

Miller Convenes National Urban-Ag Academy in Des Moines

A national conference to educate urban legislators about agriculture was held in Des Moines Thursday, August 8th through Saturday, August 10th at the Renaissance Savery Hotel and Iowa State Fairgrounds in Des Moines, IA, and Couser Cattle Company and Lincolnway Energy in Nevada, IA. The conference was convened and hosted by Iowa State Representative Helen Miller (Fort Dodge) in partnership with Iowa State University.

The Urban Ag Academy is an initiative created by Miller about three years ago to address the growing gap between rural and urban policymakers when it comes to recognizing and doing what is best for agricultural policy. As a member of the Iowa House Agriculture committee for the past nine years, and ranking member for the past three (as well as the Ag Policy committee chair for the National Black Caucus of State Legislators), she has witnessed the friction and misunderstandings between legislators representing rural and urban districts. We all are aware of the concerns around the production of our food whether plant or animal, but few of us realize that agriculture is that and so much more.

Having had to teach herself as much she could to understand and legislate in this area, Miller is keenly aware that informed legislators would improve the relationships between urban and rural legislators and help move agriculture forward. Thus the Academy was born with the goal of educating urban and minority legislators about the value that agriculture adds to our economy and the challenges facing the agricultural community today.

It began with a 2011 state-wide conference for Iowa state legislators held at the Iowa Soybean Association's offices in Ankeny, IA. Last year the first national conference was held in Des Moines and the second this year. To date, legislators and educators from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Washington! DC, and the Virgin Islands have attended.

A broad group of sponsors have helped make the events happen over the last three years. This group includes Monsanto, National Pork Producers Council, Iowa Soybean Association, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Iowa Farm Bureau, Iowa Corn Growers Association, Iowa Pork Producers Association, Biotechnology Industry Organization, CropLife America, Iowa Cattlemen's Association, POET, Iowa Renewable Fuels Association, U.S. Soybean Board, Koch Nitrogen, Syngenta, Representative Helen Miller, CenturyLink, Archer Daniels Midland, LinkedUp, and the Association of Business and Industry.

Approximately 35 legislators from Iowa and across the nation attended the conference this year along with a number of individuals interested in the education of minority youths for careers that relate to agriculture.

Topics have included the culture of agriculture, the impact of weather on ag policy, genetically modified organisms, animal production, ethanol, urban agriculture, liability issues in ag promotion/tourism, weather prospects for the states, ag education and careers, water quality

issues, labeling, international impacts, state fairs, the equine industry and agriculture, US Dept. of Agriculture programs, the role of state departments of agriculture, etc.

The purpose of the Urban-Ag Academy continues to be informing an ever-increasing number of urban legislators on ag issues. The participants have been expanded to include farmers and educators, particularly those who work to educate urban and minority youths at the college level. Program attendees, presenters and sponsors all agree that the initiative must continue, and plans for the program's future are underway.

The program book, videos of most of the presentations and other information may be found on the website at www.urbanagacademy.com. You may also visit [Facebook.com/UrbanAgAcademy](https://www.facebook.com/UrbanAgAcademy) or contact Representative Helen Miller at helen.miller@legis.iowa.gov or 515 570-3535.

Urban-Ag Academy is an initiative of RELLIM Group, LLC
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