

## World Ag Expo Chairman: Future of agriculture is bright

Luis Hernandez , lfhernan@visaliatimesdelta.com 12:01 a.m. PST February 11, 2015

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Brothers Ely, 3, left, and Luke Goncalves, 5, both of Dos Palos, explore a LS Tractor LL2101 during opening day of the World Ag Expo at the International AgriCenter in Tulare. (Photo: Steve R. Fujimoto, )

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(Photo: Steve R. Fujimoto)

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Volunteer Chairman Allen Klee said events like the 2015 World Ag Expo, where farmers can meet farmers to exchange ideas, are importance to keep agriculture alive.

"We need to keep farming going," Klee said. "Without farming, we don't exist."

Klee, who's the leader of 1,200 orange clad volunteers, made his comments during this year's Expo opening ceremony today. The farm show runs until Thursday.



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The Expo, held at the International Agri-Center grounds, is the largest agriculture trade show, featuring 2.6 million square feet of exhibit space and bringing together farmers and exhibitors from around the world. Over a three-day period, the farm show is expected to draw an estimated 100,000 people to Tulare.

In putting on such an event, Klee said it's the volunteers who make it happen.

"This is a community event," he said. "That's what makes World Ag Expo what it is."

World Ag Expo General Manager Jerri Sinift agreed.

"We couldn't do what we do; we couldn't do this show without them," he said.

Drought became a topic the opening ceremony speakers addressed. Klee said farmers around the world have dealt with less than ideal farming conditions before.

"We can share how we endure drought. We can share how we endure hard times," he said.

California Department of Agriculture Karen Ross shared the same view.

"Bringing farmers together is a gift we can give to agriculture," she said.

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Opening Ceremony Emcee Mark Watte, who farms cotton, said Tulare County is the top agriculture producing county in the world as well as the No. 1 dairy producer. Tulare County would likely maintain its production edge if drought wasn't an issue.

"All we need is water," he said. "We could do that every year."

FFA State President Dipak Kumar, a Tulare Western graduate, said he was humbled to speak at the Expo's opening ceremony. In his remarks, Kumar said he's encouraged in the agriculture.

"The future of ag. is bright," he said. "Commodity prices are improving and crops are feeding more people than ever."

But that's not all, Kumar said.

"Young people are willing to work in agriculture," he said.

Allen said he was impressed with Kumar's speech.

"I have never heard such a wonderful speech," he said. "The future of farming is bright."

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