

# An Ear to the Ground

By Walt Bones, South Dakota Secretary of Agriculture



## Savoring the Harvest

Fall is my favorite time of the year. The temperatures have moderated, the bugs have quit bothering us and the harvest is just about completed. There is nothing like seeing the fruits of one's labors in the bin or in the pen. How are the calves looking from the bull I bought almost two years ago? They were supposed to be really good - are they? And how about that corn or soybean number we planted? My dealer told me that it was the best one for our area. Did it really perform the way I expected? We will discuss and second guess those decisions in our offices and the coffee shop all winter long.

I know the work never ends and the more you do the more you find that should be done. It looks like the early harvest will give us some time to catch up on all those projects that have been "postponed" due to weather. But I hope you can savor the moment and put your efforts into perspective. Those of you in agriculture have kept our State's economy strong and continue to provide the food, fuel, feed and fiber for 155 people in the US and abroad.

Earlier this fall, I had the opportunity to travel to China and Vietnam with the SD Soybean Research and Promotion Council. China's population grows every month by the population of South Dakota - almost 800,000 people each month. They have had and will continue to have a voracious appetite for not only soybeans, corn and wheat; but also our beef, pork, wine and dairy products.

The South Dakota Department of Agriculture is focusing efforts on increasing our exports from South Dakota's small businesses, including our farms. Soybeans are our number one commodity for exporting followed by feed grains, wheat, animals and meat, and sunflower seeds. We are looking to increase our exports to foreign countries.

The U.S. Free Trade Agreements with South Korea, Columbia and Panama have been (finally) passed. Thank you to our Congressional delegation and our farm and commodity groups for their work and diligence. We will have some tremendous marketing opportunities in the future as long as WE don't mess it up.

Please continue to do what you do so well and the South Dakota Department of Agriculture will continue to work every day to insure that your opportunities continue and are not encumbered by overreaching State and Federal regulations.

As we move into the fall and winter meetings where your voice needs to be heard, I look forward to visiting with you!

**Walt**