

Commissioner's column

One of the pleasures of my job as Agriculture Commissioner is getting to meet people across the state and hearing about their farms and agribusinesses. I am constantly reminded in my travels that we are a diverse state with many different types of farms growing a variety of crops.

I was recently in Alleghany County and had the opportunity to meet with farmers at Dalton Farms, Evans Dairy and Wishon Evergreens. Later in the day I spoke at an agricultural event, highlighting the contributions of agriculture to the local economy.

Alleghany County is home to 567 farms, which tallied over \$34 million in cash receipts in 2017. It ranks in the Top 15 in the state in milk cows, all cattle, hay production and dairy cattle.

Agriculture and agribusinesses provide jobs across this state, and especially in rural North Carolina.

I was happy to recognize Edwin R. and Donna Edwards with a Century Family Farm certificate and Dustin Sheets and his family with a Bicentennial Family Farm award.

The Century Family Farm program celebrates its 50 anniversary this year. Altogether, we have over 1,800 farms in the program. At the last reunion in 2016, we announced the creation of the Bicentennial Family Farm program to recognize families who have had 200 years of continuous farm ownership. There are over three dozen with this special recognition.

Reaching either of these milestones is quite an accomplishment, and I look forward to the day when my own farm reaches this high point.

If your farm has been in continuous family ownership for 100 or 200 years or more, I would encourage you to fill out the application to become a Century Family Farm or a Bicentennial Family Farm.

We will hold the Century Family Farm Reunion this year at the State Fair on Monday, Oct. 19. The reunion is held every four years in Raleigh at the State Fair. It's a great celebration of the determination and resiliency of North Carolina farm families.