

FROM GOVERNOR

Paul E. Patton



Farm families in Kentucky face a host of challenges in their quest to build a sustainable and prosperous farm economy. Market fluctuations and weather disasters are variables encountered every year by our farm families. In the coming years, though, we must confront the unprecedented challenges presented by the seemingly permanent changes to the system of producing and marketing burley tobacco.

Although tobacco will be an integral component of our farm economy for the foreseeable future, we must also look to find new ways to expand our agricultural base across the state. Both state government and farm families alike must commit themselves to working collectively to rebuild a farm economy devastated by increased production concentration, lower federal quotas and limited marketing options for burley producers. The state Agricultural Development Board, our County Agricultural Development Councils and individual farmers around the state have thrown themselves into this task headlong in an effort to find appropriate and profitable income alternatives for our farm families.

By December 2001, over \$339 million will have been distributed in direct cash payments to Kentucky's tobacco farmers under the National Tobacco Growers Settlement Trust. Another \$310 million will have gone in direct cash payments under federal disaster relief programs for tobacco producers in Kentucky. This infusion of capital, combined with the monumental investment made in agricultural diversification through the Agricultural Development Fund, provide us with the needed resources to restructure a farm economy that provides increased opportunities for people to live and prosper in our rural communities.

The state Agricultural Development Board, our County Councils, and my Office of Agricultural Policy are working hard to make the right investments for the future of our farm economy. Commissioner Billy Ray Smith and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture are providing visionary leadership to our agricultural community, especially in the area of marketing and market development. We need your help, though, to reach our full potential in this historic opportunity.

My administration recognizes the value of protecting the future of our farm families, and we pledge to continue our work on your behalf. In partnership with the Department of Agriculture and with each member of our farming community, I am confident we can create a new era of prosperity for our farming families and our rural communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul E. Patton".

PAUL E. PATTON