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# Opinion

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## Our View

# Japan trade deal is good news for agriculture

An announcement earlier this week that the United States and Japan have reached an agreement in principle on trade was good news to farmers and ranchers in the Pacific Northwest.

U.S. officials say the deal will be a major benefit for beef, pork, wheat, dairy products, wine, ethanol and other products.

“It’s a very big transaction, and we’ve agreed in principle. It’s billions and billions of dollars. Tre-

mendous for the farmers,” President Trump said in an appearance with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan during the G7 summit in France.

Once in place, the deal will help correct a competitive disadvantage that has hampered American farmers since the U.S. pulled out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

“We are very happy that this agreement will end the growing competitive cost advantage that Canadian and Australian wheat imports

got under the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) agreement,” said U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) Chairman and Paulding, Ohio, farmer Doug Goyings.

The United States is the top supplier of agricultural commodities to Japan. It buys \$700 million worth of U.S. wheat each year, 48% of its supply. U.S. exports account for 70% of Japan’s corn purchases, 58% of its hay, 63% of its soybeans, 52% of its

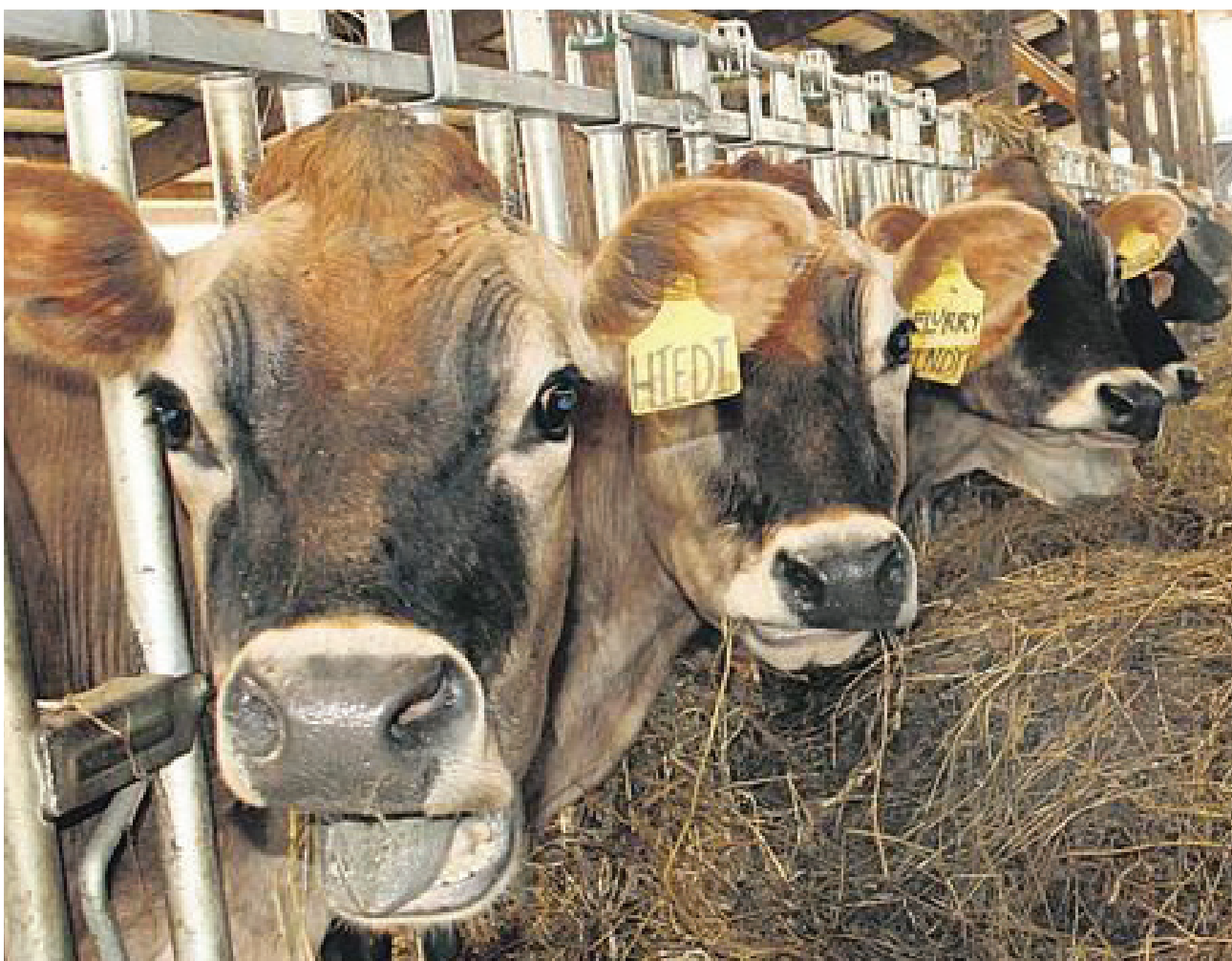
tree nuts, 48% of its beef and 15% of its dairy products.

Though there’s more work to do before a deal is signed, this still represents a significant improvement in trade relations. We hope it is a harbinger of better things to come.

While in France, Trump said that Chinese officials have signaled that they would like to reach a trade deal with the U.S. and de-escalate ongoing disputes.

We can only hope.

## Our View



Matuesz Perkowski/Capital Press

A lawsuit claims Tillamook County Creamery has falsely advertised the source of its milk.

# Lawsuit against Tillamook is without merit

We remember when we found out that our favorite chocolate chip cookies weren’t made by elves in a hollow tree. Had we not been 8 at the time we might have hired a lawyer and taken the folks at Keebler to court for falsely suggesting it was elven magic that made the cookies and other snacks so good. Such a case would have been thrown out of court.

But that lawsuit would have had more merit than one filed last week against the Tillamook Creamery Association by the Animal Legal Defense Fund is even more without merit.

The dairy cooperative is accused in the lawsuit of unjustly enriching itself and violating Oregon trade practices law by touting small family farms with pasture-raised cows when most of its milk is sourced from the “most industrialized dairy factory farm in the country.”

About two-thirds of the creamery’s milk comes from 32,000 dairy cows raised at Threemile Canyon Farms’ facility in Boardman, Ore., “where cows are continuously confined, milked by robotic carousels, and afflicted with painful udder infections,” the lawsuit alleges.

The complaint claims that while the company advertises its dairy products as being produced in Tillamook County with “small-scale traditional farming methods,” it’s heavily reliant on a distant “mega-dairy” that’s large enough to be “visible from space.”

Tillamook is a farmer-owned cooperative. The sale of cheese, butter and ice cream on a national scale benefits those farmers.

Unlike Keebler, which specifically claimed its products were made in a hollow tree by

elves, Tillamook has never claimed that all its products are made in Tillamook or all the milk is sourced from its members.

That Tillamook sources milk from Threemile Canyon Farms and other large dairies outside Tillamook County has never been a secret. It has been reported widely for nearly 20 years, not only in the Capital Press but in other statewide media such as Oregon Public Broadcasting and the Oregonian/Oregonlive.com.

We’re not sure what “traditional farming methods” consumers imagine are utilized by co-op members who have appeared in Tillamook advertising. With the exception of scale, many of their methods are similar to those employed at Threemile Canyon.

Milking carousels — robotic or otherwise — are common on the dairies of farmer-owners in Tillamook County. No commercial-scale dairy milks by hand.

“Painful udder infections” occur on small family farms too, even on organic dairies. Beef cows get them, too. Dairy producers take great care to prevent the infections and to treat them once they appear.

In 2012 PETA sued the California Milk Advisory Board claiming its popular “happy cow” promotion was false advertising. A judge threw that case out, ruling PETA couldn’t back up its claims.

An Oregon judge should do the same with this case.

(In the interest of full disclosure and to avoid litigation, we admit to leading readers on a bit. We thought Chips Ahoy were a lot better than the Keebler cookies, but the Nabisco advertising campaign didn’t fit our narrative.)

# We’re learning what it will take

It was 2015 when I had a serious wake-up call. Dairy farmers like me were facing lawsuits filed by Charlie Tebbutt. Several said if they were sued they’d just quit farming.

That shook me up because I remembered a logger at a Western Dairy Conference speaking on the “spotted owl” issue and how much it cost the logging industry. He told us, “We thought we were protected by the courts.” But, he said, it was the court of public opinion that really mattered. He warned us, with the timber battle over, the environmental non-profits need a new target to raise funds to keep them in business. “Industrial agriculture” was it.

That means me, and if you are a family farmer, it also means you.

In Western Washington, like most urban areas along the Pacific coast, our voters are decidedly “progressive.” Our elected leaders try to “out-left” each other with policies and ideas that are often harmful to our farms and futures. Those environmental groups these voters respect are telling them we are the bad guys, we wear the “black hats” on things like protecting water, air quality, animals and our own employees. Union activists paint all farmers as tyrants and cheats. Never mind the facts, these bad guy stories are necessary if they are going to raise the money to keep their jobs.

The media loves it. Social media feeds on it. “Black hat” stories sell papers and get eyeballs locked onto phone and tablet screens.

This is a new world to most of us farmers. Facebook is full of vegan and animal rights bullies.

Reporters show up on our farms looking only to capture us running and hiding to make us look guilty. A state senator from downtown Seattle introduces a bill that accuses farmers of keeping slaves, and the Democratic labor committee endorses it. Tribal leaders line up with environmental groups to make false accusations about farm pollution — and use taxpayer dollars to promote it and lobby for bad legislation.

The real trouble is, too many voters are buying this story. We see that not only in wrong-headed laws and regulations but in surveys that show the trust that the public and consumers have always had in farmers is rapidly going away. There are a lot of farm associations that do a good job of informing legislators, but if those elected leaders and regulatory folks don’t think we have the public and voters behind us, they’ll listen to those seeking to add the costs and bureaucratic burdens that will eventually put us out of business.

What I learned, starting back with that 2015 meet-

## GUEST VIEW

Rich Appel



ing, is that we can change this picture. We started a group in our farming area called Whatcom Family Farmers. We got berry farmers, potato farmers, dairy farmers and other farm types to join together. That unity was critically important as we soon found. A local tribe hired the anti-dairy lawyer Charlie Tebbutt but they were told: “You sue one farmer, you sue us all. It led to a partnership with the tribe that has been positive for all in the community — except the lawyer.

We found by speaking out loudly and using the powerful tools of social media and websites, we could make a difference — a big difference. A local environmental group aligned with the lawyer has pulled back after their false accusations were exposed. Both red and blue politicians seek out our support and views. Farmers report a different attitude among regulators. Activists who gained major coverage on TV and newspapers have been shown to be dishonest. No honest reporter wants to knowingly publicize lies.

Partnering with farmers across Washington state we formed Save Family Farming with affiliates in Eastern Washington and Skagit County. Unity of farmers is very hard to come by, but we are convinced that our ability to tell our story to the public and be heard by those in power depends on that unity. And it depends on speaking out loudly and boldly, even if that makes some uncomfortable.

I understand the discomfort and fear experienced by some. I struggle with it myself but now I know the future of our farm and our ability to pass it on to our children demands this kind of hard work. If you are reading this you have a clear choice: stand on the sidelines and watch fellow farmers be falsely attacked or unite with us and defend. We are a part of the farming community, let’s stand up for those within our community. Start speaking out loud and clear to those who will decide our future: the voters living in our cities.

Rich and Ann Appel and family, along with Rich’s brother and family, are owners of Appel Farms, milking about 700 cows and producing artisan cheese under the Appel Farms Cheese brand in Ferndale, Wash. Rich is the president of Whatcom Family Farmers and represents this group on the Save Family Farming board. He is the recipient of the Vim Wright “Bridge Builder Award” from the Washington Conservation Commission for his work in building bridges to the environmental community.

**TILLAMOOK HAS NEVER CLAIMED THAT ALL ITS PRODUCTS ARE MADE IN TILLAMOOK OR ALL THE MILK IS SOURCED FROM ITS MEMBERS.**