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# Opinion

## Editorial Board

Editor & Publisher  
Joe Beach

opinions@capitalpress.com

Managing Editor  
Carl Sampson

Online: www.capitalpress.com/opinion

## OUR VIEW

# We're still waiting for those better trade deals

Our colleagues at Politico this week published an analysis that showed our 11 former partners in the Trans-Pacific Partnership are involved in 27 separate negotiations with each other, with major international trading blocs and regional powerhouses such as China.

It reports that seven deals that impact U.S. farmers have been signed since the Trump administration pulled the United States out of TPP.

The TPP was seen by many, but not all, U.S. agricultural groups as a boon. It included the U.S. and 11 other countries — Japan, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Vietnam, Chile, Malaysia, Peru, New Zealand, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam. Japan, Mexico and Canada are among the biggest trade partners



Stephen B. Morton/Associated Press File  
President Trump canceled the Trans-Pacific Partnership and is renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement to get better deals. U.S. agriculture is anxiously awaiting those improvements.

for U.S. agriculture.

Negotiations on the pact began in 2008 under President George W. Bush. A deal was reached in October of 2015.

President Obama supported the final deal and submitted it to Congress for ratification. With an election looming,

Republicans and Democrats in Congress weren't anxious to be pinned down on a deal that had both support and opposition that crossed party lines.

The pact's critics included the Republican and the Democrat presidential nominees.

Donald Trump said the deal would undermine the U.S. economy.

As secretary of state, Hillary Clinton raved about the deal, calling it the "gold standard" of trade pacts. Candidate Clinton opposed the deal during the campaign and vowed to oppose it as president.

So without ratification prior to the election, the U.S. was destined to reject TPP in its present form.

Following through on his

campaign promise, President Trump withdrew from the accord on Jan. 23.

Among the other parties in the pact there are differing opinions as to what TPP means without the United States. Shinzo Abe, Japan's prime minister, says the deal is meaningless without the U.S.

Nevertheless, our trading partners around the Pacific Rim aren't wasting time. There are a host of bilateral and multilateral discussions in the works. China, Trump's campaign nemesis, is trying to make deals with our trading partners.

Throughout the campaign, and since taking office, Trump said he'd replace the 12-party pact with a series of bilateral trade deals that would bring jobs

and industry back to the United States. That sounds great. When can we expect that to happen?

Farmers and ranchers, a group that largely supported Trump's election, have a lot riding on foreign trade. The U.S. exports \$135 billion in agricultural products each year. It could always be better, but it's pretty great as it is.

It's hard to say what dumping TPP and renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement may mean for the economy in general, and for farmers and ranchers in particular.

But at the moment it's fair to ask what happens next, and when will it happen? We await a tweet, or any other appropriate communication, from the Oval Office.

## OUR VIEW

# Oregon's growing marijuana problem

When Oregon voters approved an initiative to make marijuana legal under state law — but not federal law — they should have expected it to create as many questions as it answered.

Such as:

- The state may be able to regulate growers and sellers under the registration system, but how does it regulate the black market, which feeds off legal marijuana?
- How does the state prevent barely regulated medical marijuana growers from selling their "extra" production on the black market?
- How does the state reconcile federal law, which specifies that marijuana is illegal, with the state law?
- Is marijuana production included in the state's Right to Farm law?
- Where do water rights and the laws relating to water use start and stop for marijuana growers?

For farmers, the last two questions are especially pertinent. Our guess is not many voters considered the right to farm and water use when casting their ballot for the ability to smoke pot.

Now those and other questions have landed in the laps of the Legislature and the courts, which will be sorting through them until further notice.

It's a great time to be a lawyer in Oregon.

We were never fond of an initiative that would partially legalize recreational marijuana and partially regulate medical marijuana.

The loopholes in that new law are big enough to drive a 1964 Volkswagen mini-bus painted with day-glow flowers through.

In the meantime, 2,788 growers, processors and sellers are taking a chance on recreational marijuana as a crop in Oregon.

Multnomah County, which includes Portland, has 496 applications pending as of July 27. Interestingly, Jackson and Josephine counties, with a combined



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press  
Marijuana plants grow in a high tunnel at a farm near McMinnville, Ore. Since Oregon voters legalized the psychoactive crop in 2013, 685 marijuana producers have been licensed to grow the crop and more than 800 have applications pending.

population that's only 37 percent the size of Multnomah's, have 649 applications pending. One wonders whether that marijuana production is destined solely for the Oregon market.

If you consider only producers, 685 are now licensed by the state and more than 800 have applications pending.

At \$800 to \$1,200 a pound on the market, marijuana will continue to attract a lot of interest, among both legitimate operators and others who seek to take advantage of the loopholes in Oregon's poorly written law.

If it isn't already, Oregon will soon be awash in marijuana. The

state already grows about five times as much marijuana as can realistically be smoked here, according to Rep. Carl Wilson, a Grants Pass Republican who is vice chairman of the Oregon Legislature's Joint Committee on Marijuana Regulation.

That leaves many Oregonians scratching their heads about the problem they created.

The failure to properly regulate marijuana is further proof that the initiative process in Oregon is wide open to interesting concepts that lack the full vetting the legislative process provides.

The result is laws that fail the public.

# For the love of labor

By MARY ALAMEDA  
For the Capital Press

Guest  
comment  
Mary Alameda



Over time, the cost of living in the Golden State has increased relentlessly, repercussions for improper documentation have grown more severe, and higher wages in other industries are drawing more workers away from agriculture. Even with the rise in H-2A worker visas in California and across the country, finding willing hands to help plant, tend and harvest crops on America's farmland is harder with each passing season.

For the first time in my life, I fear for the future of agriculture. I fear the fields will go fallow. I fear the corridors will stop playing out of the stereo on the harvester. I fear the lunchtime chatter will go silent. I fear the colorful bandanas and hats shading faces will disappear. I fear my favorite local fruits and vegetables will become a thing of the past. I fear the extinction of the people and industry I fell in love with.

I am often asked why I would choose a career in agriculture. For me the answer has always been easy: I fell in love with the hands and hearts that characterize farming.

My love stems from birth; I am truly a farmer's daughter. I come from a long line of farmers, fourth generation on both sides of my family. I grew up sitting on my father's lap, 10 and two on the wheel, waving to every other white pickup truck we passed.

I trailed behind his footsteps struggling to keep up with his long stride through furrows. I practiced rolling R's with foremen. As I got older, I put my own hands to work, only to learn they didn't stand a chance. I was left in the dust of hoeing and thinning crews. I laughed with the ladies sorting green beans, providing comic relief as the guera, blondie, trying to keep up.

In the midst of our peak season, my fears for agriculture are being realized more rapidly than anticipated. Due to challenging immigration laws and a rising minimum wage, the California farmer cannot find hands, let alone pay them. By 2023, the minimum wage will be \$15 per hour statewide. With that, the

designated work hours and days in a week have also been revised. An employee can only work six days a week at eight hours a day before hitting overtime, with the exemption of irrigators.

A farmer only wishes he or she could feed the world on these hours! Sadly, California farmers and ranchers cannot sustain the rising costs, and many may be forced to cut back production or employ more crews to absorb the cost. Thus, an attempt to bolster farm laborers may have a reverse effect, and result in workers getting fewer hours and making less money than before.

How does a farmer do more with less, or at least keep up? Technology is providing the answer, as the heartbeat of agriculture gets drowned out by the eerie low hum of mechanization.

Many hands to make light work will no longer be needed due to automation. Crews of 20 to 30 workers are now being replaced by one machine. Take for example the Splat 2.0, the Mantis Thinning Rover, operated by one person, can swiftly hoe and thin a field of leafy greens, which once required dozens of workers to tend.

In 2017, we romanticize a picturesque farm-to-fork process during which farmers lovingly handpick fresh produce. While we sporadically appreciate and consistently expect the same quality, most people are unwilling to do the same work. With the current labor situation, we will be abruptly awoken from our farming fantasy. I was once excited to return to the farm I left, but I'm now afraid I won't recognize it.

Mary Alameda is interning this summer in the American Farm Bureau Federation's Communications Department. Mary is a senior studying agricultural communications at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. Her column appears courtesy of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

## Letters policy

**Write to us:** Capital Press welcomes letters to the editor on issues of interest to farmers, ranchers and the agribusiness community.

**Letters policy:** Please limit letters to 300 words and include your home address and a daytime telephone number with your submission. Longer pieces, 500-750 words, may be considered as guest commentary pieces for use on the opinion pages. Guest commentary submissions should also include a photograph of the author.

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