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# Opinion

## Editorial Board

Publisher  
Mike O'Brien

Editor  
Joe Beach

Managing Editor  
Carl Sampson

opinions@capitalpress.com

Online: www.capitalpress.com/opinion

## OUR VIEW

# Attack ads reflect poorly on perpetrators

We live in an era of attack ads. They have for years been the weapon of choice in politics, and for the past couple of years that tactic has worked its way into the discussion about, of all things, food.

The first iteration of the tactic came in the guise of the precautionary principle, a seemingly innocuous statement that says, "If we can't prove it's safe then we should avoid it. As a personal philosophy, that's fine. If a person has doubts about the safety of something — say, driving in Seattle traffic — then please don't. But as public policy, that principle doesn't hold up. If everyone were forced to stop driving in Seattle because of the fears of a few, then public transportation would be flooded, people couldn't get to work, and the economy would be damaged.

All because a few people don't feel comfortable driving.

When that principle was applied to food, activists and others played on the fears of the public, offering flimsy arguments such as "Well, we just aren't sure about that..." Well-meaning members of the public picked up on that and decided, without any scientific proof, which foods were OK and which weren't.

The campaign to label genetically modified ingredients in foods has taken that implied shrug and turned it into a jihad against GMOs and Monsanto. The attacks are targeted specifically at one or two types of GMO crops, which have been around for more than a decade with zero impact on public health. Worse yet, all other GMOs have been caught in the crossfire. In fact, ask some GMO labeling activists about other GMOs, as

we did during a public forum last fall in Portland, and they don't know much about them and don't seem to care.

In the meantime, anti-GMO rallies target Monsanto almost exclusively, using unfounded fears to promote an emotional argument.

In the last couple of years, attack ads have mutated to smear not just GMOs but anyone who doesn't produce food the way that the sponsors prescribe. Chipotle, a fast-food chain, was one of the first to produce advertisements that attacked conventional farming, implying that all farms are evil factories — unless, of course, that burrito comes from Chipotle.

Chipotle is more than welcome to promote itself and what it does or doesn't allow in the food it sells. However, it's not welcome to paint all farmers with the broadest of brushes

in what can be most charitably be described as cheap shots.

It's one thing for a fast-food company to attack farmers, but it's quite another for farmers to attack other farmers.

That's the most recent development in the food wars. An organization called Organic Only, whose members are among the largest organic growers and processors in the world, has produced an online video called "New MacDonald" in which kids in a school production portray non-organic farmers as haz-mat-suited maniacs spraying pesticides on their crops, shooting their livestock full of hormones and other mean and nasty things.

By the end of the commercial, every non-organic farmer has been smeared.

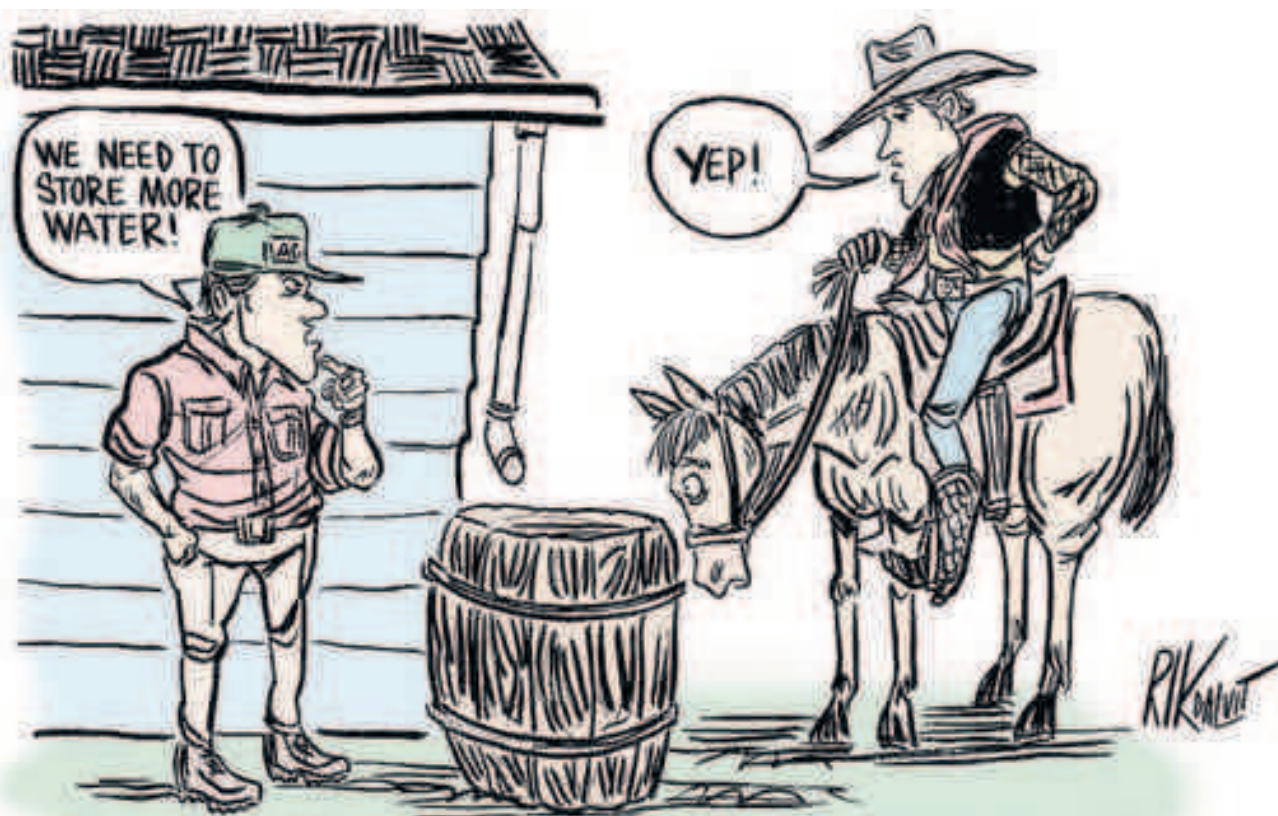
Organic Only or any other group

of corporations and cooperatives are certainly welcome to promote themselves, but attacking other farmers with misleading and inaccurate advertising is totally out of bounds.

It reminds us of the old political advertising credo: If you don't have anything good to say about yourself, attack the other guy.

We support all forms of agriculture — organic, conventional, large, small. If it involves growing food and fiber, we support it. Growing food to nourish a planet that supports 7 billion people — and counting — is serious business. Humanity depends on agriculture.

But it's demeaning and childish for one group of farmers to needlessly attack another group. We presume that Organic Only's members are better than that.



Rik Dalvit/For the Capital Press

## OUR VIEW

# More water storage needed across West

For the most part, hydrologists are painting a pretty grim picture of this season's water situation in California and the Pacific Northwest.

California faces its fourth year of drought. Many farmers there face cutoffs amounting to 80 percent or more of their water.

In the Cascades, all but the highest peaks are devoid of snow. Farmers in the Owyhee Basin can expect no more than a third of their normal allocation. A drought emergency has already been declared in Oregon's Malheur and Lake counties, with others expected.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee has declared drought emergencies on the Olympic Peninsula; the eastside of the central Cascade mountains, including Yakima and Wenatchee; and the Walla Walla region.

Whether a harbinger of summers to come, or not, the current situation underscores the need to build more water

storage and to evaluate how existing water resources are allocated.

It's been a fairly wet winter throughout the West. But warm temperatures prevented a lot of that moisture from falling as snow in the high country. In many cases, what fell as snow was later washed away by warmer rain.

Without storage, that water is lost to irrigators who depend on the snowpack.

Californians last year approved a \$7.5 billion bond measure that could fund the construction of more storage in coming years. We expect any project to be opposed by environmentalists.

In Oregon, a group of stakeholders is trying to work out the rules for a plan to build more storage. Farm interests say the proposal's environmental concessions make it nearly impossible for storage to pencil out.

A more promising plan, endorsed again last week by Gov. Kate Brown, would allow farmers in Umatilla and

Morrow counties access to more water from the Columbia River.

In Washington, a deal has yet to be reached to recharge the aquifer on the state's eastern edge.

These efforts, and more, are needed to maintain the viability of Western agriculture.

Water is a precious resource much in demand.

We must find ways to get the most out of every drop through better conservation and more efficient cropping methods. But conservation is only part of the solution. We must be able to store more of what falls for when it's most needed.

To that end, these projects are vital for farmers who need the water for their crops. And beyond the commercial interests of the multi-billion-dollar Western ag industry, they are vital to the millions who turn to that industry for their daily bread.

# Why support Klamath deals? Our world needs food

By PATRICK O'TOOLE  
and DAN KEPPEN  
For the Capital Press

Guest  
comment  
Dan Keppen



Guest  
comment  
Patrick O'Toole



Last month, the Family Farm Alliance board of directors, by unanimous vote, formally supported the concept captured in recent Senate legislation to advance the settlement agreements developed for the Klamath River watershed.

The Alliance is a grassroots, nonprofit organization that represents family farmers, ranchers, agricultural water purveyors and allied industries in the 17 Western states. We have long advocated that the best solutions to the challenges faced by Western irrigators come from the ground-up, driven by local interests.

The three Klamath Agreements — the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement, the Klamath Hydro-Electric Settlement Agreement and the Upper Klamath Basin Comprehensive Agreement — reflect an intensive, collaborative effort that has consumed much of the last decade.

Without these agreements successfully making it through Congress, local irrigators face no protection from enforcement of significant tribal water rights, no viable plan for dealing with the Endangered Species Act issues, and no identifiable path for working toward target power rates that are similar to other Western agricultural regions.

Our organization views the Klamath settlement agreements in a fairly straightforward way: This approach provides the best means of keeping basin family farmers and ranchers in the business of producing food and fiber for our country and the world.

The settlement agreements are a unique solution that advances this critical need.

What happens or does not happen for Klamath Basin irrigators could set a precedent, not only for all Western family farms and ranches, but other areas of the country where agricultural production is beset with environmental challenges.

Understandably, the idea of removing dams is a sticking point for some in the agricultural community, and the Alliance does not universally endorse the removal of dams. In fact, the Alliance is a leading proponent of creating more surface water storage in the West. Alliance representatives have been invited to testify before congressional committees several times to offer up ideas intended to streamline existing permitting and expensive daunting processes. In 2014, the Alliance released a white paper on the need for new, appropriate storage projects, which was intended to support related legislative efforts pushed in Congress.

Thus, the potential impacts and precedents of removing any dam are concerns to us as advocates for irrigated agriculture.

The Alliance endorses advancing the Klamath Agreements in Congress because, overall, they are good for irrigated agriculture in the Klamath Basin. We see the agreements as unique to the Klamath Basin and its issues and their dam-removal components have no bearing on other agricultural regions' decision-making. Moreover, no irrigation dams or flood control dams are removed as part of these settlements. In this instance, agricultural producers stand to gain increased water supply reliability in exchange for the expected fish passage benefits associated with removal of these dams, a measure supported by the dams' owners, PacifiCorp.

Our job is to advocate for approaches that keep farmers and ranchers in business so they can continue to feed and clothe the world. Reliable water is an essential component to this approach in the West.

To date, the local irrigators who have actually experienced a threat to their livelihood and way of life with water shut-offs, paying for litigation and Endangered Species Act pressures want these agreements in place. We support their belief that they provide the most cost-effective, timely and politically viable solution.

We are proud to join other organizations like the Klamath County and Oregon Cattlemen's Associations and Farm Bureaus, three Native American tribes, dozens of conservation and recreational groups, the Oregon Water Resources Congress, the Klamath County Chamber of Commerce and the City of Klamath Falls, who took similar care in making their informed decisions that support legislation to advance the Klamath Settlement Agreements.

Pat O'Toole, a Wyoming cattle and sheep rancher, is president of the Family Farm Alliance. He is a former member of the Wyoming state legislature and 2014 recipient of the prestigious Leopold Conservation Award. Dan Keppen, of Klamath Falls, Ore., has over 25 years of experience in Western water resources engineering and policy. He has served as executive director of the Family Farm Alliance for 10 years.

## Readers' views

### Celebrate with American Humane Certification

Americans quietly celebrate the nation's hardworking farmers and ranchers during every meal. And National Agriculture Day on March 18 was a good opportunity to reflect and give thanks to those who raise our food and do it right. Today U.S. farmers provide us with perhaps the most abundant, safe and affordable food supply in the world — raising 262 percent more food than in 1950, while using less fertilizer, seed and labor. Consumers are grateful for this, but they also increasingly say they care that animals used in agriculture are well-treated —

95 percent, according to a recent poll we conducted.

Farmers have always been the front-line stewards of animal welfare but to demonstrate humane treatment to consumers, many of whom have no experience on farms, more and more farmers are turning to independent, third-party certification programs such as the American Humane Certified program, which now ensures the welfare of more than 1 billion U.S. farm animals under more than 200 scientifically based standards covering everything from adequate space to food and water, lighting, warmth, clean air and the ability for animals to be animals.

This National Agriculture Day, let's celebrate by looking for humane labeling and supporting American farmers who not only put food on our

tables, but do it in a humane way.

Robin Ganzert, Ph.D.  
President and CEO  
American Humane  
Association  
Washington, D.C.

### Label college professors, too

We're given by the anti-GMO voo-doo crowd to believe that GMO foods must "labeled," that consumers may better make informed choices as to what they are buying. After all, informed choice is critically important, and such labeling is "harmless."

So, if we are to abandon objective evidence as a criteria for implying unproved harm with scarlet letter "labeling," then no doubt these

same folk would have no objection to mandatory federal labels on the demonstrated political proclivities of each college professor, so students (and parents thereof) may better make informed choices as to what they are buying. Seems reasonable, given the immense perceived "potential" for harm to consumers, not to mention the horrendously expensive costs, right?

If there is no harm-by-implication in such voo-doo labeling, what's not to like in extending this brilliance to the selection of those who are entrusted with objectively teaching our kids? After all, such labeling is critically important to an informed choice, and such labeling is ... harmless.

William Slusher  
Riverside, Wash.