DCReview March 2014_RB:Layout 1 2/27/14 8:20 AM Page 2

Outlook

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Message from the President

The 2014 Farm Bill is now a reality to all of agriculture. Farmers, lenders, and all allied agricultural businesses in our region must focus now on transitioning into a new era of federal farm policy. There will be many different meetings summarizing major features of the Farm Bill, especially those pertaining to the Commodity Title, the Conservation Title and the Crop Insurance Title. However, there are **three meetings that are on the near-term horizon that I would strongly encourage farmers to attend.** First, there will be three meetings held by the National Cotton Council and the USA Rice Federation on **March 18 and 19.** They will be held in Yazoo City, Indianola, and Clarksdale. Stay tuned and we will publish these meeting locations in our weekly enews blast and at www.deltacouncil.org.

Steele

Other Farm Bill issues such as the long-awaited catfish inspection program will commence toward implementation rapidly. Due to efforts by Senator **Cochran**, the Food Safety Inspection Service of USDA will be required to put together the final rules for catfish inspection by April 8, 2014. The law further stipulates that USDA must begin implementation of catfish inspection on February 6, 2015. Domestic and imported catfish, including those produced by our industries at home and those imported from Southeast Asia, will be required to meet food safety standards, similar to that which we have been accustomed to in chicken, beef, and pork. *Equivalency* is the key word, when USDA sets food safety standards, and the inspection programs of USDA have a strong record of imposing rigid standards on domestic and imported protein products that must meet the *equivalency determination.*

In the State Legislature, measures affecting the Delta are moving through the committee process at this time:

-Highways: State Senate Highway Committee Chairman, **Willie Simmons** (Cleveland) has introduced a measure to establish a 14-person commission of business people tasked with evaluating the next steps in ensuring the maintenance and construction of safe highways and transportation infrastructure to meet the needs of expanded commerce in our State's future. The group will come forward with recommendations on how the Legislature should finance any such highway construction and maintenance program. Also, the Commission will report to the Legislature in the 2016 session. And, we are extremely pleased that **Simmons** and Lt. Governor **Tate Reeves** have championed this measure. Hopefully, House members will gain passage too.

-Revenue/Taxes: Measures are being proposed which would clarify certain measures in the tax code as it applies to warehouse and distribution operations.

Furthermore, Delta Council continues its efforts to work with

PRESIDENT *continued on page 4*

GUEST COLUMN | Farm Bill's passage a testament to Cochran experience, seniority

By Sid Salter

Sid Salter is a syndicated columnist and director of public affairs at Mississippi State University.

Mississippi's agriculture and forestry industries are a $7.3 billion business, employing almost one-third of Mississippi workers on 30 million acres.

Salter

Those farmers and timber growers now have the certainty of a new federal farm bill for the next five years thanks, in great measure, to Mississippi U.S. Sen. **Thad Cochran**. The fact that the farm bill balances the interests of Southern farmers with those of Midwestern farmers is a direct tribute to **Cochran**'s legislative skill, his personal tenacity and the esteem in which **Cochran** is held among his Senate colleagues.

Cochran had to win two major battles over the last two years to get the 2014 Farm Bill out of the morass of Capitol Hill gridlock and onto **President Obama**'s desk awaiting his signature.

First, **Cochran** had to stave off challengers for his seat as the ranking Republican on the Senate Agriculture Committee even to be in position to use his vast experience to protect Mississippi farmers, landowners and timber growers.

That seat won, **Cochran**'s next challenge was navigating a changing political landscape. Cochran has served on the Senate Agriculture committee since 1978 - liter-

GUEST *continued on page 3*