

Contact:
Sarah Grace Fowler
Director, Communications
(202) 296-9680
sarah.fowler@nasda.org

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Public Service from the Farm to Federal Policy: Celebrating Bob Ehart's Retirement

ARLINGTON, Va. — After more than two decades of dedicated service at the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture and a career spanning over five decades in agriculture, Bob Ehart will retire May 30, leaving behind a legacy that helped shape food safety regulations and state-federal partnerships across the U.S.

"Bob Ehart has been the drive behind some of NASDA's most impactful work in food safety and public policy," NASDA CEO Ted McKinney said. "His technical knowledge, matched by his ability to build trust across federal agencies and state departments, made him a pillar in our organization. More than that, he's been a mentor, a friend and an example of true public service. We owe Bob a debt of gratitude and wish him all the best in his retirement."

Bob started with NASDA in 2003, just weeks before the identification of the "cow that stole Christmas," a dairy cow infected with Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy commonly known as mad cow disease. In his most recent role as NASDA senior policy and science advisor which he has held since 2012, Bob was instrumental in guiding both NASDA members and staff and national stakeholders through the evolving landscape of food safety regulations. He served as the principal investigator on two major cooperative agreements with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. In this work, he helped states understand and implement critical components of the Food Safety Modernization Act, including produce safety and animal food preventive controls, exemplifying NASDA's food safety team motto of "educate before – and while – you regulate."

"Bob was a leading proponent for the implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act in a manner that ensured the safety of our food supply while maintaining viability of the American farmer," NASDA Foundation Food Safety Programs Sr. Director Joe Reardon said. "He was instrumental in developing and implementing the On Farm Readiness Review process to allow for educational visits to and instructional training on American farms in advance of regulatory inspections. It is through his leadership that almost 3,200 OFRR's have been conducted domestically and internationally. He has been a true champion for food safety."

Bob held many positions during his tenure at NASDA. From his early work on issues with USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to his tenure as director of public policy, and finally to his current advisory role, Bob has been a trusted expert through complex regulatory changes. His ability to connect science, policy and people made him not only effective but widely respected by colleagues, federal partners and state agencies alike. He mentored many farmers and other stakeholders, brought clarity to complex challenges and ensured the voices of state departments were heard and valued on the national stage.

Bob's career path tells a story not just of service, but of innovation and foresight. Before joining NASDA, Bob held a variety of roles that reflect his commitment to agriculture and public health. He founded an environmental monitoring firm focused on identifying and mitigating on-farm risks. Prior to that, he served as a technical and then appointed official with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and as an extension education specialist at North Dakota State University.



During his career, Bob also worked for the agrichemical industry and, at various times, closely with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA Food Safety Inspection Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Food and Drug Administration, always with an eye toward supporting the American farmer.

As Bob retires, NASDA celebrates not only his remarkable achievements but also his leadership and service. Thank you, Bob, for your unwavering commitment to agriculture, food safety and public service.

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