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# Opinion

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## OUR VIEW

# TPP crucial to well-being of U.S. agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is trying to boost sagging dairy prices by offering to buy \$20 million worth of cheese.

It's the second round. USDA bought \$20 million worth of cheese in August, too. But, no one really expects the effort to have much of a long-term impact, least of all Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack.

Real growth in the dairy industry and producer prices are dependent on increased access

to foreign markets. Last week Vilsack touted the findings of a recent USDA report that proves the point.

It points out that the domestic market is mature, and unlikely to grow significantly. But the export market has grown fivefold since 2000, reaching \$7.1 billion in 2014. Exports account for 15 percent of U.S. milk production.

Dairy exports are good for the greater economy. For every dollar in dairy exports, another \$3 in economic activity are created. Every \$1 billion in exports

supports 20,000 jobs.

Vilsack said it's important that Congress pass the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the pending trade deal between the U.S.

and Canada, Mexico, Japan, Australia, Malaysia, Peru, Vietnam, Chile, Brunei, Singapore and New Zealand.

USDA estimates the TPP would boost U.S. dairy exports by \$150 million to \$300 million per year. But dairy farmers wouldn't be the only

beneficiaries.

Passage of the TPP is important to all of agriculture. U.S. agriculture is trade-dependent, especially in the West. Oregon, Washington, Idaho and California export about \$30 billion a year in agricultural goods overseas, mainly to Pacific Rim nations.

As we've said before, TPP isn't perfect. But, U.S. farmers and ranchers can't afford to cede free access to their most important trading partners.



## OUR VIEW



This screen capture from the "Mr. Seed" video shows the main character criticizing conventional agriculture.

# The underbelly of agricultural discussion

An old political adage summarizes much about today's world: "You can't sling mud without getting some on yourself."

That's true in agriculture, too.

A pro-organic nonprofit recently released a video that attacks conventional agriculture. It's low, and it's crude. It's inaccurate, and it's nonsensical.

Called "Mr. Seed," it's a cartoon in every sense. It uses four-letter words, inappropriate metaphors and is based primarily on ignorance.

"Mr. Seed" is to agriculture what "Beavis and Butt-Head" are to intelligent discussion.

At several points, the main character is "bleeped" to cover his foul language. In another instance, he peeks into the pants of another seed to see — you get the idea. It is as gross and silly as it is lame.

"Mr. Seed" makes the originators look like a bunch of 13-year-old boys. (At least the boys will outgrow that tittering snarkiness. "Mr. Seed" will not.)

That the Clif Bar Family Foundation, through its Seed Matters initiative, agreed to have its name attached to the video is a surprise. We assumed they were above that sort of thing. We also hope they rethink their support for the low road.

As an agricultural newspaper and website, we cover all types of agriculture on our news pages and support all types of agriculture in our editorials. We view the production of food as an issue of overarching importance today and in the future. There is no more important industry in the world.

We don't see the point of cartoonish, ignorant attacks on any farmer or rancher. The folks at Clif Bar and the family foundation they support are better than "Mr. Seed." By all lights, they reflect high values in their business practices and products and we wish them all of the best.

We also wish they would use this occasion to engage with others in agriculture to gain a better

understanding of all facets of the industry.

The Food Producers of Idaho — an organization that includes most of the state's agriculture-related groups — recently wrote a letter to the Clif foundation.

"Our diverse agricultural practices — conventional, organic, biotech — are all vitally important to our food supply," the letter stated. "The demonizing of conventional agricultural practices through this video discounts its essential role in meeting the country's food needs, sustainability efforts, and economic development."

Well said.

There's another adage that has been overused during the current political season: "If you don't have anything good to say about yourself, attack the other guy."

We'd like to see that practice confined to the lower bowels of the presidential election campaign and not seep into the legitimate and thoughtful discussion of agriculture.

# Why Oregonians should vote yes on 98

By KRISTIN KOSTMAN  
For the Capital Press

Guest  
comment  
Kristin Kostman

Oregon has nearly the worst graduation rate in the country. Measure 98 is our chance to fix it. Measure 98 will establish and expand vocational and career technical education classes in high schools throughout the state, including agriculture education at rural schools.

Measure 98 would make Career Technical Education classes, or CTE, available to every high school student in Oregon. As an agricultural science and technology teacher at Crater High School in Central Point, I've seen firsthand how such classes can transform students' lives.

For some kids, sitting down in a math class or reading a book in English class is not what they were cut out to do. CTE courses are different. They provide these students with challenging, hands-on classes that help keep them engaged. Specifically, agriculture education and technology is an intra-curricular program that combines classroom instruction, supervised agricultural experiences and FFA, the largest career and technical student organization in the state.

CTE classes also make the rest of school more relevant. Classes like mine show students how their learning from other courses can be applied.

For example, in my classes, students use math and chemistry to figure out how much fertilizer they would need to apply to a field. They use reading to decipher complex planting instructions. They use critical thinking to evaluate livestock and then defend their placings through oral reasons.

My students see why math, chemistry, reading and critical thinking matter. As a result, they're much more likely to take their other classes seriously. This is one reason Oregon students who take CTE courses have a 15 percent higher graduation rate than students who do not take CTE courses.

Furthermore, when they do graduate, CTE students are more likely to find high wage jobs in growing industries. That's because when they take classes like mine, they graduate with more real world skills and

experiences that prepare them to make critical decisions about their future educational goals. They learn about trade school options and already have experience in industries that have a need for more workers.

These are just some of the reasons we need CTE classes in high school. Unfortunately, budget cuts have meant many high schools have lost these important training opportunities and career paths.

Measure 98 will fix this, making sure Oregon high schools expand access to CTE education that lets students learn real world skills in a variety of fields, such as engineering and design, computer coding, robotics, agriculture mechanics/welding, medical biotechnology, veterinary medicine, plant science and more.

This way, all students can get education they need for good-paying jobs with local businesses.

In addition, Measure 98 will make sure Oregon's high school graduates are well prepared for college. Measure 98 means many more students can take CTE dual credit and advanced placement classes that let them earn early college credit — which gets them ready to succeed in college. They start college with coursework under their belts and a competitive edge when applying to colleges across the country.

Once in college, they have a head start, which saves them money and increases the chances that they'll actually graduate.

Finally, Measure 98 will help students stay in high school by providing for additional tutors or counselors. Students will understand their options, take charge of them and be more likely to succeed.

Now is the time to do something about our depressing high school graduation rate. Every year we wait, more than 10,000 students fail to graduate high school. Please vote yes for Measure 98. The futures of thousands of students are at stake.

*Kristin Kostman is an agricultural science and technology teacher at Crater High School in Central Point, Ore.*

## Readers' views

### Pierce should be next governor

Bud Pierce is the MOST positive and needed change that our citizens could make in this very important election! Our State of Oregon has been governed by a philosophy that has, and continues to believe that a centralized authority emanating from Salem is the basis of sound representative government.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Please consider the reality of decline that our rural communities languish in today. For thirty-plus years this elitism of control, through these ill-founded policies, has eroded our economic, as well as our social base, here east of the Cascades.

The facts are very plain. Our rural communities, that are the fabric of our culture, have been decimated by the overreach of this controlling policy, AND the neglect to engage our knowledge with the wisdom of our valuable natural resources. Most, if not all, of our rural communities are in decline with lowering population, schools closing/consolidating for lack of kids to educate. Our sons and daughters having to leave because there is no sustainable employment to support families.

I want to make clear that this devastation to our side of Oregon, was not the policy makers' intended outcome. It is because we, the stewards of our communities were, and continue to be ignored for our abili-

ty in generating conscientious management practices that will enhance not only the environmental aspects, but also create a sustainable economy to make our rural side of Oregon thrive again!

Bud Pierce is that much needed change in direction! He has visited our eastside and demonstrates his belief in our abilities that we know what is best for our neighborhoods and small towns. Bud understands and truly believes that the people that live here have THE most invested in a sustainable prosperity, along with the utmost concern for doing what is right in utilizing our tremendous resource base.

Assuredly, we on the eastside of the Cascades, can turn this state around, getting it back on track, and

leaving the old stale, corrupt policies of the last 30-plus years behind.

If we enthusiastically participate in the election process, and vote for Bud Pierce as governor we can invigorate our communities once again. I implore you to vote, and for you to encourage family and friends to engage. Oregon desperately needs a positive, bold change for all of us! Bud Pierce as governor can be the catalyst for a new beginning!

*Curtis W. Martin  
North Powder, Ore.*

### Power company targets producers

In 1980 I built a water-powered generator to produce power and sell to the power company.

I was getting 7 cents a kilowatt-hour.

Now, 35 years later, I receive \$.025 per KWH.

The power company in turn charges \$.65 per KWH that I use from it.

I also get charged for the meter, Klamath dam removal and helping low-income customers.

The power company wants to make all the small people like me that produce water power on a small scale quit producing power.

The power company has been allowed to keep reducing the price they pay for the power and in turn run me out of business.

*Lloyd F. Fery  
Lloyd Fery Farms LLC  
Aumsville, Ore.*