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Opinion

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OUR VIEW

New dairy effort undeniably interesting

Being a member of the public these days can be confusing. A look at social media such as Twitter and Facebook opens up a can of worms that offers conflicting and factually challenged criticisms of virtually everyone and everything.

The dairy industry occasionally finds itself on the receiving end of such criticism, which generally comes from people who have decided — without the benefit of actual facts — that they don't like it.

Up to this point, the industry's efforts to set the record straight have met with varying degrees of success.

A new effort aims at improving that record.

It's called Undeniably Dairy and combines some new features and others that have been around for awhile that are upbeat and non-defensive. Some are informative, and others are just for fun. They avoid the air of self-righteousness and, in sum, portray dairy farms as the fascinating places they are.

For example, a news story last winter mentioned that Skittles are fed to dairy cows. A video featuring dairy farmer Laura Daniels on the Undeniably Dairy



website offers a complete and science-based explanation that leaves viewers with only one question, whether cows like Skittles or Gummy Worms best. FYI, the sugar in the candy is fed to cows in small portions in their winter rations to help them digest their feed.

The rest of the year, plenty of grass, which also has sugars, is available, so no Skittles are needed.

Another video discusses the use of antibiotics on dairy farms and the fact that there is zero

Online

<https://dairygood.org/>

chance of antibiotics getting into milk. Why? Because milk is tested nine times, from the farm to the store, to make sure there are no antibiotics in it.

These videos feature farmers who avoid being preachy and defensive and offer pretty good science lessons on raising cows.

Other videos are just for fun. One from Indiana features a "cow cam" in which a Go Pro camera was put on the head of Yasmine the cow, which then wandered around doing

that cow thing, like eating and hanging out with her buddies.

Featured also is lots of food — that's what dairy is all about — and other tidbits, which are fun to watch and sneak in a few factoids here and there.

The Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy and Dairy Management Inc. are behind the effort with help from the National Dairy Council and other dairy groups.

We predict it'll be a hit with younger folks who like to be entertained as they learn.

Anyone who checks out Undeniably Dairy with an open mind will find it undeniably interesting.

OUR VIEW

Saving the West's farmland

Idaho's Treasure Valley is a hotbed for residential and commercial real estate development. As a result, a lot of prime farmland is being lost to other uses.

A growing number of groups and individuals are trying to find ways to stem the loss.

It's a complex issue that pits the private property right of an owner to realize the highest value of an asset against the need for the greater agricultural community to maintain a viable infrastructure.

While you'll find similar situations throughout the West, farmland in the valley — particularly Ada County, home to Boise, the state capital — is being lost at an alarming clip.

According to the Ada Soil and Water Conservation District, Ada County had 244,218 acres of farmland in 1974 but 144,049 acres in 2012 — a decrease of 41 percent.

And no one expects things to slow down.

The valley's population is projected to increase 62 percent, from about 650,000 now to 1.05 million by 2040. Nearby counties will soon feel similar development pressure.

"It's just sprawling right to us," said farmer Brad McIntyre, a member of the Owyhee Soil and Water Conservation



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Idaho farmer Neil Durrant cuts hay in a field near Kuna on May 26. Farmland in some parts of the Treasure Valley has disappeared at an alarming rate, adding urgency to the need to protect it.

District. "We've already lost huge amounts of farm ground around here. I don't want to see any more prime farm ground go away."

Once developed, the land

never goes back under the plow. And, as more land in a particular area goes out of production, it's harder for the remaining farmers to stay viable.

We think farmland should

remain farmland whenever possible. But how?

In Oregon, statewide land use planning laws adopted in 1973 severely restrict the development of prime farmland.

They have worked. There is no unchecked sprawl around Portland and other urban centers. But while it continues to be supported by many Oregon farmers today, we don't think Idaho property owners would go for those kind of restrictions imposed on them by the state.

And that's understandable. For many farmers the land represents their retirement, and they should expect to get the best deal they can when it comes time to sell.

We like conservation easements, a tool used in many states.

Under the easements, owners are paid for voluntarily designating all or part of their land to remain permanently in open space, which could include farming. The payments are meant to reimburse landowners for the loss of property value because of the restricted uses.

Often times the money comes from private land conservation groups. It's conceivable that taxpayers could fund a state-run program.

As long as all parties make their choices freely, we think these types of deals are a perfect way for farmers to realize the value of their property while keeping it in some type of productive use.

Readers' views

The quiet majority, patrons of Westland

As the quiet majority, the patrons of Westland have grave concerns about the management of Westland Irrigation District.

What might we be concerned about? The last time there was a major water project in 1987, the senior water rights holders' McKay allotment went from 3.5 acre-feet to 2.3 acre-feet and our cost went up, while Teel, the junior water rights holders as the Limited Water Users, ended up receiving the benefit.

A short history: The detriment to Westland started when dryland wheat farms from Teel drilled wells. The wells dried up. Teel tried to get rights to McKay, this was denied numerous times. So Teel came to Westland. Teel got their Umatilla River water delivered with the Flood Water Delivery Contracts in 1984. A Boundary Expansion was proposed by the then-manager, doubling the size of the district, to include Teel inside the boundaries, despite Teel inside the boundaries, despite a letter from the Oregon Water Resources Department on Jan. 28, 1986, that cited serious concerns and violation of state law. In 1987, Teel became the Limited Water Users to get access to McKay. Teel took control of the Westland Board.

Westland senior rights holders' McKay allotment decreased and irrigation season shortened after the senior water right holders went from flood to sprinkler at their own expense. (Records are available to verify this history.)

With that, the senior water rights holders in Westland need to have a full season of water as we had in the past. Stop the prevention of people from knowing the facts through destruction of records, as noted in the Oct. 6, 1991, Sunday Oregonian article, "The Umatilla River Blues." As well, patrons shouldn't have to put in a public records request to receive meeting agendas, draft minutes and board packets prior to meetings.

The Central Project was first discussed with patrons on March 31, 2015; we were excited to have ability to purchase more water. To our disappointment, though, we were repeatedly told by Westland, you can buy the water, but we may not be able to deliver it to you. Our property is located in the middle section of the Westland canal system, so this didn't make sense; the new water could only be delivered to the main canal, where Teel Irrigation District is located.

We are for an affordable exchange project from the Columbia

that will work in collaboration with CTUIR and the BOR. We are not for more water to benefit a select few large farmers, the juniors Teel, at the expense of Westland via a project of misconception.

The patrons voiced their opinion by electing two new directors in the fall of 2016 — the first time ever voting for plaintiffs who purchased the Oregon Hereford Ranch in 1976. The will of the people could have reached the same conclusion about the Central Project, potentially voting it down. Why was that opportunity denied allowing for blame to be placed on the lawsuit instead?

Furthermore, why did the district notify the patrons on Aug. 23, 2016, "It is likely the district will need to increase assessments to cover the cost of defending the suits?" Neglecting to mention there is an indemnification clause in the Limited Water Users Contracts, holding senior water rights harmless from cost of all claims, losses, damages, causes of action or suit arising.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit always have a clear conscience, reached by doing the right thing for the right reason. Fighting to not allow an irrigation board to take your water to do with it as they please, at their discretion and by the power of eminent domain, which is what the

Westland attorneys are arguing.

The Westland Irrigation District Board has a fiduciary duty to the patrons of Westland with 1903, 1907 and 1961 water rights to deliver the water resources to which each is entitled. Water delivery by priority: first in time, first in right.

*Protecting Water Rights
 Patrons of Westland
 Dixie Echeverria
 Echo, Ore.*

Elliott Forest shows leaders' shortcomings

The article in the May 25 Capital Press about the Elliott Forest — Isn't it the responsibility of the elected officials to deal effectively and responsibly with existing problems for the good of the citizens?

Why isn't the Elliott Forest generating funds for schools, as was intended? Since this forest is owned by the state, you'd think that with proper management and harvesting the funds would be generated and dispensed to these schools instead of shifting a burden on overtaxed citizens.

What is this appeasement of en-

vironmental interests? Seems history has shown that nature has existed for eons without the interference of the harbingers of Agenda 21 and their affiliates with unnecessary problems and troubles, not only for foresters but for farmers and ranchers who have been and are good stewards of the land, lest we would not enjoy the fresh food, warm homes, building materials, etc.

Do we need these harbingers? I think not, and they should be voted out, as they are deleterious to our well-being, economy, nation and our future. Don't you think?

*Mrs. M.A. Novak
 Yamhill, Ore.*

A question about dairy concerns

This is more of a question: In your article on "Fake Milk," the dairy industry wants to put pressure on the Food and Drug Administration to regulate dairy terms, such as soy milk or almond milk, but will they also push for the terms peanut butter or almond butter?

I understand their concerns, but how far do you take this issue?

*Al Dertinger
 Terrebonne, Ore.*