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OUR VIEW

How to make money farming? It’s complicated

With all due respect to Sonny Perdue, there’s more to farming than size.

The U.S. agriculture secretary last week told folks at the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin, that some farms may have to get larger to survive.

“Now what we see, obviously, is economies of scale having happened in America — big get bigger and small go out,” he said, according to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. “It’s very difficult on economies of scale with the capital needs and all the environmental regulations and everything else today to survive milking 40, 50, 60 or even 100 cows, and that’s what we’ve seen.”

While that may be seen by many as a fact of agricultural life these days, we disagree.

Farms producing commodities such as milk must be efficient, no doubt about it. Most often, those efficiencies are to be found in larger operations.

That much is true.

However, there is much more to farming — or any other business, for that matter — than producing the maximum amount of a commodity at the minimum cost.

Much more.

Efficiency is important, but other factors also come into play.



AP Photo/John Hart, File
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue addresses questions from members of the media following a town hall meeting at the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin, earlier this month.

For example, the market is critical. A farmer producing a commodity such as milk will receive a certain price. As a price taker, he or she makes money by being efficient, minimizing debt, keeping input costs down and hoping for the best.

Niche marketers, however, find a segment that they can target. For example, some dairies market organic milk. In addition to being efficient, minimizing debt, keeping input costs down and

hoping for the best, farmers might be able to market their organic milk for a price premium. That could in turn increase the odds of a farmer clearing a profit.

Another consideration is value-added products. Suppose that organic dairy farmer makes artisan cheese, ice cream or yogurt with his milk. That would potentially open the door to more income. Assuming those products can be made efficiently — there’s that word

again — more income is possible.

Choosing the right crops to grow is also a major factor. For example, instead of growing forage for his cows, a farmer might be able to grow another crop such as hemp, which in many instances is bringing much higher prices. Yet there’s a possibility that, at some point, the hemp market could become saturated, forcing those prices down.

It’s a matter of putting the resources a farmer has at his, or her, disposal to the highest use.

Still other factors include side products. Some dairies make money turning cow manure into compost, electricity or natural gas and selling it. Others lease land for wind turbines that produce electricity. Others do custom field work on the side or grow feed instead of buying it.

Still others sell rights-of-way or development rights to help them pay down debt and increase cash flow.

Farmers need to know how to raise livestock and grow crops, but they also need to be entrepreneurs, marketers and innovators.

Yes, Mr. Secretary, there’s more to farming profitably than size in the 21st century. A lot more.

YOUR VIEWS

The left should give up its witch hunting

Oh, Mrs. Roubal (my former Silverton civics teacher), you would be so saddened to see what is happening in the country that you so loved, that you so believed in and that you tried so hard to get us to understand and appreciate. To appreciate what our forefathers had engineered when such a nation was only an unfulfilled dream. Part of that new form of government, that new freedom for the citizenry, was the right to question, and challenge, and work for the betterment of our nation.

Now we find ourselves embroiled in the hate and bigotry of the left, who have taken an insane reaction to losing the election in 2016. The vocal “left” of the Democratic Party, like spoiled children, no longer work for the betterment of our nation. With the support of the main media, they constantly scream of one issue after another. When that issue falls flat they witch hunt up another. Go ahead count them up — all failures.

We are experiencing a growth in our economy like the world has never seen. Our people are going back to work so they can feed their families, pay their bills, and be contributing members of our village. Mrs. Roubal, you could make me swallow my gum with a sideways glance and I love you for that. We are not broken, only bent. The left is listening to the wrong voice. We are a great nation getting back on track. It is proving to be a rough road because the swamp is a hard place to drain.

I believe in what you believed in, Mrs. Roubal. We are making America great again, but imagine what we could do without the insanity of the witch-hunting left. There is an election in 2020. Use your voice then.

Ron Linn Stanfield

Lexington mayor resigns from position

Personally I would like to thank the community members who have helped make a positive impact on the town of Lexington with our

goals of providing safe neighborhoods attracting more families to move in, clean water, safe streets, children’s park, recruiting more firefighters and promoting and supporting businesses.

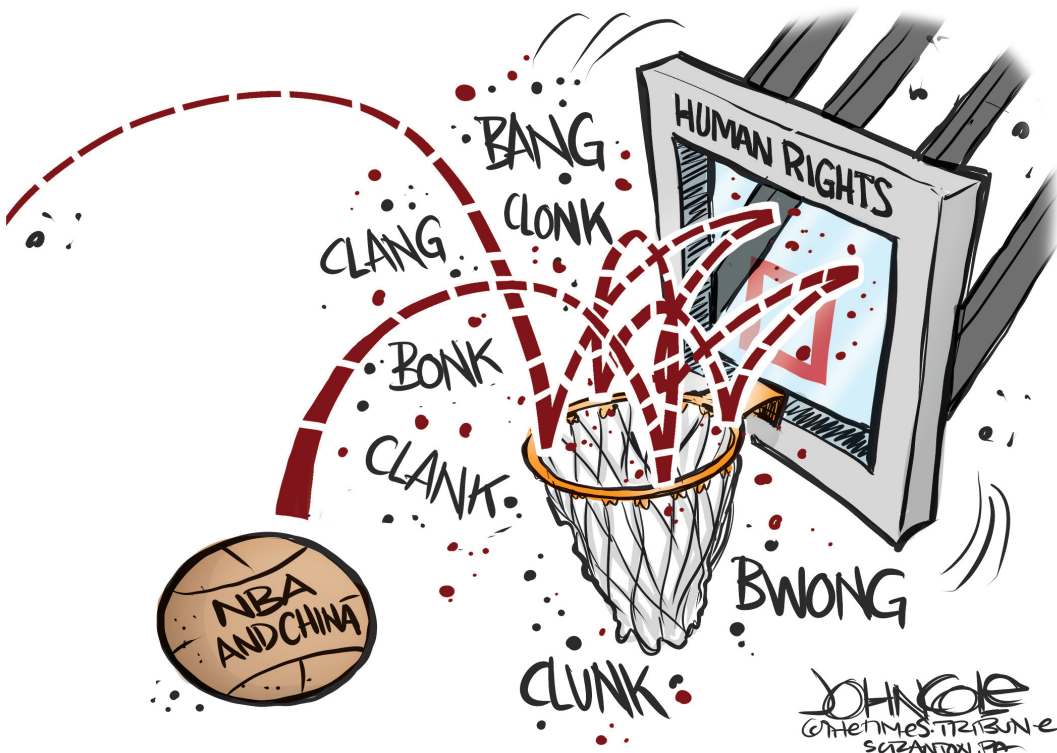
Last November, I was elected by a write-in vote for mayor. When I took the oath of office as mayor of Lexington, I promised to follow all the rules, laws and regulations of the state of Oregon, as well as the town of Lexington and Morrow County. As mayor, I found that the town council had not been following some rules and guidelines. I contacted state agencies, DEQ, Ethics and Conduct, State Revenue, Secretary of State, and with the League of Oregon Cities lawyers and our auditor, was advised to correct the violations. I also sought out the county assessor, clerks and planner for further direction and guidance and was supported by county government.

When I started to change the council way of doing business, the personal attacks against me started at council meetings, on social media and in the newspaper. Council members vowed to fight me every step of the way. The present council has illegally stopped me from fulfilling my duties by taking actions with no resolutions, changing the town charter and making decisions outside of council meetings.

Recently, Lexington’s town recorder and maintenance personnel resigned due to a hostile work environment, which is my biggest disappointment as I was unable to protect them.

Many in our town have been working hard applying for grants and established partnerships to help us make Lexington great with a bright future. As much as I would like to pursue improving the town of Lexington, the council has prevented me fulfilling my duties, so it is time to step aside and resign effective immediately. However, I will continue to be an active community member and, on a positive note, I have been recruited to help other communities and organizations with their goals and missions and look forward to contributing my time and effort.

Marcia Kemp Lexington



OTHER VIEWS

Public records battles continue in Salem

Medford Mail Tribune

Two developments emerged in the public records arena last week. One would make the state’s public records advocate independent from the governor’s office — a necessary step. The other is a troubling report in *The Oregonian* indicating that Gov. Kate Brown’s office is claiming exemptions to time limits on releasing public records that are supposed to apply to small local government offices.

Public Records Advocate Ginger McCall, the first person appointed to the newly created position, resigned in September, saying she was pressured by Brown’s staff to push the governor’s agenda on public records policy but not reveal who directed her to do that. She also said the governor’s chief legal counsel told her she reported to him and she needed to clear potential legislation or policy proposals with the governor’s office before releasing them. McCall will leave her position this month.

The Public Records Advisory Council, appointed by the governor and which the advocate chairs, has proposed legislation for the 2020

Legislature that would make it clear the advocate is independent of the governor’s office. Under the proposal, the council would hire the advocate for a four-year term and could dismiss that person for cause. As it stands now, the council presents a list of candidates to the governor, who selects one and has the power to fire the advocate.

After McCall announced her resignation, Brown said she supported legislation to clarify the advocate’s independence, but should not introduce it herself.

Such legislation should receive favorable consideration from lawmakers next year. The next records advocate should use that newly clarified independence to keep a close eye on the governor’s office, because it appears Brown’s administration is less devoted to transparency that she promised it would be.

Brown took office after Gov. John Kitzhaber resigned under the cloud of an influence-peddling scandal during which his office stonewalled multiple public records requests. Brown supported reforms of public records law that, among other things, set a 15-day deadline for agencies to release records or

justify withholding them.

The law includes exemptions designed for small local governments, who lobbied lawmakers for exceptions because they didn’t have the staff to meet the 15-day rule.

Now, according to a detailed report in *The Oregonian*, two of that newspaper’s requests have languished for six weeks, and other news organizations are still waiting for responses to records requests after nearly three months.

Brown’s office says it is dealing with an unusually high volume of requests, qualifying for an exemption that applies if complying would be “impracticable.” The attorney general’s guidelines for the new law, however, say agencies must justify any deviation from the 15-day deadline: “Public bodies with the resources to adequately staff its public records requests are expected to do so.”

The governor has a staff of nearly 70, including six public affairs employees, but only one staffer — an attorney — handles nearly all records requests.

That’s not transparency. It’s foot-dragging.