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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Agriculture Grows Missouri's Economy

AUGUST 30TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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This week at the Delta Days in the Bootheel, I'll be wrapping up a 30-county, monthlong swing through southern Missouri's unique agriculture industry. I'm grateful to all the farmers, organizations, and agribusinesses who have taken the time to share with me their successes, what makes their farm unique, and their concerns with the federal government. Over the past month I've traveled the back roads of southern Missouri to listen to local farmers because when the agriculture industry does well, the entire country benefits. And when the agriculture industry struggles, so does main street America.

Missouri is home to almost 100,000 different farms that supply the world with cattle, corn, soybeans, cotton, hay, and every agriculture product imaginable. Agriculture is an \$88 billion industry that employs more than 1 in 10 working Missourians, making it the top employer and driver of our economy. The industry has changed some since I was growing up – younger farmers in Mississippi and Scott Counties showed me the latest technology they're using on family farms today to make the most of their resources, and a family operation in Perry County demonstrated the applications they use to keep track of feeding, watering, and create carefully designed nutrition programs for livestock. As much as the technology is evolving, farmers still want the same thing from their federal

government: to be able to work their land how they know best without the government making it harder for them.

Farmers brought up a wide range of topics on our stops, because just as agriculture touches everybody, every policy touches agriculture. Businesses in Howell and Wayne Counties walked me through their new expansions and investments made possible after President Trump and I cut taxes across the board and allowed businesses to fully expense internal investments. When we were writing the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, we wanted Missouri's farmers and small businesses to keep more of their hard-earned money, so they can grow both their businesses and the economy. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act lowered the tax rates for farms of all sizes and fewer farms are now subject to the death tax, which especially hits family operations hard as they pass their farms on to a new generation.

Missouri's farmers and ranchers want the freedom to work their land how they know best, but each rule slapped on by career Washington bureaucrats costs them more time and money. Ninety percent of farms are family-owned in Missouri, and just like in the business world, smaller operations have a harder time keeping up with Washington's regulators.

A family operation in Carter County shared with me their frustrations with a constant flow of regulations from Washington. A farm in Butler County walked me through how their healthcare costs have skyrocketed under Obamacare. And almost every farm I visited said they're having a hard time finding help because federal government welfare programs are incentivizing too many people to stay out of the workforce.

Farming is hard work, but Missourians do what it takes to put food on the table. I'm proud that Missouri's products are enjoyed all over the world. It's an honor to fight every day for the hardworking families who grow our country's crops, economy, and communities.

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