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Annual Virginia Grains Conference Educates on Environmental Issues

Chesapeake, Va. – (March 1, 2010) - Farmers and agriculture industry professionals are as dynamic a group of individuals as they are resilient. Despite the wintry weather and on-farm weather related issues, approximately 150 Virginia producers and industry representatives attended the recent Annual Virginia Grain and Soybean Conference held at Colonial Downs in New Kent, Virginia.

The program for the day-long conference was primarily focused on environmental issues facing Virginia's farming community. With the pending reauthorization of the Chesapeake Bay program come new regulations and mandates combined with proposed expansion of EPAs on-farm authority. Changes are coming fast and furious for producers of all commodities in the mid-Atlantic. Unfortunately, for Virginia's top economic sector, these changes could cause increased production costs and negatively impact the economic viability of farming in the Commonwealth.

As the Chesapeake Bay program and accompanying legislative issues remain at the forefront of the Virginia Grain Producers Association's docket, the 2010 Annual Conference carried a much needed and welcome educational angle for conference participants. Presentations were made regarding proposed regulations relating to mandated nutrient management plans and practices required to meet EPA issued Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). Other state and federal measures currently under consideration relating to pesticides, spray drift and indirect land use were also discussed.

A major point for conference attendees to take home is that despite new regulations and proposed mandates, Virginia's grain producers continue to be diligent stewards of the land. Producers have the responsibility of providing the world's safest and most affordable food supply, feed, fiber and energy solutions and conservation always plays an important role. Many conservation practices that are implemented on the ground continue to go unnoticed and uncounted within the Chesapeake Bay Model for various reasons. Virginia Grain Producers Association leadership is working legislatively with other agriculture partners to attempt to improve the reporting issues surrounding Virginia agriculture conservation practices.

"Environmental issues in agriculture are complex and often difficult to explain through publicized news updates," says VGPA Executive Director Molly Pugh, "but to have the opportunity to present the information in a clear, concise manner and open the floor for questions, answers and producer discussion is quite effective."



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The Annual Virginia Grain and Soybean Conference also serves as the annual business meeting for both the Virginia Grain Producers and the Virginia Soybean Associations. Members received 2009 Annual Reports and association updates from the respective Boards of Directors. Informational exhibits provided by conference sponsors are also a valuable part of this worthwhile annual event.

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The Virginia Grain Producers Association (VGPA) represents Virginia's corn and small grains producers. VGPA is committed to providing value to agriculture and Virginia by serving as the voice for Virginia grain farmers on current issues pertaining to corn and small grains. For more information on VGPA and the association's areas of focus, please visit www.VirginiaGrains.com.