Slumping Farm Economy

Hello from our home to yours and I hope everyone is having a great 2019.

It is hard to believe that it is already the end of July. It seems just like yesterday we were at the 2019 Conference and Show in Moorhead, and now we are only a few short months away from Conference and Show 2020. Dave Thompson is going to make this upcoming conference a fun and educational one. We will be back in St. Cloud, MN from January 16-18, 2020 with Real

Estate continuing education on January 15th for those interested in that.

We had a fun day in Austin, MN for the summer picnic and bi-annual meeting. Thanks to Dave and Beth for putting on such an enjoyable day for all that were able to attend.  Nice park, great food, and of course, great conversation. It was so nice to see everyone that was able to attend. I would strongly encourage everyone to try to make it to these meetings. There was some great discussion at the meeting. Our hard working members have been able to stay on top of anything that ever comes up. We have so much talent within our organization.

I have been thinking about the slumping farm economy. I know many of the members of this association rely on the farm economy to help support our businesses. I have seen the ups and downs over my lifetime. I grew up on a family farm and am so thankful for that opportunity. I was fairly young in the 80's when thousands of farms discontinued operation. And the last four years have been very hard on the family farms: net income is reported to be down just about 50 percent in the past four years. I don't know about you, but many of us can't afford to lose 50 percent of our net income.

We hold a livestock and hay auction every Thursday in Belle Plaine and have seen the prices all over the board. Cattle has been up and down over the past few years. The hay market has been the same. The farm machinery prices have dropped over the last few years as well. Some of the farmers are being asked to sell a piece or two to help with their overall debt. Several of these folks are relying on this equipment to continue farming. I work with several auction companies in the state and everyone I have worked with or talked to are seeing the same as I am. We have had several small family dairy farms discontinue operation over the last couple of years. It is very hard for these farmers to get up and go to work every morning knowing they are losing money before they even step out their door. This has taken a toll on so many families. The last couple of years have been very difficult to get the crops in as well. This has ultimately affected the amount of bushels being produced on these farms. Whether they are selling the grain or feeding it to animals, the bottom line is at all-time lows.

Please take the time to reach out to your customers that are going through some very challenging times and just let them know you are there for them in this difficult time. Many of these folks just need someone to talk to that is a neutral party. In the end you will be remembered for lending a listening ear when someone is in need.

I would encourage each and everyone of you to support the local farm economy as much as you are able to. So many folks are relying on this income to feed their families. In your day-to-day dealings with these folks, don't forget to thank them for the food they are putting on many of our tables. Sometimes that is all these folks are getting at the end of the day is a thank you.

I hope we will see each and everyone of you in St. Cloud in January or sooner.  Please encourage each of your auction staff and families to attend the Conference and Show. Let's keep our numbers up in this great association.

Sincerely,

Jim Connolly