



# RESILIENT LOUISIANA COMMISSION

CO-CHAIR DON PIERSON

CO-CHAIR TERRIE STERLING

## Food and Agriculture Task Force

May 19, 2020

Meeting called to order at: 2:00 p.m.

### Task Force Members Present:

- Commissioner Mike Strain
- Wayne Baquet, Jr.
- Jim Simon
- Toni McAllister
- Dale Cambre
- Dr. Orlando McMeans
- Dr. Bill Richardson
- Reggy McDaniel
- Dr. Susan Hassig
- Randy Bracy
- Buck Vandersteen

- Agenda and Roll Call
  - The meeting was called to order by Co-Chairman, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) Commissioner Mike Strain at 2:00 PM.
  - The roll was called by Melanie Tullier
  - Certification for Lack of Quorum
    - Mrs. Tullier stated there was a quorum with ten members present.
- Public Comments
  - Tim Alexander reminded the task force that while there is considerable documentation that COVID-19 is greatly disrupting production and processing, to please keep in mind that there are many other forms of relief funding besides what is available through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- Approval of Minutes from 5/12/2020
  - Jim Simon made a motion accept the minutes. Dr. Bill Richardson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
- Opening Remarks: Co-Chairs Commissioner Mike Strain and Wayne Baquet
  - Commissioner Strain opened by reading the items recommended to the Resilient Louisiana Commission on the Agriculture & Food Task Force behalf:
    - Ensuring access to testing in rural areas
    - Tort Reform
    - Electronic betting for horses
    - Workforce training
    - Broadband access in rural areas
    - Food deserts
    - Supply and demand issues that continue to occur
    - Farmers, fishers, and others will be allowed to apply for USDA's CFAP program beginning next week
  - Wayne Baquet, Jr. notified the task force that the Information Technology and Communications Task Force has reached out to him to do a cross-sector discussion with the Food and Agriculture Task Force to discuss the needs of the rural communities.
- Discussion on Workforce Training with Mr. Harlen Henegar, Director of Field Operations at Louisiana Workforce Commission/Office of Workforce Development
  - The agriculture sector needs to be a bigger piece of the industries that the Louisiana Workforce Commission serves with more engagement by the office and its programs with the agriculture sector. This includes better utilization of workforce training and better preparing of the younger generation to enter careers in agriculture.
    - Mr. Henegar informed the Task Force that he has recently assigned a staff member to be an agriculture sector coordinator.
  - There needs to be more public awareness about the varied jobs and skills needed in agriculture. The perception that jobs in agriculture are not high tech

- needs to be changed. Young people need to understand that agriculture jobs aren't what they may think.
- Any assistance the LWC can provide to help find workers is needed. On this point, Mr. Jim Simon of the American Sugar Cane League discussed a major concern is the need for workers for sugar harvest in the Fall. He discussed the problems that persist with the H-2 A/B programs along with persistent problem of local persons not applying for jobs. This is a problem throughout the agriculture sector.
- Discussion on Long-Term Resilience and Development of Action Items
    - Several members highlighted the need of getting the workforce to return.
    - Buck Vandersteen stressed the importance of locating new markets for agricultural products. He also encouraged the state to examine the use of wood in construction projects.
    - Randy Bracy stated that the H-2A/B programs do not need more regulations. The program needs to be less burdensome and easier to use.
  - Next Steps & Meeting Date
    - The Task Force will reconvene on Tuesday, June 2, 2020, at 2 PM. Commissioner Strain requested that if any of the members have any ideas, both short or long-term, to email all suggestions to him before the next meeting at [mikestrain@ldaf.la.gov](mailto:mikestrain@ldaf.la.gov).
    - Public Comments
    - Dr. Eric Smith and Cade LeJeune with the Louisiana Future Farmers of America (FFA) Association emphasized the significance of having 4H and FFA return to schools. Agricultural education needs to start at a younger age and get children interested in shop, mechanics, etc. All state superintendents need to understand the importance and benefits of agricultural education, what the FFA is, and how it benefits your and agriculture.
    - The Task Force will send to each superintendent a report published in the Journal of Agricultural Education titled "A National Analysis of School Based Agricultural Education Involvement, Graduation, STEM Achievement, and Income", as well as the Louisiana FFA Association's 2018-2019 Impact Report.
    - Randy Bracy requested information from other states regarding their COVID-19 response for short and long-term issues.
  - Closing Remarks and Adjournment
    - The meeting was adjourned at 3:13 p.m.