



Renk Agribusiness Institute
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Panel of experts see difficult road ahead for farmers in Wisconsin

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Last week Paul Mitchell, Director of the Renk Agribusiness Institute was invited to participate in a panel at the UW-Platteville on the "Struggles in Wisconsin Farm Country: the trade war, weather, and workforce issues." The panel also included: State Agriculture Secretary Brad Pfaff; Wisconsin State Representative Travis Tranel, R-Cuba City; Anna Landmark, award-winning cheesemaker and owner of Landmark Creamery, one of the "Soil Sisters" of southwestern Wisconsin; and Charles Irish, the emeritus Volkman-Bascom professor of Law and former director of the East Asian Legal Studies Center at University of Wisconsin Law School -- an expert on international trade policies and international tax law. It was moderated by radio personality Pam Jahnke, the "Fabulous Farm Babe". The event was part of the event was part of WisBusiness.com's "Navigating the New Economy" series, supported by the Wisconsin Academy of Global Education and Training.

These experts foresee a continuing difficult road for Wisconsin farmers across the state with the ongoing trade war, wet weather conditions and low crop prices. "The capital has been sucked away, and it's going to take a while to build those reserves back up again," Mitchell said. "The stress will stick with us for a while in farming. It's not like every farmer is struggling, but a lot of farmers are — more than they were five years ago."

Mitchell says many categories in the broad ag sector have been underperforming for years, including corn and soybeans operations, cranberry growers, vegetable processors and dairy farmers large and small. Wisconsin's cranberry farms supply around half of the world's demand for the fruit, but growers are grappling with low prices. And the state's vegetable processing industry, the second largest in the country, is also in decline.

"There's no good crop to go grow," he said. "A lot of people are desperate for an easy answer. I don't think there's a quick and easy answer. It's going to take a long time to get out of this trough."

Read more about this panel discussion, and find the link to a video the whole event on YouTube at WisBusiness.com.