



Washington Association of Wheat Growers

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 23, 2016

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Washington wheat farmer appointed to USDA task force on air quality

Brian Cochrane, a dryland wheat farmer from Franklin County, has been appointed by Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to take part in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Air Quality Task Force.

"I feel honored and humbled to be selected for the Agricultural Air Quality Task Force," Cochrane said. "I have been looking for a way to impact the sustainability of agriculture for future generations beyond the scope of being an Eastern Washington wheat farmer, something I am extremely proud of."

Cochrane is the fourth generation of his family to farm on a 100-year-old dryland wheat farm near Kahlotus, Wash. Prior to his life as a farmer, he served in the U.S. Air Force for 27 years. Besides wheat, he also grows grapes, raises bees and a few steers with his brothers, their wives, nieces and nephews.

"Brian has long been a tireless supporter of the Washington wheat industry, from being a lifetime member of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers to serving on the Franklin County Conservation District and as a Farm Service Agency committee member," said Washington Association of Wheat Growers President Kevin Klein. "We couldn't ask for a more committed farmer to represent our industry when it comes to agriculture and air quality."

The Agricultural Air Quality Task Force is charged with advising the secretary of agriculture on air quality and its relationship to agriculture based on sound scientific findings. It will also review research on agricultural air quality supported by federal agencies; promote intergovernmental coordination in establishing agricultural air quality policy; and ensure that air quality conservation practices supported by USDA are based on peer reviewed research and are economically feasible for producers. The task force is managed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In a 2015 letter recommending Cochrane as a nominee for the task force, then-Washington Association of Wheat Growers President Larry Cochran stated about Cochrane, "...His exemplary leadership skills and proven knowledge of air quality issues, including PM 10 emissions, make Brian an exceptional choice to serve on the Agriculture Air Quality Task Force."

Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, agreed, adding that Cochrane has long been involved in the association's natural resource committee.

"Farmers in Washington State and across the nation are seeing more and more regulations being put into place that could potentially threaten their livelihood," she said. "We want to make sure that any regulations regarding air quality are based on proven scientific research, and Brian is the perfect person to help in that endeavor."

The other 34 task force members come from industry stakeholders, state commissions, academia, government agencies, environmental experts and nongovernmental organizations. To learn more about the task force, visit its website at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/air/taskforce/>

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