

Q&A: Trump trade tactics concern McMorris Rodgers

Perdue, Conaway to visit Eastern Washington in summer

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

U.S. wheat farmers are concerned about trade on several fronts. They're concerned about the continuation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership without the U.S. following President Donald Trump's withdrawal, revision of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the U.S. Korea Free Trade Agreement and possible retaliation from Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminum imports into the U.S.

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers represents Eastern Washington in the U.S. House of Representatives. She spoke about trade with the Capital Press March 22.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press File

U.S. Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers: "I'm very concerned we could be losing markets right now that we might not ever get back."

Q. What do you say to farmers who are concerned about trade?

CMR: I understand the concern, I believe the administration must get moving on negotiating new trade deals. When I look at TPP, I felt that remaining at the negotiating table would have been the best course of action to ensure the United States was writing the rules for global trade, not China. I can support updating NAFTA, but I do not believe we should be pulling out of NAFTA. We need to modernize it, make sure it benefits the United States — our farmers, our manufacturers, and keeps us on track for the 21st century economy.

Q. Have you spoken with the United States Trade Representative or the White House regarding wheat?

CMR: Yes, I've spoken to the U.S. Trade Representative, I've spoken to the White House, I've had conversations with the president directly. I have been speaking with my colleagues and joined in really impressing upon the administration how important these trade deals are. For farming in Eastern Washington in particular, it has taken us years to open up some of these markets. I'm very concerned we could be losing markets right now that we might not ever get back.

Q. What's been the response?

CMR: The administration is concerned about bad actors, those who have been abusing and dumping on the world market. They believe, and rightfully so, that these trade agreements need to make sure we put America first and put our manufacturers, producers and farmers in the best place possible. I share that goal. But I am concerned. I've impressed upon the administration that we need to stay focused on those who are

actually doing the dumping and where the abuse is. The across-the-board approach, I'm concerned, is going to lead to a trade war.

Q. Farmers have expressed the hope that somehow there are negotiations going on behind the scenes or this is all negotiation tactics. What do you make of that?

CMR: I always think there's negotiation underway. Clearly there's a lot of negotiation underway around the world. For our farmers, though, they're on the forefront of trade policies, and for Washington state, we're on the forefront as the most trade-dependent state in the country. I think that's where we're feeling it the most.

Q. What's the outlook for a positive outcome for farmers?

CMR: Well, even this week, I was sitting down with the wheat growers and (Washington) Secretary of Agriculture Derek Sandison to talk about where we are and to continue to encourage the administration to move quickly on negotiating new trade agreements and instituting more focused, targeted trade policies. I'm looking at Congress' goals and what our options are to also move in that direction, so it would be a more focused, targeted approach. Also, the farm bill's coming up. The House, even this spring and summer, plans to move forward with a farm bill. That will give us an opportunity to address some of these policies within the farm bill, and make sure we are positioning our farmers to be competitive and successful.

Q. What can be done from a farmer perspective regarding trade?

CMR: I think farmers need to tell their story. There's still a lot of people that don't understand our trade policy. I would encourage farmers to tell the story, how it impacts them, just the reality of exporting 90 percent of our wheat around the world. Ninety-five percent of the consumers are outside of America. We produce, manufacture and grow here in America and then sell it to the rest of the world. That story needs to be told. I'm doing everything I can to spread the word. We have U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, he wants to come out to Eastern Washington. It will give farmers an opportunity to talk directly to the secretary of agriculture. Also, the chairman of the (House) Agriculture Committee, Michael Conaway, is going to come to Eastern Washington in August and do a farm bill listening session. It will also give farmers an opportunity to emphasize the importance of trade, market access and some of the issues within the farm bill, with crop insurance so important as a safety net to our farmers and research at Washington State University.

Q. When is Perdue coming?

CMR: We don't have a date. He's looking at summer.

Q. You have a farm bill listening session at 8 a.m. March 27 at the Walla Walla, Wash., airport. Do you expect to hear from growers about trade?

CMR: Yes, I do. It's an opportunity to hear concerns from the farmers. I do expect trade, farm bill and market access all to be part of the discussion. Our farmers are hurting and these policies are very important to our number one industry in Eastern Washington.



WSU Clark County Extension

Washington State University Clark County Extension annually holds workshops at its Small Acreage Expo in Vancouver. The 2018 expo will be April 14. Registration is \$15 in advance; \$25 on the day of the expo.

WSU Clark County Extension to host annual small farm expo

Workshops throughout day

Capital Press

Workshops on topics such as controlling weeds, maintaining pastures and raising goats will be presented at the 13th annual Small Acreage Expo on April 14 in Vancouver, Wash.

Washington State University Clark County Extension organizes the expo. Amber Lefstead, the extension's small acreage program coordinator, said about 120 people typically attend.

She said that many own 5 to 10 acres, and about half are farming and the others are interested in starting. The expo draws people mostly from Clark County and the Portland area, she said.

"We always have a good turnout," Lefstead said. "People who come seem really happy with it."

Besides workshops, the expo will have representatives from organizations,

such as the local conservation district and farmers' markets, available to talk with landowners.

The expo will be from 8:30 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Saturday, April 14, at the Heritage Farm, 1919 N.E. 78th St., Vancouver.

The advance registration fee is \$15. The fee on the day of the expo will be \$25. Those who register by April 10 will receive a free box lunch.

For more information and to register online, go to expo2018.brownpapertickets.com.

Here is the schedule:

Session A: 9 to 10:15 a.m.

- Managing grazing for sustainable pastures, Gary Fredricks, WSU Cowlitz County Extension.

- Equine health and best management, Anne Marie Ray, Ridgefield Equine Clinic.

- Weed'em and Reap, Kara Hauge, Clark County Vegetation Management.

- Native Vegetation Landscaping, Brad Mead, Clark

County Public Utilities.

Session B: 10:30 to 11:45 a.m.

- Septic inspection (gravity fed systems), Sean Hawes, Clark County Public Health.

- Sustainable timber harvest, Matt Provencher, Washington Department of Natural Resources.

- Gearing Up for Goats, Amy Gustin, Clark County Dairy Goat Association.

Session C: 12:45 to 2 p.m.

- Composting, Pete DuBois, master composter.

- Maintaining a healthy well, Brigitte Bashaw, Clark County Public Health.

- Pond Care 101, Doug Fenwick, Clark Conservation District.

Session D: 2:15 to 3:30 p.m.

- Drainage Q&A, Seth Kenworthy, Drainage Masters.

- Sustainable living for small farms, Eric Lambert, Clark County Public Works.

- Transforming irrigation efficiency, Firas Al-Oqaili, Oregon State University.

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