K-State’s Ifft casts view of Barry Flinchbaugh Ag Policy Chair

Ag economist says university focuses on solutions for Kansas farmers

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Fraught with the challenges of weather, fluctuating commodity prices, global markets and more, farming tests even the most resilient of souls.

That’s not something lost on Kansas State University agricultural economist Jenny Ifft, whose daily work spins around finding solutions.

“As an agricultural policy economist,” she says, “I want to help producers, stakeholders, policymakers and others to get the best research available to make important decisions.”

Ifft is the university’s Flinchbaugh Agricultural Policy Chair, a position that aims to uphold the legacy of a man well-known in state and national circles for his contributions to agricultural policy.

“Anybody that ever met Barry Flinchbaugh once will never forget him,” Ifft said. “He was a great storyteller, and he was great at clearly explaining concepts in agricultural policy in ways that his students could really remember it.”

Flinchbaugh passed away in 2020, having taught agricultural policy to K-State undergraduate students for 49 years. His work included leadership on several U.S. Farm Bills, and he was highly skilled at networking with state and national legislators from both major political parties.

“He was a strong supporter of Kansas agriculture as well as people who lived in rural areas,” Ifft said.

In mid-August, K-State announced the creation of the Barry Flinchbaugh Center for Ag Policy to showcase the university’s commitment to farmers and ranchers in Kansas and the U.S.
Though it’s affiliated with K-State, “the Center is a free-standing organization…that will work with stakeholders to identify innovative solutions to current and future challenges facing our agricultural communities,” according to Ifft.

While the Flinchbaugh Agricultural Policy Chair is not directly associated with the Center, Ifft says she will have close ties to the work being done there and serve in an ex-officio role in the Center’s leadership.

“In the coming year, I’ll be working with the Center to form an advisory board for the Chair,” Ifft said, noting that undergraduate education is a priority area.

“We have an outstanding program at K-State called the Flinchbaugh Food and Agricultural Policy Fellowship that places Kansas students in a state organization, and gives them a work experience with an option to eventually work in Washington, D.C.,” Ifft said.

Through the state’s extension network, Ifft said she will also be involved in providing updates on agricultural policy to various groups in Kansas – much of the work based on what’s being learned at K-State.

For example, Ifft said, “I’m trying to understand the effectiveness of forage safety net products, some of which are quite new. And I’m studying how often and why farmland turns over in Kansas, which has a lot of policy implications. I’m asking questions about how effective it is to use crop insurance to target the adoption of conservation practices.”

“I’m trying to make sure the research I conduct myself and with colleagues continues to be focused on the current and future challenges of farmers.”

Ifft can be reached at jifft@ksu.edu. K-State’s Department of Agricultural Economics also routinely posts updated reports on numerous issues on its AgManager website, https://agmanager.info.

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K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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