

**By GENE DAVIDSON, State Executive Director  
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In the past few weeks, there has been much talk and media coverage about unrest in the Middle East driving up the prices of fuel in the U.S. There is a certain sense of vulnerability when we realize events that occur half a world away affects our quality of life right here at home... in our own backyard. However, when it comes to food, fiber and yes, biofuels, we suffer no sense of vulnerability – Why? Because, thanks to America’s farmers and ranchers, we have what I refer to as, ‘Homegrown Security’;

Food, fiber and alternative fuel sources are affordable and abundant right here in the United States. Agriculture is the backbone of our nation. Our ability to provide for our own plus a significant percent of the world’s growing population is the envy of all other nations. For this reason alone, it is appropriate that we recognize farmers and ranchers on National Ag Day, which we celebrate March 15.

But let me make my point stronger. The agriculture industry has made significant progress in the past century. That progress has made the United States the most self sufficient country in modern civilization. Take for instance the most common commodity – grown in nearly every state of the union – Corn...

In 73 years (the average length of human life) agriculture has made America so productive and secure that its fundamentals are seemingly invincible. In that time, corn has become more than a food product or sweetener. It is an alternative fuel, a source for plastics and an icon for the industry. But it is just one of many as most commodities have seen similar successes, technological advances and alternative uses.

Because of agricultural ingenuity, we can feed, clothe and shelter ourselves and provide life’s necessities to all U.S. citizens at home and to our armed forces worldwide. Agriculture is the first line of defense IN America. It is the first line of defense OF America. We owe the proud men and women involved in agriculture an enormous debt of gratitude.

I hope you will join me in making good on that debt as I extend a much deserved, &quot;Thank You&quot; to America’s farmers and ranchers on National Ag Day.

I, as well as the 324 USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) employees in Tennessee, understand and appreciate the amount of work that farmers and ranchers do on a daily basis to protect our natural resources and produce the nation’s supply of food, fiber and fuel, and I encourage consumers to learn more about agriculture and the people involved in the industry.

We never want to find ourselves dependent on a foreign food supply. It’s America’s farmers and ranchers who make sure our nation stays independent from the ground up. And as long as America’s farmers and ranchers remain steadfast in their stewardship and productivity, America will remain strong. Please take time on National Ag Day to show your appreciation for American Agriculture... our Homegrown Security.