

President's Letter
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What a relief to be reaching the end of this year. Not to dwell on the obvious, but hopefully the most devastating year financially in our memory will have taught us a few lessons that we can use to prosper in the future. Hopefully a lot of the pain is going away.

One major problem that is not going away is the “wacky, out of control environmental movement” (Ron Goble Nov. 2009 Western Dairy Business) that would force everyone back into caves with subsistence farming. None other than Bill Gates has been quoted as saying that “environmentalists are standing in the way of feeding humanity through their opposition to biotechnology, farm chemicals and nitrogen fertilizer.” Gates has committed over \$1 billion of his personal fortune to improving crop yields in the poorest countries and for additional farm productivity research in colleges and universities.

With the future projection of over 8-9 billion people in this world by 2050 and the current situation of over 1 billion undernourished people today, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) says there is a major food crisis looming. FAO projects that agriculture must produce as much food in the next 40 years as it has in the past 10,000 years to meet global needs. Anyone with any production knowledge at all would understand that it is impossible to accomplish this while denying modern technology, chemicals and fertilizers, and at the same time working with the same or a shrinking land base. Greg Vincent, Editor of Top Producer magazine, editorialized that such an attempt is not only foolish, but immoral. (Nov. 2009)

Animal agriculture has its place in the solution. Approximately 2/3 of the world's land areas are not suitable for agricultural use, leaving only about 1/3 from which to derive our food. Only 1/3 of this is suitable for cultivation to produce food for humans, the remaining 2/3 is covered by grass, shrubs and other plants that only ruminants can digest. More than 2/3 of animal feed consists of feeds that are either undesirable or unsuitable for human food. Those of us watching range cows work on New Mexican rangeland can really appreciate this fact.

Fortunately, the overzealous and misguided environmental movement is a small group of people who are trying to change modern agriculture. Unfortunately this very vocal minority has a direct link to the current leadership in Washington, D.C. One of their pet projects, “Cap & Trade” considers planting trees on farmland as a solution. I say that

the reduction in food production seems to be quite harmful to the future food needs of the world's population.

On a short scientific note for those who slept through or skipped high school biology, during photosynthesis, plants use water and carbon dioxide (yes carbon dioxide) to produce food (sugars and starches) and oxygen. Maybe the slight increase in CO₂ in the atmosphere is just God's way of getting ready to feed the increased population of the earth. (Everyone should copy and send this message to their elected officials.)

We must unleash the free enterprise system of American farms, ranches and dairies to feed the world of the future. In one of my last newsletters, I noted that since we in agriculture are so productive we are the passport to prosperity for America and the rest of the world. The prosperity train is coming down the tracks. For those who would lay across the tracks to stop this, you should move now. Get up, put on your boots, plan on learning something and getting your hands dirty helping us feed this world. Otherwise it could get quite messy.

As we approach this holiday season, let us all hope for a Merry Christmas, and a very Happy New Year! Dairy producers wish to thank the banks and our associated suppliers for standing with us as much as we have depended on you for the last year. As president of DPNM, I would like to once again thank Sharon Lombardi, Kaye Dunnahoo, Beverly Fikse and Susan Curry for all of their hard work and dedication on behalf of the association and the producers.

Merry Christmas.