

Our View: The Farmer Must Feed Them All

Thursday, January 26, 2017

From Farm Policy Facts

"But the farmer he must feed them all" reads the last line of each stanza in a 19th century poem called The Farmer that has been making the rounds in agricultural circles and beyond of late. The poem was recently repurposed into a commercial with the backdrop of stunning images of American agriculture and landscape. No doubt, the commercial and the poem have resonated because of the poignant and timeless message, and because of its sympathetic tone to what farmers endure to grow our daily food and fiber.

*The farmer's trade is one of worth;
He's partner with the sky and earth,
He's partner with the sun and rain,
And no man loses for his gain;
And men may rise, or men may fall,
But the farmer he must feed them all.*

It was written at a time when the United States was facing historic change and progress of every kind from industrial capacity to oil production to even major innovations in agricultural technology and production. Although the country was predominantly rural, it was rapidly growing its urban centers. One can imagine that Amelia E. Barr, the poem's author, observed this new trend with a bit of alarm. Despite listing a number of professions and describing their importance, Barr concludes we still need farmers – emphasizing their significance by ending each stanza with the repetitive verse.

*The writer thinks, the poet sings,
The craftsmen fashion wondrous things,
The doctor heals, the lawyer pleads,
The miner follows the precious leads;
But this or that, whate'er befall,
The farmer he must feed them all.*

As we begin 2017 with a new president, a new Congress, and soon a new, confirmed agriculture secretary, as well as an expiring farm bill, we wanted to make certain this message made it to Washington.

Indeed, America's farmers and ranchers - roughly one percent of the population – feed the remainder. And, these men and women rely upon the certainty of a farm safety net to help them make it through tough times like what they are experiencing today. As lawmakers begin discussions surrounding reauthorizing a new farm bill, it is important to remember that we are all the beneficiaries of sound farm policy that affords us a safe, secure, and affordable food and fiber supply.

The complete poem is below:

The Farmer
*The king may rule o'er land and sea,
The lord may live right royally,
The soldier ride in pomp and pride,
The sailor roam o'er ocean wide;
But this or that, whate'er befall,
The farmer he must feed them all.*

*The writer thinks, the poet sings,
The craftsmen fashion wondrous things,
The doctor heals, the lawyer pleads,
The miner follows the precious leads;
But this or that, whate'er befall,
The farmer he must feed them all.*

*The merchant he may buy and sell,
The teacher do his duty well;
But men may toil through busy days,
Or men may stroll through pleasant ways;
From king to beggar, whate'er befall,
The farmer he must feed them all.*

*The farmer's trade is one of worth;
He's partner with the sky and earth,
He's partner with the sun and rain,
And no man loses for his gain;
And men may rise, or men may fall,
But the farmer he must feed them all.*

*God bless the man who sows the wheat,
Who finds us milk and fruit and meat;
May his purse be heavy, his heart be light,
His cattle and corn and all go right;
God bless the seeds his hands let fall,
For the farmer he must feed us all.*

Upcoming Area Meetings and Ag Conferences

January 30 – Llano Estacado Cotton Conference, Bailey County Electric Cooperative, 610 E. American Blvd., **Muleshoe**. Registration, 8:30 a.m., \$20; Program 9 a.m.-noon. 3 CEUs offered. More info: Curtis Preston, CEA-AG, 806-272-4583.

January 30 – New Cotton Technology Meeting featuring PhytoGen Cottonseed and the Enlist Weed Control System, **Abernathy** City Hall, 811 Ave. D. Program 10 a.m.; ends with a catered lunch. RSVP: Kassadi Click, 806-680-4158; or Ken Legé, 806-773-7310.

February 2 – Hub of the Plains Ag Conference, Koko Palace, 5101 Ave. Q, **Lubbock**. 7:45 a.m.-3:50 p.m. \$35 Pre-registration, \$45 on-site. Lunch provided. 5 CEUs offered. More information: Mark Brown, CEA-AG, 806-775-1740.

February 5-7 – Southwest Ag Issues Summit, Worthington Hotel, **Fort Worth**. Register and get more information at <http://www.agissuesummit.com>.

February 7 – Hale/Swisher Crops Conference – Ollie Liner Center, **Plainview**. CEUs offered. More information: Jason Miller, Hale County Extension Agent-AG, 806-291-5267.

February 15 – High Plains Irrigation Conference, North Exhibit Hall, **Amarillo** Civic Center, 401 S. Buchanan St. Registration 8 a.m., program 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Cost \$30, lunch included. CEUs offered. More information: http://taia.org/HPIC_2017.html.