

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

NW ag economy more complicated than it seems

It should come as no surprise that the dairy industry drives a large portion of the Northwest agricultural economy.

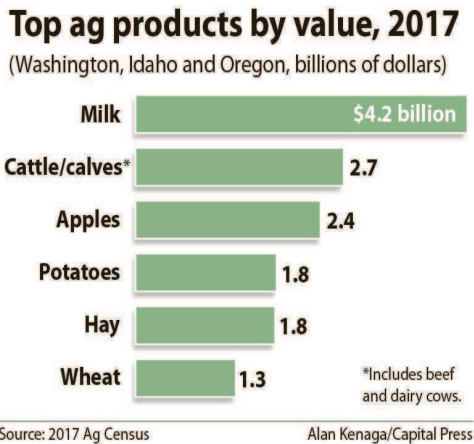
According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, which was just released last month, the region’s dairy farms had production valued at \$4.2 billion.

By comparison, the next largest ag sector in the three Northwest states was cattle and calves with a production value of about \$2.7 billion.

In third place were apples at \$2.4 billion, potatoes at \$1.83 billion, hay at \$1.81 billion and wheat at \$1.3 billion.

While these are large numbers, they are also subject to volatility. Several years ago, the price of wheat spiked at more than \$10 a bushel, only to drop by half.

Nearly every commodity faces volatility. No one knows that better than dairy producers, who find themselves



on a roller coaster that has sent milk prices spiraling past \$20 a hundred-weight one year only to splash down below the cost of production the next.

Most recently, much of the industry’s story has been written in red ink. Milk prices have lingered below break-even and are just now starting to rebound.

Why? The answer is complicated.

At the top of the list of factors is a trade war with China and several trade agreements that have been promised or negotiated but have not gone into effect.

With trade suffering, so has the dairy industry. The cyclical price swings have been exacerbated as some production meant for export stays and weighs on the domestic market.

In the meantime, take another look at that list of the Northwest’s top commodities, and you’ll find at least two others related to dairy.

Cattle and calves are impacted by dairy, whose cattle enter the market when they are culled. If excess dairy cattle are culled during a down milk market, it depresses the price of beef cattle, too.

In the 2017 census, for example, Idaho had about 2.4 million cattle and calves. About 25% of them were dairy cattle.

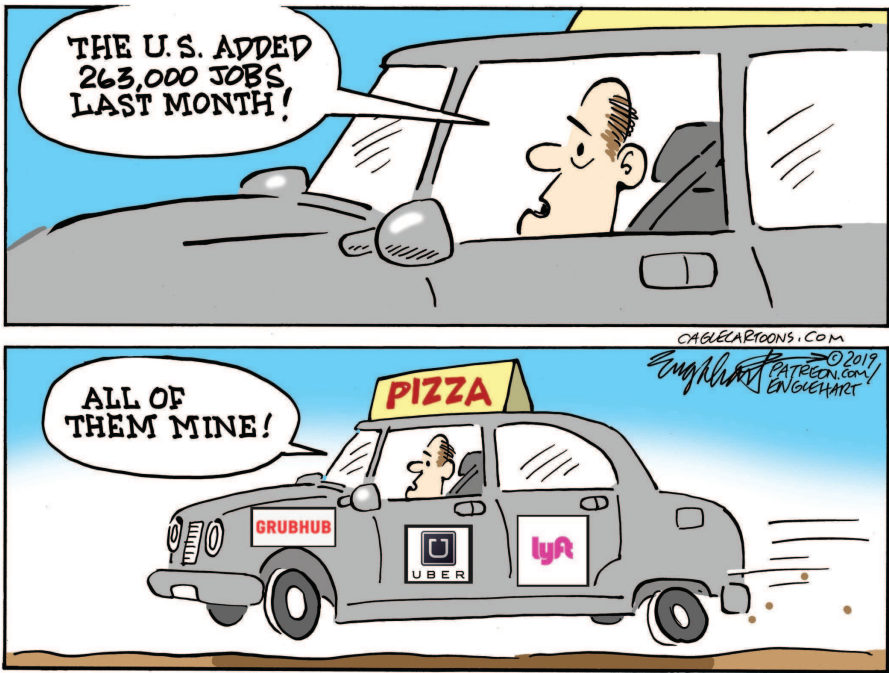
Hay is also impacted by the dairy industry. Though a lot of North-west-grown hay is exported, a lot of it is also purchased by dairies in the region and in California. If dairy prices are low, they can depress demand and hay prices.

Again, looking at Idaho, 5.8 million tons of hay was produced in 2017. Much of it went to the state’s 603,817 dairy cows.

The fact that many other parts of agriculture are interconnected — wheat prices tend to track those of corn and other grains, for example — means that no commodity is an island.

That’s especially true when trade and the impact of overseas competition and currencies are factored in.

That’s why when you ask a farmer or rancher “How’s it going?” you better have plenty of time for the answer. It’s is far more complicated than you might think.



YOUR VIEWS

Killing for sport is not hunting

Regarding the curious editorial endorsing James Nash for the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, I am puzzled by the description of Mr. Nash as a hunter. I am a lifelong Oregonian. I know hunting. Hunting involves the ethics of fair chase, respect for wildlife and wildlife habitat, and utilization of the harvest.

The sport killing that Mr. Nash engages in is not hunting, just as the snuff pics that he posts on social media in which he uses dead wildlife as props for his selfies are not art.

Do we really want a diversity of views that reflects all of Oregon on the Fish and Wildlife Commission? Perhaps we could consider allowing a woman to serve? I hear that over half the state is female these days.

**George Sexton
Talent**

It’s a matter of tradition

Tradition is alive and well in Pendleton. This was reaffirmed with the recent vote of the city council giving the city manager a 3% cost of living (COLA) pay raise. Elected officials have a tradition of supporting such raises. In our city manager’s case, that 8% raise last year was not based on any particular accomplishments, but to ensure that his salary wouldn’t be exceeded by the chief public safety officer.

This latest raise, I’m guessing, was recommended by the city’s personnel manager since other salaried managers were also getting a 3% COLA raise. This would also ensure that ris-

ing water/sewer rates and the proposed 13 cent gas tax would not result in any undue hardship. The raise plus the additional stipend he receives to cover his gas purchases should be more than adequate.

I was surprised when Scott Fairley objected to the 3% COLA raise. Scott is, for those who don’t him, an employee of the governor’s office and is perhaps well aware that our city manager’s annual salary already exceeds that of Gov. Kate Brown’s by well over \$30,000. Kudos to Mr. Fairley.

I see another resident wrote about the condition of our city streets: “We created the problem, so it’s up to us to pay for its solution.” I disagree. The problem was created by our city officials when the decision was made to ignore our streets and spend the money intended to maintain them, such as franchise fees, on other projects. City officials would have you believe that it’s our own fault since we failed to approve previous gas tax proposals.

I did notice a goodwill gesture in the new budget proposal — the city manager has offered to cut the city’s contribution to the Main Street flower basket proposal from \$1,500 down to \$750 to bolster the street maintenance program. Seems the Downtown Business Association members still aren’t willing to pick up the cost of their own program.

The writer is correct about one aspect of the solution: We will all end up paying dearly for the poor decisions of the past. I’m afraid there are quite a few of us that didn’t get anywhere near a \$4,000 pay raise combined with a monthly gas allowance to help pay that bill.

**Rick Rohde
Pendleton**

OTHER VIEWS

The difference between happiness and joy

On Monday I was honored to speak to the graduating students at Arizona State University. It was an intimidating occasion. ASU is the most innovative university in the world. Plus, there were 35,000 people in the football stadium.

Anybody speaking to college students these days is aware of how hard it is to be a young adult today, with rising rates of depression, other mental health issues, even suicide.

So while these talks are usually occasions to talk about professional life, my goal was to get them thinking about the future of their emotional lives, which is really going to be at the center of everything.

There are two kinds of emotion present at any graduation ceremony.

For the graduating students there is happiness. They’ve achieved something. They’ve worked hard and are moving closer to their goals.

There is a different emotion up in the stands among the families and friends. That emotion is joy. They are not thinking about themselves. Their delight is seeing the glow on the graduate’s face, the laughter in her voice, the progress of his journey, the blooming of a whole person.

Happiness usually involves a victory for the self. Joy tends to involve the transcendence of self. Happiness comes from accomplishments. Joy comes when your heart is in another. Joy comes after years of changing diapers, driving to practice, worrying at night, dancing in the kitchen, playing in the yard and just sitting quietly together watching TV.

Joy is the present that life gives you as you give away your gifts.

The core point is that happiness is good, but joy is better. It’s smart to enjoy happiness, but it’s smarter still to put yourself in situations where you might experience joy.

People receive joy after they have over-invested in their friendships. The thing the wisest people say about friendship is this: Lovers stand face to face staring into each other’s eyes. But friends stand side by side, staring at the things they both care about.

Friendship is about doing things together. So people build their friendships by organizing activities that are repeated weekly, monthly or annually: picnics, fantasy leagues, book clubs, etc.

A friend of mine organized a giving circle when he graduated. He and his friends put money into a common pot every year, and every year they gather to decide what cause they will give the money to. The philanthropy is nice, but it’s really just a pretext to get them together each year, so they can live life shoulder to shoulder.

They say that love is blind, but the affection friends have for each other is the opposite of blind. It is ferociously attentive. You are vulnerable, and your friend holds your vulnerability. He pauses, and you wait for



DAVID
BROOKS
COMMENT

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- Italian novelist Cesare Pavese

him. You err, and she forgives.

“You will be loved,” Italian novelist Cesare Pavese wrote, “the day when you will be able to show your weakness without the other person using it to assert his strength.”

Transparency is the fuel of friendship. We live in an age of social media. It’s very easy to create false personas and live life as a performance.

We live in a cruel time, when people attack you when they see a hint of vulnerability. So, it’s extra important to stick with emotional honesty even after people take advantage of your vulnerability to inflict pain. Vulnerability is the only means we have to build relationships, and relationships are the only means we have to experience joy.

My friend Catherine Bly Cox observed that when her first daughter was born, she realized she loved her more than evolution required. I love that phrase because it speaks to what is distinctly human, our complex and infinite caring for one another.

There are some things we do because biology demands it. There are some things we do to pay the rent. But material drives don’t explain the magic of our friendships and the way our soul sings when we watch loved ones glow.

Sometimes when you’re out with your friends, you taste a kind of effervescent joy. Several years ago, writer Zadie Smith was dancing at a club with her friends when a song from A Tribe Called Quest came on. At that point, she wrote, “A rail-thin man with enormous eyes reached across a sea of bodies for my hand. He kept asking me the same thing over and over: You feeling it? I was. My ridiculous heels were killing me, I was terrified I might die, yet I felt simultaneously overwhelmed with delight that ‘Can I Kick It?’ should happen to be playing at this precise moment in the history of the world, and was now morphing into ‘Smells Like Teen Spirit.’ I took the man’s hand. The top of my head flew away. We danced and danced. We gave ourselves up to joy.”

When you have moments like that, you realize there is magic in the world.

You can’t create the magic intentionally, but when you are living at that deep affectionate level, it sometimes just combusts within you.

A blaze of joy.

David Brooks is a columnist for The New York Times.