

Director Candidates: Region 3 – III. (4-year term), Candidate 1 of 2



Benjamin (Ben) Hugenberg

36 years old
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Farm Credit member since: 2007

Family: Rose Ann Hugenberg, Mother.

Brief description of agricultural operation and employment/business experience over the past five years:

I row crop 1,000 acres of corn and soybeans on rotation as well as 7,500 contract swine finishing spaces under management. In the last two years I have expanded into strawberries, blackberries, tomatoes, sweet corn, peppers, pumpkins, cantaloupe and green beans in small fruit and vegetable production. This has come from the need to find a new source of labor which has come from the H2A seasonal worker program. The H2A program, though extremely challenging, has served me well and I continue to learn. In addition, the program has more than served my goal of finding and utilizing suitable labor for the day-to-day tasks of my operation. I have been farming and managing this operation full time for the past 10 years after the unexpected passing of my father.

Boards or committees you currently serve on and boards or committees you have served on in the past five years:

1) Adams County Farm Bureau-past 10 years and current Vice President, IL Farm Bureau State Young Leader Committee and former Chairman. Agriculture is the root of our operations and our cooperative/Farm Bureau advocates for agriculture and helping the rural economy. A focus of Compeer's as well. 2) Compeer Client Advisory Council. As a member I do not believe I have missed a meeting of the council. This is a way to voice concerns and encourage new ideas to better Compeer as a whole. 3) Adams county FSA Committee member and past Chairman. Advocating for local farmers

Community Involvement/government service:

1) St. Joseph Catholic Church - Lector, Holy Name member, Knights of Columbus, founding member of Annual Shrimp Boil Committee and chair, Pastoral Council member. Belief in a Higher power is of great importance and actively participating in Church activities is an honor. 2) County FSA Committee involvement. Staying active and knowledgeable about programs with the federal government is important to be able to help others and our own operations. 3) Liberty School FFA Alumni Member. Staying active and supporting the youth is of the utmost importance. They are our future, helping in any way possible, ensures the best chance for that future to be bright. 4) Give presentations for local 4-H. Education at an early age and helping teach youth about agriculture and what it truly is and what it truly serves ensures sustainability and a better future.

Education: Bachelors in Agribusiness from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Extensive Graduate work in Agrifinance; course work is complete for a Master's. However, my thesis is undefended due to returning to the farm after my father's passing. I've excelled at academics, graduating high school valedictorian and graduating top 100 from the U of I. Nothing beats real world experience. Having been thrown directly into sole operator has drilled home the importance of succession planning and in exploring all options before making a decision. Myself and my operation have become stronger in learning the lessons.

What is your vision for the future of agriculture? I believe agriculture will need to continue to adapt and utilize technology in order to continue to thrive. Talented individuals will need to be able to earn income sufficient to entice and hold them on the farm. In addition, further avenues of diversification will need to be explored including specialty areas. We will need to adapt to the wants and need of the people/customers that we serve.

What do you believe are the primary issues facing agriculture and Compeer Financial? Continued profitability and the ability to maintain high quality talent, many times in the form of a child or family member coming back to the farm, are issues facing agriculture and Compeer. Compeer needs to stay true to its agriculture roots as well as be competitive and hold, and hire the talent necessary to do so. Agriculture as an industry also faces continued geopolitical pressure, environmental pressures, continued governmental red tape that seem to be becoming more and more, and as always unforeseen international pressure that can have dramatic impacts on markets.

Why do you want to serve on the Board of Directors at Compeer Financial? Compeer is a premier, industry based, cooperative in the financial lending world. I and my family have been associated with them for many years and they continue to serve us well. However, like all businesses and organizations they must stay relevant and current to the industry and competitive in the market. This needs to be achieved through the guidance and direction of its board. Quality directors from all sectors and generational areas must be present on the board to do the best to achieve this. Put simply, diversification.

With my unique situation of the unexpected passing of my father I have the unique ability to be able to give my perspective, while having the experience and responsibility of being the sole operator and decision maker of my operation. In that time period I have grown the operation and continued to diversify it. These unique characteristics allow me to have valuable perspective which can help to achieve the best decisions and direction for Compeer as an organization and for its cooperative membership, which is who the organization is truly there to serve.