saw the schedule, I also appreciated the extra time to explore and do things on our own. I feel like this gave our Cohort the opportunity to bond and further build our friendships!

### **Washington, DC**

Our time in DC started with a night tour of the monuments. I had never been on an official tour of the monuments, so I enjoyed hearing the history and seeing them at night was so neat. The next day we had a free day to continue to explore the museums and sites in DC. We ended up going to lunch at Old Ebbitt Grill, which was delicious. We then went to the National Archives, Botanical Gardens, and Museum of Natural History! I learned so much and enjoyed seeing pieces of our nation's history.

Monday, we started the day at USDA with a comprehensive program overviewing their operations. We were able to hear from multiple departments and learn about many of the different sectors of their business. I learned a lot from their perspectives on foreign affairs and farm policy. They were very hospitable during our visit and I appreciated the time they took to visit with us.

Following our visit to USDA, we made our way to the House office building for lunch and a meeting with Congressmen Pete Sessions and Jake Ellzey. That evening we had dinner with Mr. Adam Krzywosadzki and Mr. Bartosz Folusiak from the Polish Embassy. I really enjoy their presentation with more information on Poland and their culture. I'm looking forward to our trip to Poland next year!

We ended the evening with a private Capitol tour with Congressman Nathaniel Moran. This was really neat to see the Capitol from that perspective and even get to sit on the house floor. I appreciate Daniel in our Cohort for setting this up for us.

The next day we visited EPA and heard from Venus Welch-White on her role at the agency. Following that we met with Senator Ted Cruz and Congressman Jodey Arrington and had good visits with each of them! We also had the pleasure of meeting with G.T. Thompson of the House Agriculture Committee. Following his visit, I was reassured that we had the right people in place to hopefully get a strong farm bill passed. His goals for the farm bill were to write it to last with a good platform for the future, not just to last the next five years. He also said that nobody does sustainability better than American farmers, and we need to be sure to tell that story. We ended the day joining Texas Farm Bureau for their dinner/event with Cruz as the keynote speaker. It was neat to see so many ag advocates in DC at one time. The priority issues for Farm Bureau include Farm Bill, border security, trade, ag labor, food supply chain, rural connectivity, livestock/crop protection, and regulatory reform.

### **Maryland**

The next day we boarded a bus and made our way to Maryland for a variety of tours. We visited the Holloway Brothers Farm and learned about their operation and the land preservation program in the state. Following that we went to the Hopkins Brewery and

were able to learn about their brewery they have built in conjunction with their farming operation.

Broom's Bloom Dairy was next on the itinerary, and personally, this was one of my favorite stops of the entire trip. The family was so hospitable and served us a delicious lunch and the best ice cream! I think it is really neat how they have vertically integrated their operation to add additional value. I also love how the daughters are coming back to help grow the business. Can we go back for some more ice cream?

### **Pennsylvania**

The Riehl farm was our next stop where we learned about the Amish way of life and their beliefs. I found this very interesting. It made me want to take a step back and slow things down in our way of life. One of the main things he hoped to pass down to his children was contentment. I think that is something that each family should strive to have more of. I also loved seeing all the handmade items they make – they are so talented. While at this farm, Russel C. Redding, the Secretary of Agriculture for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, spoke to us about the ag economy in the state.

### **New York**

We then continued our trek to New York City and arrived at the hotel late that evening. Our tours in NYC began with Grow NYC, whose mission is to improve New York City's quality of life through environmental programs that transform communities block by block and empower all New Yorkers to secure a clean and healthy environment for future generations.

Keeping with the food distribution theme, Baldor Foods was our next stop. They gave a wonderful tour and I learned a lot about food distribution from them. The President of the company, Michael Muzyk, was quite a character. He talked to us about what it was like to do business during different times like Covid. During covid, 78% of his business was gone in 3 minutes. They had to reevaluate and get through it. He also talked about the importance of goals and writing them down. I enjoyed his visit a lot!

After lunch that day we visited the Federal Farm Credit Banks Funding Corporation. We utilize Capital Farm Credit for our farming operation, so I found this stop really interesting. While I am not a banker, and some of the technical language was over my head, I think it is really neat how they operate to fund the banks. They have five stakeholders: Rating Agencies, U.S. Treasury, Federal Reserve, Underwriters, and Investors.

After this we had a little free time and Jaclyn and I went to see Harry Potter and the Cursed Child on Broadway. I had always wanted to see a Broadway show and I loved having the opportunity to do so!

The last day of our trip we ventured out on Long Island. We visited Bayport Flower House, heard from the Long Island Farm Bureau and Peconic Land Trust, and visited a Cornell Shellfish Hatchery. Our trip ended with a visit to Pindar Vineyards to see their vineyard and winery and get to taste some of their wine.

This was a very diverse session that touched on many topics and industries we don't have the opportunity to view in Texas. I really enjoyed this session and am looking forward to the next one!

**Jon Cluck #6**  
**Session 4-Washington, DC, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York**  
**“National Government: Issues and Policies”**  
**April 15-22, 2023**

Out of all of the session that we have had planned for our time as members of Cohort XVIII, this was one that I was really looking forward to. I have never been to this region of the United States and always wanted to go. I knew that going with this program would not disappoint, and it was an unforgettable experience.

**Saturday, April 15**

On Saturday, members of TALL XVIII slowly trickled into our Nation’s Capital. I was able to arrive early enough to meet up with members of our group to catch a Washington Nationals baseball game. After that we all met up and went on a private night tour of Washington, DC with the stops focusing primarily around the National Mall. This was a great experience because I had never been to that part of the country before. To be able to see all these monuments and memorials in person was awesome. What was so special about having a private tour was for all of us being able to sit there and ask the tour guide all sorts of questions to learn more about each of our stops.

**Sunday, April 16**

Sunday morning began when a group of our Cohort went over to Arlington National Cemetery. Here we took a tour of the graves, then got out at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier where we witnessed the Changing of the Guard. Afterwards, we walked over the Lee House, and lastly down to the JFK grave where we completed our time there. I spent the rest of the afternoon with one of our cohort members having a seafood lunch in Maryland. The day was wrapped up by heading to the National Archives where we arrived just in time to see the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The day concluded with another seafood supper.

**Monday, April 17**

On Monday morning we walked over to the USDA where we met with Jon Hurst who gave us a rundown of the top challenges and priorities for the Secretary of Agriculture. They are climate change, racial equity/equal opportunity, more/better markets, food nutrition/insecurity, making the USDA a great place to work. Following Mr. Hurst, we heard from several speakers who talked in depth about the Agricultural Research Service

(ARS). We also heard from Under Secretary Robert Bonnie. The Under Secretary discussed the different plans that have been put into place for American agriculture and how the next 18 months will be about their execution. After lunch that day, we were lucky enough to visit with multiple Congressmen. Congressmen Mike McCaul, Jake Ellzey, and Pete Sessions each shared their views on a wide range of topics including the war in Ukraine, and the crisis at our southern border to name a few. What was interesting was that they all had the same views towards the border, but differing views to our involvement in Ukraine. They each emphasized the importance of our program, and the need for leaders in the agricultural industry. After we left the Longworth Building, we caught a ride over to Georgetown where we had a great dinner while getting to hear from two members from the Polish Embassy. They spoke to us about their country's strong relationship with the United States, Polish history, and the war in Ukraine as well as much more. To round out the evening, we had a personal night tour of the U.S Capitol from Congressman Nathaniel Moran. This was an incredible experience to be able to tour a place that is so historic and monumental to our country.

### **Tuesday, April 18**

The first stop of the day was at the EPA where we spoke with Venus Welch-White who is the Senior Advisor to the Ag. Advisor. She touched on several hot topics such as WOTUS. Following our time at the EPA, we made our way over to the Russell Senate Office Building to begin the afternoon. We were very fortunate to meet with Senator Ted Cruz at his office. While it was an extremely short meeting it was very insightful and interesting. I really appreciated how he wanted to know where we were all from and what we all do. He was very passionate about certain topics such as the border, agriculture, and the war in Ukraine. He specifically talked in depth about Ukraine and how a bill he had proposed to stop the construction of the Nordstream 2 pipeline would have played a large hand in stopping the war before it started. Next, we went back to the House Office Building to visit Congressman Jodey Arrington. He spoke to us on issues facing small business and agriculture, while also touching on the border and Ukraine. Congressman GT Thompson met with us next to round out our afternoon session. Congressman Thompson is the US House Agriculture Chairman who discussed with us the upcoming Farm Bill and the challenges that him and his side are facing.

That evening we attended a reception held by the Texas Farm Bureau. Here, we enjoyed a nice supper and got to hear again from Senator Ted Cruz.

**Wednesday, April 19**

Wednesday morning began bright and early when we boarded the bus and began to make our way to New York. The first stop of that day's road trip was at the Holloway Brothers Farm in Maryland. They are a large sized farm producing Angus cattle, corn, soybeans, and wheat. They were transparent about their operation and very personable. We also heard from Maryland LEAD Alumnus, Bill Amoss, who educated us on the Agricultural Land Preservation Programs or land easements for their area. After leaving the Holloway Brothers Farm, we made our way over to the Hopkins Farm Brewery. They gave us a tour and discussed how their craft beer is brewed from grain and other products grown on their farm. We also got to spend some time in their tasting room, enjoying their beer. The next stop of the day from there was Broom's Bloom Dairy. Here we were served a delicious lunch that came straight from products produced on their own operation. When lunch was over, we headed over to their dairy operation to learn about what all they do and how they do it. What was extremely impressive was that the only employees they have are all family members. On top of that, they work pretty much every day of the week, each day consisting of 12+ hours. The last stop of our road trip for the day was in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to the Riehl Farm, which is owned and operated by an Amish family. The drive heading to this stop was very neat, because as we got closer and closer you would see the Amish people out working their fields. We saw a six-horse team hooked up to a buggy, pulling a John Deere hay baler, or a fertilizer spreader - it was so interesting. At the farm, we talked to owner/operator, Sam Riehl, who answered our questions and was very transparent about the Amish culture. Russell Redding, Secretary of Agriculture for Pennsylvania, spoke to us after a while at the farm and provided an overview of agriculture for their state. When the talk concluded, we got on the bus and made our way to New York City.

**Thursday, April 20**

We began our day with a visit to GrowNYC. GrowNYC was founded in the 1970s with the mission to improve New York's quality of life by providing access to healthier food. We were given a quick presentation and a tour of the warehouse. The next stop was to Baldor Foods in Hunt's Point, NY. Baldor is a large wholesale food distributor business that purchases products from around the U.S. and gets them in to NYC. The success of their business is because they can get the food the "last mile" into the city. Getting to hear from Michael Muzyk, President of Baldor, was the absolute highlight. He seemed like the

typical New York businessman; charismatic, loud, energetic, no filter, etc. - it was such a treat. Thursday's final session was at the Federal Farm Credit Banks Funding Corporation in New Jersey. We heard from Tracey McCabe, President & CEO, Dan Spencer, Vice President, and Regina Gill, Managing Director-Investor Relations. They each gave us an overview of what their all company does and how they provide funding for the Farm Credit System.

### **Friday, April 21**

On the last main day of the session, we headed out to Long Island to see some agricultural operations. Bayport Flower house was the first stop of the day. They are primarily a retail operation but have diversified over the years by adding floral design, landscaping, and winter plant storage to their list. We learned about their operations, challenges, and plans for the future. Lunch was had at the Pulaski Street Grill where we had two speakers who discussed the challenges for people in the agriculture industry on Long Island. The main issue is the encroaching population and their attempts to prevent farmers from doing their jobs. They believe the solution is by trying to put the remaining farmland into land trusts, where it cannot be broken up any further and must continue to be farmed. After lunch, we went further out on Long Island to see the Cornell Shellfish Hatchery. Here, we were given an overview of their operations and a tour of the facility. This was a very fast tour, but extremely fun and informative. The speakers were extremely knowledgeable about shellfish and really helped us to understand what all they are doing at the facility and what all the shellfish do in the environment. For us oyster eaters in the cohort it was very neat to talk to those folks about different types of oysters and what makes them taste different. The last official stop of the session was at the Pindar Vineyards. We spoke with the grape grower and the wine maker and received a tour of their facilities. The session was concluded by a wine tasting.

In conclusion, this was a phenomenal session and truly a once in a lifetime trip. Getting to meet with so many great people and tour so many different and diverse operations was great. One thing I realized was that even though these people live in the Northeast, they still face similar issues that we do in our industry. Going up there, mainly to New York, sure made me appreciate living in small town Texas and our slow paced way of life. Thanks to Dr. Jim, Jennifer, and everyone else involved in making this trip successful and memorable. I do not know if I will ever be able to go up to that part of the country and

Cluck #6

have an experience like that again. Being able to be in those cities that are so rich in history, meeting senators and congressmen, and seeing all the countryside in between was incredible. This will be an experience that I will never forget. I hope all TALL Cohorts are able to experience this same type of trip in the future.

**TALL COHORT XVIII**  
**Session #4 – Washington, DC, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York**  
**April 15-22, 2023**  
**Reina Lewis #10**  
**National Government: Issues and Politics**

We started our trip with a night tour of the National Mall in DC. So much history is set across the monuments and memorials. It was a great way to set the tone for our time in DC over the next few days.

Our first stop Monday morning was at the USDA, meeting with several different departments. Agriculture Research Service, ARS, is the global leader in ag research and they want to be the global leader in ag discovery. They have 8,000 individuals working with them. Conduct research at 95 locations across the country. In Texas they have 6 locations, which is the most of any state. They have three main areas of focus. Animal science, they work to cover a lot of animal diseases. Crop science, work with all different commodities, production, and protection. Natural Resources work to conserve water and other limited resources. Nutrition is the final general area that they work in to make sure everyone gets the correct nutritional needs. They have to be innovative and have the ability to grow and maintain the organization. They also have to be relevant. They also work with several universities to find research opportunities, like UT Arlington is helping them with AI research and Texas Tech helps with crop research. Texas is a key anchor state for research for their department.

Agriculture research the US is falling behind other countries, especially China. We are not investing enough in the research of agriculture and have fallen from the top country. Ag research is roughly 2% of the investment in research in the US. It has been 2% for a long time.

Mike Arnold spoke to us next about the finances of the ARS, including how they spend their \$1.78 billion budget. They have about 60 million dollars that are dedicated to the state of Texas research facilities, which is the largest state allocation. A total of 300 million dollars goes to working with those research facilities across the nation. They are looking to increase their budget for FY 2024 with a \$1.9 billion budget to try to make a more sustainable future for agriculture is the key focus.



They have a large real estate portfolio. The first appropriation of the budget is for salaries. The second appropriation is for real estate management. They are currently working on modernization of their facilities with 27 modernization projects currently going on.

We continued to hear from more USDA departments. Dr. Rosemary Sifford, the APHIS Deputy Administrator of Veterinary Services, explained how current disease outbreaks are affecting US production. Avian Influenza has been in the current outbreak since 2022. They have seen very little spread for domestic flocks, but instead see more introductions from wild birds. However, we are seeing far fewer than we did last spring and last fall. As of April 11, there have been 202 detections of Avian Influenza in Texas this year and one in a skunk. African Swine Fever is another disease that has key focus. A country can establish a protection zone to create separation. This allows people to have confidence in the products that are being imported and traded. Communication to travelers understand the risk and do not bring things back that can cause transmission. Especially those visiting the Caribbean is key to maintaining control.

Dr. Jessica Fantinato, APHIS Deputy Administrator Wildlife Services, explained some programs that are at work in Texas. It is no surprise that feral swine control is a key focus. \$400,000 comes from the state and a variety of federal funding. They had funding from the Farm Bill but that is ending this year and adjustments to the program will have to be made. In Texas they are trying to manage the Feral Swine population not trying to eradicate because of hunting opportunities. However, rancher feedback is that removal has positive feedback on production.

Under Secretary Robert Bonnie spoke to us about farm production and conservation. He said his next 18 months are about execution of all the new programs they have introduced recently. One goal is to make it easier to get into conservation programs. Crop insurance is also still a key part of their focus. There is strong support for crop insurance, but the goal is to continue to get the product that they need to make sure we can cover all of agriculture. They have a focus to try to support young farmers and find a way to invest in their futures to keep farming strong for many years. We are responding to a lot more natural disasters in recent years compared to when he was in office with Obama previously. When it comes to environment and climate vs

agriculture, there seems to be a lot of clashing but really there is more opportunities to work together. These include things from controlled burns to methane capture from livestock. They are trying to attract private capital to incentivize producers to adopt these new programs instead of putting in more regulations. They want to reward producers for their stewardships.

We moved to the Rayburn House Office Building where we met with Congressman Michael McCaul (TX-District 10). He serves as Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and on the House Committee on Homeland Security. He has just returned from Asia but now that he is back his focus is working on the farm bill. He reps Brenham area, which of course includes Blue Bell, so sugar regulations are important to him.

Conflict in Ukraine is front and center with EU. He has been to Poland 3 times since the war started and they are very kind and strong people. They are very independent minded. They are good with ag. Potential trade opportunities out of South Asia? We have a trade agreement with Japan and in South Korea they are working on joint session opportunities. They are looking for a joint trade agreement with Taiwan that would open a lot of new opportunities, particularly regarding beef. They have a serious threat from China, but she is a brave woman and is ready to get the threats off her back. They are aware, however, that China is trying to influence the next election in Taiwan and selecting a candidate.

Next, we met with Congressman Pete Sessions. He serves on the House Committee on Financial Services and House Committee on Oversight and Reform. Pete displayed true Texas passion for small towns. He believes that rural America is key for the future success of the country. He understands the challenges that these communities face and is working to help them. We concluded our time in the building meeting with Congressman Jake Ellzey (R-Ellis County). He serves on the House Appropriations Committee and House Small Business Committee. Jake spent 20 years serving his country in the US military before becoming an elected official. He is strongly against the EPA. He believes they work against agriculture and wildlife and would like to defund their oversight. With his military experience, he also has been keeping a tight focus on the war in Ukraine. All of the equipment is tracked and none of it has made it on the black market and one of the large accounting firms in the US

audits the money that we are sending. The American people need to have clarity with what is going on, but we have to win the war. We can't come back in and try to recover late like we did in World War II.

We continued our evening with a dinner where we met with Mr. Adam Krywosadzki and Mr. Bartosz Folusiak who are representatives at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in DC. They gave us great insight on Poland and their relationship with the US. Today the relationship between Poland and the US is very strong. There are 10,000 American groups currently in Poland. There is the first US base on the furthest part of the Eastern EU is in Poland. The US and 52 other countries have shipped a lot of humanitarian aid into Poland for Ukraine. They have accepted 1.4 million refugees from Ukraine since the start of the war. 200,000 Ukrainian kids are in Poland public schools and a lot of refugees, around 700,000, have found employment in Poland. Poland is one of the most Pro-American countries in Europe, they love Americans and their way of life. They share the values of Americans and even have a statue of Ronald Regan in their country. This year Poland is going to spend about 4.2% of GDP on military defense. This is not typical for many NATO countries of their size, but they feel strongly about sending resources to protect themselves. The only time they have experienced a recession was during the Pandemic, any other time they had a flourishing economy. They are currently completely independent of Russian natural gas. Plus, they now have strong partnerships with many Texas natural gas companies. They see nuclear energy being a part of their future because of their location. However, they are investing in regenerative energy like solar panels. I look forward to learning more when we visit Poland next year.

We ended our first day with a private tour of the U.S. Capitol with Congressman Nathaniel Moran. Once again, the history of these buildings is overwhelming and will continue to be important in the future of the United States.

We began our second day by visiting the EPA. Dr. Venus Welch-White, Senior Advisor to the Ag advisor spoke to us about current focuses of the EPA. They had a meeting with the agriculture committee the next day that they were spending most of the day preparing for. The Ag Advisors Council has been in existence for 25 years and they work to be the voice of the agriculture industry with the EPA. She holds a position but her boss position in appointed with different administrations. They are one of twenty-

one advisory committees that the EPA has. She only spends about 15% of her time is spend with external groups like cattlemen associations and other ag groups. Instead, she mainly works within the organization.

We continued our day with a short visit with Senator Ted Cruz. When it comes to the farm bill, his focus is on Title 4. This could potentially be the first trillion-dollar bill to pass. The debt ceiling will have to be addressed in order to make this bill work. Next, we met with Congressman Jody Arrington who represents the Lubbock area. Of course, the farm bill is a strong focus for the area that he represents. He believes that market and weather risk need to be covered. At the same time, he believes there should be a personal responsibility for farmers the same way that we need to have for the SNAP recipients to keep the system fair for farmers who are doing the right thing.

Chairman GT Thompson was preparing for the agriculture committees hearing with the EPA the next day. Their goal was to have the EPA explain the WOTUS ruling and outline how this will affect farmers. It is no surprise that Chairman Thompson is so passionate about agriculture and that the future relies on science, technology, and innovation. The theme from his listening sessions on the farm bill is that crop insurance and disaster relief are of key importance to producers.

We ended the day at the Texas Farm Bureau Event. Once again, we got to hear from Senator Ted Cruz and meet with our fellow Texans as they prepared for a week of similar meetings.

On Wednesday we began to work our way up to New York City. Our first stops were in Maryland and coordinated by William Amoss, Administrator of the Harford County MD Land Preservation Programs. Agriculture is still the number one commercial industry in Maryland. A lot of that is from the bay, crabbing, fishing, etc, Holloway Brothers Farms has been around for 6 generations with the inclusion of their sons. They farm about 2000 acres including corn, soybean, wheat, and cattle. Hay has become a scarce commodity, but they have found a good partnership growing for the thoroughbred farm down the road. Their top challenge is nutrient management issue. You have to have someone certified in nutrient management to write your program for you. You can get that certification yourself or work with someone in extension to help write those programs. They are concerned about taking up exceptional farmland for

solar farms. Plus, roadways are difficult to navigate with large farm equipment. There is also a lot of land being lost to development, which is a big problem. \$15,000 per acre is what farmland is going for. They got money from COVID relief, and they invested that in farmland and really pushed up prices. With the Maryland agriculture easement program land goes for about \$8,000 per acre. The program also gives them a property tax break.

Our next stop was at Hopkins farms, a Class A farm brewery. They grow 100% of the hops they use. They have 16 taps, and they try to have that many all the time with some variety of options outside their four most popular options. They produce about 1000 barrels last year and are continually growing.

Perhaps a favorite stop on the trip was visiting Bloom dairy. We had an excellent lunch with fresh cheese and ice cream made by the dairy. They utilize their own milk for everything, so they no longer utilize a milk shipper, so inventory control of milk production is key to staying profitable. They are milking 53 cows in a tie stall barn. Current production is about 55lbs because they have not hit ice cream push of summer and do not need high production. In the summer they will make about 350 gallons of ice cream a week.

Lancaster county was perhaps the most fascinating part of our trip. The Amish integrate old farming practices with new technology to create profitable operations while staying true to their values. The average farm in Lancaster is 70 acres but they are blessed with high quality soil, good rainfall, and available labor. Although they do not participate in crop insurance, they do utilize FSA loans and conservation practices. They are exempt from social security tax if they are an approved Amish church. They utilize the 4028 form that states they will take care of their own and do not need insurance or other government programs. They do utilize banks and farm credit to finance their operations. They have to with the price of land. Farm auctions in Lancaster County are above average. The neighboring county farms will sell for about \$10,000 an acre while farms in Lancaster will go for upwards of \$35,000 per acre. Lancaster county is the most productive non irrigated land in the country. There are a lot of farm conservation programs to try to conserve the farm but now the focus is how to conserve the farmer as profit margins reduce and children look for new opportunities.

We started our first day in New York City by visiting Grow NYC in the Bronx. They are one of the arms of non-profit grow. They are trying to increase food access and the amount of green space in New York. They function as a food hub and a distribution. They are in the three burrows. Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx. We are in the Bronx. Union Square Green Market is the most famous farmers market they run. Why do this? Farms in the tri-state area were closing. The produce was becoming difficult to get and of poor quality. So, they developed a farmers' green market to allow consumers to be able to get fresh quality produce. In more recent years they started the wholesale business to cater to mid-size farms and allow them to have a market for their products when they couldn't compete with the large or the niche markets of the small farmers. They work with about 40-50 farms with their wholesale market. They work mostly with New York farmers, but they will supplement outside to get more products that are not grown in state. They supplement the needs of their customers. They are working with New York city to get a new facility at Hunts Point to essentially double their space.

We moved out to the Hunts Point area to visit Baldor Specialty Foods where we spoke with Michael Muzyk, President, and Jared Walton, Director of National Accounts and Sales Operations. At one time they were only produce distributor but in 2007 when the markets tanked, they had to reinvent themselves to find new customers. So, they first brought in smoked salmon and caviar and have also started prepping produce for customers too. They specialize in navigating NYC and helping get products via trucks efficiently to their customers. They now make deliveries from 6 am and will deliver until 11pm. They survived Hurricane Sandy, the Canadian blackout, etc. but they were never prepared for COVID 19. In one night with the closure of indoor dining they lost 78% of their business but they figured out how to adjust and make it work. Michael called Albertsons and asked if they could deliver all their produce needs directly and prevent them from warehousing producing, they finally agreed, which helped them survive. For 14 weeks they sent trucks to 108 stores. They also service every hotel and most schools. They have had double digit growth for 30 years, minus COVID year.

They will bring in products from all over the country to meet the needs of the US consumer. Most products are grown west of the Mississippi when majority live east of

it. They do the majority via truck, but they will fly, train, boat it in. They are the largest donated city harvest in the city. Their rejection is about 1.5% before they never come in and then another 1.78% is donated.

We finished off our afternoon at Federal Farm Credit Banks Funding Corporation in Jersey City, where we heard from Tracey McCabe, President & CEO, Dan Spencer, Vice President, and Regina Gill, Managing Director – Investor Relations. Their balance sheet as of year-end is \$477 billion. They have doubled in size in the last ten years. Their earning stream is \$7.2 billion making them the third largest issuer in the US. They have 14.4% capital including their insurance fund. Every part of their stakes are for sale because they are invested in rural America. They have strong underwriting standards that establish strong trust with their stakeholders. Within the Farm Credit system, they are a small size. They have less than 45 employees. They raise money through the capital markets. They don't have to have ATM machines, tellers, external banks, etc. they have the cost advantage because they are able to maintain a small management system.

Larry Van De Valk, Executive Director of LEAD New York, joined us on Friday for our final day and tour of Long Island. The LEAD New York program currently has about 60% women this session. They have about 24 people and they run 1+1 program where the cohorts must reapply after the first year to make sure they fit in the program for the second year of the international work.

He also informed us about the state of New York's ag sectors and how it compares to Texas. Dairy is the number one ag sector in NY. Their average herd size is 250 but they don't have many 250 cow farms. They have several 1500-2000 cow herds and several 40-50 size herds. One fifth of the world's fresh water supply runs through river in northern part of the state. They have a lot of water and good ground water throughout. Good tillable land goes for \$8000 to \$6000 per acre. Dairy producers continue buying the land to spread manure. Manure management is a limiting factor for dairies to be able to add more cows.

We made our first Long Island stop at the Bayport Flower Houses where we were given a tour by LEAD alumnus. John Auwaerter. John's family started the business in 1932 when his great grandpa was hired to consult and then eventually bought out the

company. They utilize multiple peak greenhouses because they allow for more airflow than a single peak greenhouse. Plus, they are shorter and with strong winds it allows them to be more stable. During the tour John informed us that the greenhouse we were standing in was 100 years old. They spend the whole month of January just potting with soil in their pots. They use 200,000 to 300,000 pots in a season. One challenge they have to navigate is regulations that only allow for limited pesticide usage and a lot of limitations in fertilizer. They used to have a cut flower field but as land prices and values went up it became cheaper to get those flowers out of South America and they switched to potted plant production. One of their most popular plants is cascading geraniums. They service 15 towns and 4,000 baskets annually for those towns. They contract the total number, but they are on their own to keep them alive. They will provide some fertilizer to treat their water. Hanging baskets are a large part of their business, mainly due to convenience.

As we moved further out on the island we stopped to have a traditional Polish lunch and had the opportunity to listen to a couple of Long Island speakers. Rob Carpenter of Long Island Farm Bureau addressed us first with facts about agricultural production in the region. The counties of Long Island produce \$235 million in sales from Agriculture on 35,000 acres. COVID exposed that some farmers were not reporting their production, so they imagine it will increase to \$450 million after and made it the counties with the highest dollars in production from ag in New York State. As land got more expensive with urbanization, they switched from production of potatoes and cabbage to greenhouses and vineyards. The farmers who are left are the ones who have learned how to develop a direct-to-consumer product instead of a commodity.

Protecting the groundwater is of the utmost importance. There are pesticides and fertilizer products that are available for use everywhere else in New York but cannot be utilized out on Long Island because it is not worth the testing necessary to protect the groundwater. The aquifer that is utilized by Long Island is a truly strong and regenerative resource for producers. Wells are dug anywhere from 300-900 feet deep and usually pump at a rate of 250-300 gallons. Between the two counties, they pull about 1 billion gallons a day in their heaviest use month in July, but a billion gallons go back in daily. Of course, they also have their own challenges. They believe they will begin to start having some issues with pulling salt water from the ocean due to the high rate of recharge going back into the aquifer.



Jesse McSwane of the Peconic Land Trust addressed us next to explain how they are fighting for producers as land values increase exponentially. Right now, an acre of unprotected farmland in East Hampton's could go for \$1 million+ an acre, while an acre of protected land can go for \$300,000. Farmers cannot afford to pay those prices. One of the reasons why the preservation came to be, was the estate tax. They developed this program to help them. 2% of the real estate sales goes to this conservation fund. .25% of all sales that are taxed goes into the environmental preservation fund too. With homes sold in millions, counties often have a lot of money to preserve farmland. There are tax benefits to donating the developmental rights value to the county. Peconic Land Trust helps farmers navigate these opportunities.

Our next stop was the Cornell Shellfish Hatchery where we met Gregg Rivara, an aquaculture specialist and the SCMELC Site Director. Cornell has been producing shellfish since 1991. This center focuses on propagating oysters and releasing them to replenish the local populations of oysters. Oysters start out as microscopic and they create a strong environment to help them grow. This hatchery is able to develop millions of oysters a year. Growing Algae is one of the most important parts of breeding oysters. They utilize Industrial Plankton machines, costing about \$650,000 each, to grow their food source, algae. They mix five different strains of algae together as a feed ration for the oysters. After about 2 months the oysters are ready to be placed in the bay by farmers. It will take 89-24 months for the oysters to grow to market size.

Our final stop was at Pindar Vineyards for a tour and wine tasting. The family owned several vineyards across Long Island, about 300 acres in total. Different vines get different yields and grapes can vary from 4.5 tons per acre to 7.5 tons per acre. Deer are a huge problem and animal rights activists really try to limit hunting. They also have neighbor frustrations and complaints to consider. All the grapes they produce come through this winery's facilities to be processed and bottled. They make about 65 thousand cases of their own wine and about 10,000 cases for other wineries. They had just installed a new bottling machine that can produce 6000 bottles of wine in an hour. It takes about 8-9 people to run the system. 4-5 individuals work in the warehouse of the facilities overseeing production and storage. They buy over 300 barrels a year, from France, as they believe the wood of French trees are superior to development. They will buy some of their barrels second hand from high-end producers in California. They also resell their own barrels to other producers on Long Island. This was an excellent end to our trip along the East Coast. I look forward to visiting several other wineries out in California in the fall.