

# 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 recently 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.

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.

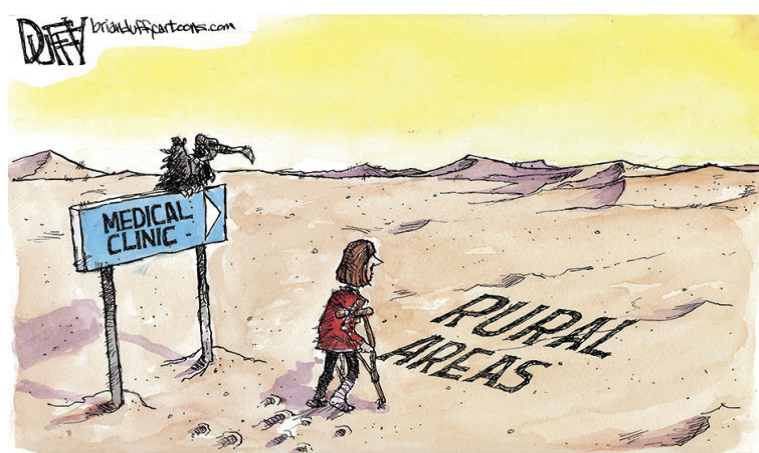
It's a matter of putting the resources a farmer has at his, or her, disposal to the highest use.

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.



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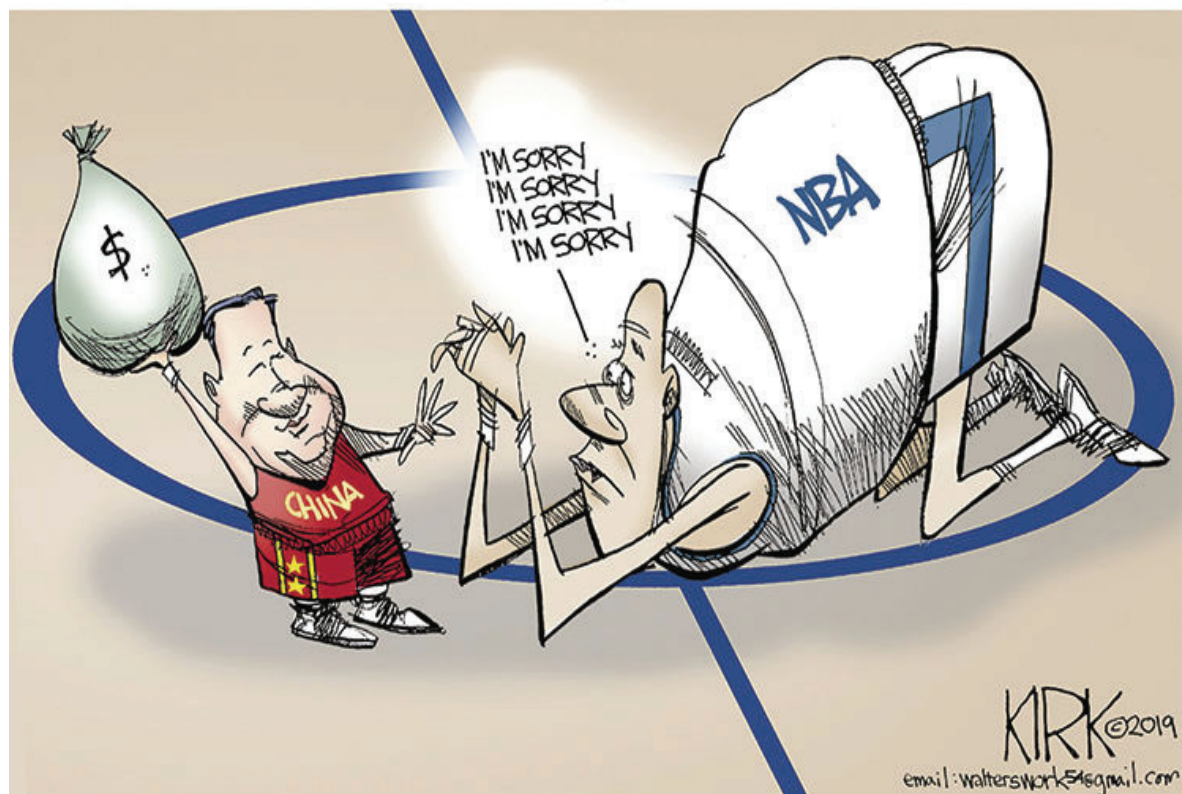
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## OTHER VIEWS

# Vaping ban a wise course of action

The fact that the Oregon Liquor Control Commission is moving ahead to formulate plans to execute Gov. Kate Brown's order that bans vaping products is good news.

A spokesman for the agency said in a story in this newspaper this week that once the commission OKs the ban, its staff could begin inspecting retailers immediately.

As many readers probably already know, Brown issued an executive order last week to ban flavored vaping products for six months. The ban is a reaction to a mysterious vaping illness that has sickened more than 1,000 people across the nation, and two dead in Oregon.

In our conservative part of the county, no one is particularly enamored when government steps in and proclaims the decision is for our "own good." The Eastern Oregon mantra of live-and-let-live as long as

you are not breaking the law remains vibrant. If you want to smoke, that's your personal decision.

But in this case Brown made the right move.

That's because flavored vaping products are extremely popular and right now the product appears to be causing serious illnesses. The reason why people are apparently harmed by using the flavored vaping products is unknown. That makes it a general health hazard. When the health of the greater community — whether in small town Eastern Oregon or other parts of the nation — is at risk, government has a duty to act.

Public health isn't a once-in-a-while issue, but one that centers on our very way of life and our collective pursuit of happiness. So, the governor's decision was a prudent one. A lot remains unknown about what is causing these vaping

injuries. What, exactly, is the cause is something the nation's medical community — spearheaded by the Centers for Disease Control — must discover.

Granted, the ban will impact small businesses that sell the product. No one in our part of the state likes to see small business — or business of any kind, for that matter — suffer an economic hardship. Building a prosperous business anywhere in America is tough, but it is particularly difficult in Eastern Oregon.

But in this case, a prudent course of action is far better than doing nothing and waiting for a medical solution that could take months or years to surface.

Until a definitive answer to the vaping illnesses can be found and proper steps created to deal with it, a ban makes sense. On this one the governor made the right move.

—East Oregonian

## OTHER VIEWS

# Vaping warnings wise, but ban is excessive

Several hundred people have damaged their lungs by vaping, and around 20 have died in the United States recently, including two in Oregon.

The trend is troubling. And given the popularity of vaping as a safer alternative to smoking tobacco, government health officials had an obligation to issue warnings and even, as many have, to urge people to stop vaping altogether until more evidence is available about which products pose the greater risk.

But Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's decision last week to ban for six months the sale of flavored vaping products in Oregon, despite the absence of definitive proof that those products are hurting people, is excessive.

Elected officials should not ban the sale of legal products when the link between those products and illness is less than conclusive. There's evidence, although again it's not absolute, that the biggest danger might lie with black-market products rather than the legal ones affected by Oregon's temporary ban.

The analogy is not perfect, to be sure, but food recalls, most of which are initiated voluntarily by a manufacturer rather than imposed by the government, are limited to a well-documented, lab test-con-

firmed risk, usually contamination of a specific list of items.

In any case, it's not as if Oregon's temporary ban is the only way to significantly reduce the number of people who use flavored vaping products.

It's beyond question that the vast majority of people who vape are aware of the situation, and of the potential risk. Some retailers acted quickly to pull products until they could confirm whether they contained an additive that has been linked to the illnesses. And it's reasonable to believe that when the governor says "Until we know more about what is causing this illness, please, do not vape," she will have an influence.

California officials issued a similar statement urging residents to avoid vaping.

But unlike Brown, California Gov. Gavin Newsom didn't temporarily ban any products. Newsom instead directed health officials to start a public awareness campaign to emphasize the potential health risks of vaping.

As is typically the case when the government seeks to deprive citizens of a product based on its potential hazards, Brown's ban on flavored vaping items likely will have negative effects that partially off-

set its intended benefits.

Because vaping is an alternative to smoking, it's likely that some vapers, denied access to the product, will revert to smoking tobacco. And there's nothing uncertain about the health risks associated with that.

Brown's decision to temporarily ban products that might not prove to be implicated in the recent spate of illnesses isn't the only problematic part of her executive order, though. The document shows that Brown's motivation isn't limited to the recent illnesses.

The order also cites surveys showing that more teens are using flavored nicotine vaping products, which can't be legally sold to anyone younger than 21 in Oregon. Brown's order blames this trend on advertisements for the flavored products.

It's perfectly reasonable for the governor to worry about minors using products which are supposed to be available only to adults. But that problem, it hardly needs to be said, is not limited to flavored vaping products. Teenagers smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol as well. Gov. Brown has not taken any action to temporarily ban either of those products. Nor did she ban all vaping liquids, only the flavored ones.

—Baker City Herald

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