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Opinion

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Our View

People are people, animals are animals

In Japan is a man named Toko. He likes to pretend he is a dog. To do that he spent \$15,700 on a dog suit fashioned after a collie. When he is in the suit, he looks a lot like a collie. He also acts like one, rolling over and doing collie things.

But if you ask a human, he is no dog. And other dogs certainly know a dog when they see one.

He is just a guy in a dog suit, and a very expensive one at that.

Some animal rights groups occasionally cook up public relations stunts arguing that animals have constitutional rights. This would come as a surprise to anyone who has ever read the Constitution, or who has been around animals.

For example, 11 years ago, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, or PETA, filed suit arguing that Sea World, an aquarium, was depriving orcas of their constitutional rights and “enslaving” them.

If a group wanted to help orcas, it could argue that they should have more room at



Oregon Zoo
Elephants dine on giant pumpkins at the Oregon Zoo in Portland. An activist group in New York has sued on behalf of an elephant, arguing it is a person.

the aquarium or be better treated. That’s fine. We are in favor of free speech.

But an orca is not, under any circumstance, a person who has constitutional rights. It must be embarrassing for a member of the bar to try to argue that with a straight face.

Other groups have taken up the cause of a chimpanzee in upstate New York, arguing that it should be granted the abil-

ity to choose where it wants to live.

Most recently, the Nonhuman Rights Project has gone to court on behalf of Happy, an elephant at the Bronx Zoo in New York. The group filed a writ of habeas corpus in the state’s Supreme Court, seeking to have Happy recognized as a person and moved from the zoo.

If the group wanted to help, it could make sure all applicable humane laws are followed. It could even buy Happy and move her to better circumstances. But that would solve a problem, not make a splash in the news, which is apparently what the group seeks most.

This legal wrangling has farmers and ranchers concerned. They worry that if an outside group can demand that an animal be treated as a human under the law, similar cases might be made on behalf of cows, hogs, chickens and other farm animals.

This has nothing to do with elephants or orcas, or any other animals, for that

matter. This is just another public relations stunt aimed at raising money for another animal rights group.

The Associated Press talked to a law professor at Rutgers University about the case involving Happy.

“I’ve been a vegan for 40 years. Don’t get me wrong, I disagree with animal use altogether,” Gary Francione, the professor, said. “Just to have the court start saying that non-human animals are persons under the law is going to raise all sorts of questions, the answers to which are not going to be amenable to many people.”

We’ll finish that thought: A man in a dog suit may look and act like a dog, but he’s no dog. And an animal rights group can argue that an elephant is a person, but that doesn’t make it true.

It’s not a matter of constitutional rights, it’s a matter of biology.

EPA needs to bring more farmers to table

Recently, the Environmental Protection Agency held its first stakeholder roundtable on its new Waters of the U.S. rule, and I sure hope it wasn’t a sample of what’s to come. The group lacked diversity of experience in agriculture, and few of the participants had any direct experience with the quagmire of Clean Water Act regulation. This was a missed opportunity for EPA, and we are urging them to seek out and listen to all viewpoints.

You have often heard me talk about the importance of agriculture having a seat at the table, and the administration has agreed that the farmer’s voice is critical to this rulemaking process. But simply checking a box without hearing from farmers who can speak from experience will not do.

Water is the lifeblood of agriculture, and farmers across the country are taking proactive steps to protect water on and around our farms.

We have been straightforward and consistent in our call for clear rules because we know how important it is to get regulations right, especially ones that impact the lives and livelihoods of so many. All farmers should be able to look out on their land and know what’s regulated, so we can continue to protect our natural resources while growing a sustainable food supply.

EPA’s proposed WOTUS rule instead casts uncertainty over farmers and ranchers across the country and threatens the progress we have made to responsibly manage water and natural resources.

Let’s recap how the proposed rule reaches beyond the protection of shared, navigable waters.

It would give the federal government the ability to regulate areas such as ditches, ephemeral drainages, or low spots on farmlands and pastures that are not even wet most of the year and that do not connect to flowing waterways.

This would subject ordinary farming activities to complex and burdensome regulations. Simple activities like moving dirt, plowing or building fences would require permits, and getting a federal permit can take months or even years and cost tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars.

A farmer shouldn’t need a

GUEST VIEW

Zippy Duvall



team of lawyers to grow crops and raise animals, but these unclear and overbroad regulations could lead to large civil fines as well as criminal charges.

Farmers, ranchers and all landowners deserve clear rules and a system that respects voluntary conservation efforts. Practices like no till and conservation tillage that reduce soil erosion and keep nutrients in the soil are becoming common practice, now being used on more than half of the corn, cotton, soybean and wheat planted across the nation. That’s more than 200 million acres.

The use of cover crops—another important tool in protecting water and promoting soil health—also continues to grow, increasing 50% between 2012 and 2017, according to the last USDA Census of Agriculture. And farmers use several other tools and techniques to protect waterways and reduce runoff, such as buffer strips, protective zones between fields and waterways; strip cropping, growing alternating strips of erosion-resistant crops; and terraces, using slopes to help filter water and reduce erosion. We will continue to hold the administration to their commitment to bring farmers to the table and to treat us as partners in our sustainability efforts.

It is no secret that Farm Bureau was extremely disappointed in EPA’s decision to repeal the 2020 Navigable Waters Protection Rule, which brought much needed clarity to farmers.

But if the EPA is going to continue forward, they must ensure that the process truly offers the opportunity for meaningful engagement and feedback from all stakeholders.

Future roundtables must present the perspective of active farmers and be better organized and managed. Otherwise, EPA is doing nothing more than muddying the waters in this rulemaking.

Vincent “Zippy” Duvall, a poultry, cattle and hay producer from Greene County, Georgia, is the 12th president of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Legislation would handcuff ag innovation

Farmers have always played an essential role to the economic vitality of America. They are a critical part of a supply chain that keeps food on the table in homes, schools, hospitals, military installations and more.

GUEST VIEW

Doug Kelly



In today’s world, farmers are facing increasing demand due to the world’s growing population in tandem with unprecedented environmental pressures, pushing the industry to rapidly evolve.

Thankfully, technological innovation is already helping them do so. Technology has elevated farming to a science informed by reams of granular data that drive more accurate decision making in real time.

Farmers can now use GPS, artificial intelligence, machine learning and more to advance resiliency and higher crop yields.

We’ve seen firsthand the benefits of technology and innovation in agriculture as our farmers are some of the most productive in the world today.

Unfortunately, some members of Congress currently support anti-innovation legislation that could handcuff the companies that drive this technology, causing the innovations our farmers rely on to wither on the vine.

This regressive legislation comes at a critical time when we must ensure farmers have the technology and resources needed to keep our nation’s food supply flowing. Global trends in population growth show that by 2050, the world’s population will increase by 2.2 billion to 10 billion people. Farmers will need to grow about 70% more food than what is now produced in order to keep up with this trend.

At the same time, climate change and other environmental issues are resulting in a vicious combination of resource scarcity, harvest loss and soil degradation. Farmers will need to meet these growing demands with fewer resources and with less impact on a shrinking land base. Making that happen will require using natural resources more efficiently and sustainably relative to every single acre.

The only way farmers can keep up this new paradigm and maximize crop yields is through smart farming enabled by technology. Chemistry, biology, biotechnology, data source platforms and new business models enabled by technology allow for integrated, tailored and more sustainable solutions.

Ongoing innovation in the industry and ensuring widespread internet connectivity with and across farms is not only important, but necessary for the future of our food supply.

As lawmakers in Washington consider how to respond to the continuing evolution and growth of the tech sector and intensifying competition over the internet, supporting farm technology must be a top priority.

We need policies that continue to drive farm tech forward and foster groundbreaking agricultural practices. Ignoring our farmers’ needs will not only mean dire consequences for the industry, but for all of us depending on them to put food on the table.

Doug Kelly, of Columbus, Ohio, serves as the chief executive officer of the American Edge Project, a coalition dedicated to the proposition that American innovators are an essential part of U.S. economic health, national security and individual freedoms. Kelly is committed to protecting America’s tech innovation. He understands that America’s most innovative companies help drive our economy, protect our national security and promote free-speech values abroad.

China IS a threat to our national food security

China has been buying up American farmland, and, for some reason, people aren’t worried about it.

GUEST VIEW

Rep. Dan Newhouse



Maybe they’re unaware that China’s American agricultural land holdings have increased over tenfold in the last decade. Maybe they’re unaware that at the beginning of 2020, investments from China held \$2 billion of American agricultural land. Maybe they’re unaware that 2021 was the 10th straight year America’s trade deficit with the Chinese eclipsed \$300 billion. Maybe they’re unaware that China owns 50% of the global reserves of corn.

But I’m not.

China is slowly, but surely, acquiring more land and resources outside their own borders, and right now they’re targeting America. I want to be very clear: this is not something to take lightly.

The Chinese Communist Party and the Government of the People’s Republic of China are not our allies. China is controlled by an unforgiving communist regime that represses domestic opposition and undermines American interests. And for years, the United States’ dependence on China has harbored a rising threat to our national security.

After decades of well-known wrongdoings, human rights violations, and manipulation of American intellectual property, it is time to get serious about reducing our dependence on China and its role in our nation’s supply chains — the U.S. cannot become dependent on China for our domestic agriculture and food supply.

We hail from the greatest country in the world, and there is simply no reason we should be reliant on a communist country like China. If we begin to cede the responsibility over our food supply chain to an adversarial foreign nation, we could be forced into exporting food that is grown within our own borders and meant for our own use.

Conversely, by bolstering American agriculture, we can create jobs, strengthen our economy, and enhance our national supply chain into the future.

Simply put, we should be taking every action we can to strengthen our domestic production while preventing our adversaries from gaining a foothold in our supply chain, and I am proud to be leading that charge in Congress.

Last Friday, I introduced legislation that would prohibit the purchase of public or private agricultural land in the United States by foreign nationals associated with the Government of the People’s Republic of China.

Additionally, the legislation would prohibit the same associations from participating in any United States Department of Agriculture programs except food safety inspections.

China is many things, but an ally to the U.S. it is not. The Chinese Communist Party is a national security threat that seeks to rebuild the world order in its image. We must stop pretending China is an ally, and instead recognize it the adversary that it is. I will continue to stand up to China and all of our foreign adversaries on behalf of the people of Central Washington and the United States.

We know that a disruption of the global supply chain for any reason has long-lasting and broadly-felt impacts, and food security is national security. So, when China is buying up American agricultural assets, yes, you should be worried.

Dan Newhouse, a Republican, represents Central Washington in the U.S. House of Representatives.