

## Robert L. “Bob” Williams

**B**ob Williams has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to agriculture in West Virginia. From his childhood days on his grandparent’s farm to his current role with the West Virginia Farm Bureau, he was able to make contributions to the field through an unusually wide variety of roles at state, regional and national levels.

After completing higher education in biology, political science and plant pathology, he began as an instructor at the Potomac State College of West Virginia University, where he worked with future farmers and youth preparing for careers in the sciences. He then served as an agricultural agent with WVU Extension in Wetzel County.

In 1978, he began a 23-year career with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA), starting as a plant pathologist. He worked with the United States Department of Agriculture to establish a National Plant Pest Survey and Detection Program, the first of its kind in West Virginia.

In 1987, he became the director of the WVDA’s Marketing and Development Division. Under his leadership, the unit shifted from focusing primarily on production agriculture to product marketing, niche marketing and cottage industry development. Mr. Williams was instrumental in expanding the use of the “West Virginia Grown” logo in advertising and identifying quality agricultural products.

Mr. Williams also led the WVDA to expand its efforts into international marketing. He became active in the North American Agricultural Marketing Officials group and brought national and international recognition to West Virginia products.

Under his direction, the WVDA assisted with the establishment of the Capitol Market, Logan Farmers’ Market and the Huntington Farmers’ Market, as well as the expansion of the Inwood Farmers’ Market.

In 1997, he was given responsibility for management of more than 10,000 acres of public land, updating production practices to improve efficiency. Working with farm managers, he implemented the use of best management practices on these public lands.

Mr. Williams received the National Honor Award for Service to Agriculture from the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), as well as the prestigious National Superior Service Award from the USDA for his passion and dedication to agriculture and natural resources.

In 2001, he became the executive secretary of the West Virginia Farm Bureau, leading efforts to promote agriculture, protect the interests of farmers and landowners, and further agricultural education to West Virginia citizens. He works tirelessly to advocate for favorable agricultural legislation at the local, state and national levels.

