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# Opinion

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## OUR VIEW

# Another farm bill deadline missed

Last month Senate and House conferees working on the 2018 Farm Bill failed to reach an agreement before the old farm bill expired and without Congress voting to extend it.

Congress has once again let down American farmers and ranchers who need to know the extent of farm programs when making plans for next year's crop. It is impossible for those in agriculture to plan for the next season without knowing how the federal government intends to impact their business.

This has happened all too often before.

The 2014 Farm Bill was supposed to be the 2012 Farm Bill. It took more than three years to negotiate, despite original promises in 2011 that it would be passed before the 2012 presidential primary season. In reality, constant wrangling over the cost of nutrition programs and crop insurance subsidies mandated that the old 2008 bill be extended a number of times before Congress came up with a bill it could pass.

Each farm bill has many

parts. Some programs, such as commodity and nutrition programs, were created under separate legislation. The farm bill provides funding for these programs and provides governing language that for the life of the bill supersedes the "permanent" legislation. The farm bill also creates new programs not included in any other legislation.

So in establishing an expiration date on the farm bill, Congress puts a gun to its own head. Commodity programs revert to "permanent" law written in the '30s and '40s should it fail

to enact a measure to replace or extend the expiring farm bill. Other programs die altogether.

The permanent laws are so antiquated they have little relevance to modern agriculture. Trying to apply them in the 21st century should create consequences too dire for Congress to ignore its duty. Or at least that's the theory. Congress has repeatedly failed to yield to its own extortion.

Senate and House conferees are confident they will reach agreement and pass a bill before

the end of the year. We'll see. Between now and then there will be an election. Given the current divisive politics, that couldn't possibly hold things up.

But it also provides an opportunity.

While we don't think much of legislators who can't meet their own deadlines, we have to put a fair amount of the blame on their employers.

We may not get the government we deserve, as the old saw goes, but we do get the one we vote for.

## OUR VIEW



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Burrowing shrimp taken from Willapa Bay, Wash. The shrimp kill oysters by undermining them and causing them to suffocate in the mud. Oyster farmers are appealing a state decision not to approve a pesticide that kills the shrimp.

# Washington oyster farmers need help

"Neonic" is a word that sets off alarm bells among the anti-pesticide crowd, most of whom oppose the chemicals that farmers and ranchers need to protect their crops and livestock.

Neonics — the common term for neonicotinoid pesticides — were blamed for the problems honeybees were encountering in relation to colony collapse disorder, when large numbers of bees would die or disappear. Researchers ultimately determined several factors were to blame in addition to pesticide exposure, including varroa mites, poor nutrition and other stressors, according to the USDA.

Among the solutions identified is making sure pesticides are not applied nearby while honeybees are pollinating orchards or crops. If a farmer sprays a pesticide on his crop and a neighbor is pollinating trees, the result could be a disaster.

In the meantime, pesticide haters have latched onto neonics as one more reason pesticides are bad for bees — and everything

else. When used properly, the pesticides are safe and effective.

Which brings us the latest context in which neonics have found their way into the spotlight. Oyster farmers and researchers have for years worked to gain Washington state approval for using the neonicotinoid insecticide imidacloprid to protect oysters from ghost shrimp. The finger-sized creatures burrow 3 feet below the surface of the mud, causing the oysters to sink into it and suffocate.

Oyster farmers had asked the Washington Department of Ecology for permission to spray imidacloprid on 500 acres of mudflats in an effort to stop the ghost shrimp from killing oysters. Kim Patten, a Washington State University researcher, has found that the pesticide is the only practical way for the farmers to protect their oysters from the shrimp.

Oysters are raised by family farmers, and the \$12.2 million shellfish industry is the largest employer in Pacific County, Wash.

Yet it's that word "neonic" that seems to have put Seattle's anti-pesticide crowd on red alert, opposing the use of imidacloprid. They took to social media — the source of most misinformation these days — to holler about neonics.

Except they forgot one thing: The alleged problem with neonics is their impact on honeybees and other pollinators when they are misapplied during bloom. Honeybees are not known to inhabit oyster beds or mudflats. The use of neonics on mudflats would have nothing to do with pollinators.

Oyster farmers say they will appeal Ecology's decision to the state Pollution Control Hearings Board. They say they have a decade of research to prove the safety and effectiveness of imidacloprid in aquatic applications.

Our hope is the board will agree that science should prevail over social media when it comes to deciding whether to use imidacloprid to protect oysters. We will not hold our breath, however.

Guest  
comment  
Charlie Arnot

## Inside the minds of millennials

By CHARLIE ARNOT  
Center for Food Integrity

While we tend to talk about millennials as a homogenous group and characterize them with sweeping statements, trust research from The Center for Food Integrity shows there's a distinction in attitudes about food and agriculture between early (aged 18 to 25) and late (aged 26 to 37) millennials.

As food and agriculture communicators — and farmers — look to engage younger consumers, avoid the mistake of generalizing an entire generation.

What's important to early millennials is very different than top-of-mind issues for late millennials.

On a list of 18 life issues, EMs are most concerned about having enough food to feed people in the U.S., followed by personal financial situation and unemployment in the U.S., while LMs' top three are rising health care costs, keeping healthy food affordable and affordability of food in general.

Concerns about feeding people in the U.S. and finances and unemployment speak to both a higher social consciousness among EMs and the focus on managing money and establishing their early careers.

On a list of sources trusted to ensure healthy food, EMs trust all sources more than LMs. The top source for EMs is family, followed by family doctor and then nutrition advocacy group. The top source for LMs is family, followed by family doctor and then farmers.

More so than LMs and other segments including men, women, foodies and early adopters, EMs believe the food system is headed in the right direction.

Both EMs and LMs feel they know more than others about food and agriculture, have a more positive attitude about both and a higher interest than all other segments in learning more.

This presents a golden opportunity to engage this segment. They may be skeptical, but they are also curious. How will your company, organization or farm tap into that curiosity?

This up-and-coming influential segment has the potential to help balance the conversation about food and agriculture if an effort is made to earn their trust.

Learn more about CFI's latest research, "A Dangerous Disconnect: CFI Research IDs Food and Ag Trust Gaps."

Charlie Arnot is CEO of The Center for Food Integrity ([www.foodintegrity.org](http://www.foodintegrity.org)) and president of Look East, a consulting company with offices in Missouri and Iowa. This column was originally published on the CFI Blog and appears courtesy of the American Farm Bureau.

## Readers' views

### Leave climate science to scientists

The science of climate change should be left to the scientists and not the politicians.

A recent letter boldly states that concern with man-made climate change is wrong and contradicted by "the evidence and literature and harmful in its remedies." The letter

goes on to point out that the majority of the House of Representatives fails to support actions to reduce carbon emissions.

The author continues to make his point by quoting Marc Morano's book on climate change. Marc Morano was born in Washington, D.C., and has a bachelor's degree from George Mason University in political science. He began his career

working for Rush Limbaugh. In 2009, despite having no formal education in the field of climate science, Morano founded and became executive editor of ClimateDepot.com, a website sponsored by a special interest group.

Finally, the writer implies that NOAA (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration) research supports his view. This is frankly

wrong and misleading, and I suggest readers go to the NOAA website to get the facts right.

We are all going to be a lot better off if we let our scientific institutions, and not the politicians or lobbyists, work out the risks and solutions for the environmental challenges we face.

David Nemarnik  
Sherwood, Ore.