

USDA outlines market-based climate approach

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

While the European Union is mandating certain agricultural practices and prohibiting others to meet its goals for mitigating climate change, the U.S. is taking a different route.

“We think that a market-based, voluntary, incentive-based approach works best with our farmers,” USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack said in a webinar during the National Farmers Union’s virtual legislative fly-in.

USDA has listened closely to what farmers think and feel about climate-smart agriculture and how USDA can structure its approach to be most beneficial to them, he said.

With more consumers wanting to make sure their food decisions are not contributing to greenhouse gas emission, USDA sees a market opportunity for verifiable sustainable products, he said.

“We think there’s a value-added proposition there, and we want farmers to be able to take full advantage of that value-added opportunity,” he said.

Measuring and quantifying posi-



Courtesy of Bill Jepsen

No-till farming is one practice seen as climate-friendly. USDA is developing market-based incentives for such practices.

itive impacts will not only allow farmers to take advantage of that market opportunity but allow them to participate in carbon and other markets without necessarily incurring substantial cost.

But there is a financial risk associated with certain practices or buying certain technologies, he said.

“That costs money. And the reality is that’s risky, especially when margins are so tight already,” he said.

USDA wants to be able to reduce the risk, he said.

“There are a lot of different ways to do this, a lot of different practices and a lot of different approaches. We want to make sure that we are derisking all of those approaches,” he said.

USDA is already engaged in several areas related to climate, such as methane digesters, energy efficiency, conservation programs, research and technical support.

There are roughly 45 agricultural practices that work in mitigating climate change, and USDA wants to make sure those practices are encouraged. It is also looking for other ways to provide financial resources, verification and credibility while giving farmers the ability to voluntarily engage, he said.

“I believe that when we do this, do it right, agriculture will be at the forefront of real aggressive action in terms

of climate,” he said.

USDA will be laying out its efforts in greater detail this week in Colorado, and Vilsack hopes farmers will feel USDA listened to their concerns and needs.

USDA understands it’s about pilots, partnerships, listening to farmers and reducing the risks associated with climate-smart agriculture, he said.

Robert Bonnie, deputy chief of staff and senior climate adviser at USDA, said there’s a lot of alignment between climate and agriculture.

“To take advantage of that, we need to make sure that whatever we do works for producers, works for agriculture,” he said.

So it’s important to design incentives and other opportunities in a way that fits into producers’ existing operations, and USDA is looking for ways to create more market opportunity, he said.

Climate-smart agriculture isn’t just about mitigation, it’s also about resiliency, he said.

“It’s making sure we provide good information and help for producers that help make sure their operations are more resilient,” he said.

ODFW: No new wolf kills in Baker County

By JAYSON JACOBY
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No additional wolves have been killed from the Lookout Mountain pack in eastern Baker County since Sept. 17, and the pack hasn’t been implicated in any recent attacks on cattle.

Wolves from the Lookout Mountain pack have killed at least six head of cattle, and injured three others, since mid July.

On the morning of Sept. 17, employees from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), firing rifles from a helicopter, shot and killed three wolves from the pack, including its breeding male.

Michelle Dennehy, an ODFW spokesperson, wrote in an email to the Herald Monday morning, Sept. 27, that no wolves have been killed since Sept. 17.

ODFW announced on Sept. 16 that agency workers intended to kill up to four wolves from the pack, not including the breeding female.

Four ranchers who have lost cattle to wolves are also authorized to kill up to two wolves from the pack, not including the breeding female. That permit continues through Oct. 31.

ODFW employees shot and killed two other Lookout Mountain wolves, both of them pups born this spring, on Aug. 1.

The most recent confirmed wolf attack on cattle happened on Sept. 16, according to ODFW reports.

ODFW employees found the carcass of a 450-pound calf on Sept. 17 on private land near Daly Creek, north of Lookout Mountain.

ODFW workers also confirmed on Sept. 20 that wolves had injured a 450-pound calf, also on private land, but biologists estimated that attack happened about three weeks earlier.

The calf was found in the Timber Canyon area north of Little Lookout Mountain.

ODFW officials estimate the Lookout Mountain pack consists of six wolves, including the breeding female.

By killing the breeding male, ODFW hopes to still allow the breeding female to raise any remaining juveniles. Reducing the number of juveniles she will need to feed increases the likelihood that some will survive, according to a press release from the agency.

Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash sent a letter to ODFW Director Curt Melcher on Sept. 13 asking the state to kill the entire Lookout Mountain pack.

Three days later ODFW announced that it would try to kill up to four wolves, citing the ongoing threat to livestock and the evidence that the Lookout Mountain pack has been targeting cattle despite significant populations of elk and deer in the area.

Oregonians fear climate change unstoppable

By ZANE SPARLING
Pamplin Media Group

We’re doomed. That’s the pessimistic point of view espoused by the two-thirds of Oregonians who believe there’s a slight chance, or no chance at all, that humans can solve climate change in time to stave off the worst of its effects, according to a new poll.

The data comes from the nonprofit Oregon Values and Beliefs Center, which surveyed 1,154 adult state residents in mid-August to map Oregonians’ perception of climate change. Survey respondents were selected to match state demographics. The margin of error ranges from 1.7% to 2.9% per question.

A majority of residents think there’s only a small chance (45%) — or no hope at all (21%) — of stopping climate change, the results show, or about 66% total.

Interestingly, a similar slice of the state says human-caused climate change is fact (64%), compared to just 8% who believe that carbon emissions’ role in global climate is fiction. Democrats (85%) far outpace Republicans (27%) in describing climate change as reality, a trend also seen comparing college graduates (77%) to those with a high school diploma or less (57%).

“People are more pessimistic



Oregon Capital Insider

about forest fires and the climate crisis than about solving communicable diseases like COVID (33%), voting rights and secure elections (40%), racial discrimination (58%), or population growth (62%),” pollsters said in a briefing memo.

Here are a few more highlights from the survey:

- Despite the dramatic photos of wildfires and flooding that inundate social media, a majority of Oregonians say climate change has had no (22%) or little (40%) impact on their life. That said, the impact has been significant (27%) or dramatic (11%) for the remainder.
- Oregonians aren’t eager to pay more at the pump, either. A third

(35%) wouldn’t support any sort of fossil fuel tax, and another 13% wouldn’t want to pay more than a quarter per gallon in tax. A skimpy majority (51%) would pay as much as 50 cents. Only 15% would OK a tax of \$4 or more, if that’s what it takes to halt climate change.

- While research shows that Americans generate, on average, 15 to 25 tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually — compared to a global average of four tons per year — most Oregonians think their own lifestyle is below the mean. Some 42% of respondents said their emissions are extremely low, 40% said their emissions are low, while just 3% admitted to

MORE INFORMATION

The Oregon Values and Beliefs Center is committed to the highest level of public opinion research.

To obtain that, the nonprofit is building the largest online research panel of Oregonians in history to ensure that all voices are represented in discussions of public policy in a valid and statistically reliable way.

Selected panelists earn points for their participation, which can be redeemed for cash or donated to a charity. To learn more, visit oregonvbc.org/about-the-panel and join the panel.

average levels of pollution.

What about the solutions? Oregonians largely favor government interventions that promote tree planting (81%) and incentivize renewable energy sources (80%), pollsters wrote. A healthy majority also approve of strengthening regulations on industrial emissions (73%), as well as implementing tougher fuel efficiency standards (69%).

“Nearly half of Oregonians say they aren’t sure about geo-engineering strategies, like reflective artificial clouds (47%),” pollsters say. “Strategies like this will need more media attention before people have strong opinions.”

Women having impact on agricultural economics

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

An influx of women over the past four decades has increased the relevance of the topics that agricultural economists study, a recent article says.

Susan Offutt, a retired chief economist at the U.S. Government Accountability Office, and Jill McCluskey, director and regents professor in Washington State University’s School of Economic Sciences, recently published an article, “How Women Saved Agricultural Economics.”

The article was in the Agricultural & Applied Economics Association’s journal Applied Economics Perspective and Policy.

“We were just thinking about all of the impacts women have made in agricultural economics,” McCluskey said. “I feel like many of them have

been unrecognized. We also wanted to point out that adding diversity to the field can make it more creative, more relevant and even more rigorous.”

Women primarily broadened the topics that agricultural economists consider to include food and consumer issues, social safety nets and the environment, the authors said.

Women tend to be more interested in social policies such as labor, education and health, including consumer nutrition and international market development, Offutt said. They’re not necessarily as interested in finance or farm management.

“The women who joined wanted to study those topics,” Offutt said. “We argue that without the momentum the discipline gained by having a significant number of students that wanted to look at those issues, it would have remained much more narrowly focused, and we think not

as relevant to national policy.”

Consumer research is vital for farmers, McCluskey said. It helps growers choose the best crops to grow and in which traits to invest breeding research.

“Before you do something, you need to know the impact on consumers,” she said. “If no one’s willing to pay for it, then it’s worth nothing.”

The authors say women are under-represented in the field. They’re often discouraged from entering fields that are math-intensive, McCluskey said.

“We can tackle it with mentoring and high expectations, we can tackle it with work-life programs (and) dual-career hiring programs,” she said.

Many people meet their partners in graduate programs, leading to dual-career academic couples. Women are more likely to turn down or leave a job if their husband

doesn’t have a job, McCluskey said.

“If a woman has a child during her time on the faculty, she should be supported,” she said. “With these types of programs, we’re supporting people to work and be successful.”

Once critical mass is achieved, it’s easier to recruit more women into the field, McCluskey said.

Some of the topics that women study the most have the highest citations in published articles, which is “the currency of academia,” McCluskey said. “People are interested and it’s having impact.”

Offutt and McCluskey also point to the contribution of women in leadership roles. Both are former presidents of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association.

Women need more examples of women economists or in high policy positions, Offutt said — “just having visibility to say, ‘Oh, yeah, that is something women do.’”

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