

# Cow Country Reporter



January 2013 Volume 5 Issue 1

## NEWS FROM YOUR CEO

### IN THIS ISSUE

News from your CEO

Leachman's future beef trends

Commentary: Bye bye 2012

Commentary: Eating is just too dangerous



Cattle Producers Of Louisiana  
P.O. Box 886  
Prairieville, Louisiana 70769  
Website: [www.lacattle.org](http://www.lacattle.org)  
Toll Free: 888-528-6999

Dave Foster  
Chief Executive Officer  
[info@lacattle.org](mailto:info@lacattle.org)

### HAPPY NEW YEAR CPL MEMBERS!

As we anticipate the new year 2013 and what it might bring, I am amazed at how fast time passes. Can you believe 5 years have gone by since Cattle Producers of Louisiana first started out with 5 people believing that the cattle producers in Louisiana needed more than "Beef, it's what's for dinner!" So, our little group canvassed the state and was assured by producers that, "YES" CPL was just what was needed and they would join forces to assist in the growth. As you know, CPL exists on the \$50.00 annual dues per member. We never reached the number that others promised to make happen. We have heard all sorts of reasons, but the bottom line is membership makes CPL function and pays our bills. Our Executive Committee, Dave Foster, CEO, Ronald Black, Mike Kovac, Dave Sanson and Hank Schumacher, decided that CPL would be structured different than other organizations and have a different approach when it came to meetings. We divided the state into regions and gave each region the opportunity to host meetings, determine topics to be discussed and the Executive Committee would assist in getting speakers and helping with costs. So instead of the leadership determining what is needed in the different regions of the state, the members would select what their needs, concerns and updates would be.

Well, honestly, this concept has not worked like we thought it would. CPL has not had the growth it needs to fulfill its potential. So, as your CEO, I challenge each member to sign up another member, plan a meeting (numbers is not the goal, but the outcome is) and use the resources you have as a CPL member. CPL has a toll free number that allows you to talk directly to the CEO, voice your suggestions or complaints and listen to a weekly market update that is current and informative. I get many calls from members who want to get "posted" on the current market, have cattle to sell or want to buy cattle. They have all said that that one call made them money or saved them money. What I heard was, "it paid for my \$50.00 membership". During the year 2013 Cattle Producers of Louisiana will continue to represent you locally, statewide and nationally. We will promote the growth of the cattle industry of Louisiana. We will support the local auction markets, order buyers, video sales and provide marketing information about Louisiana cattle to others outside our state. CPL did some great things in 2012 and will continue our efforts in 2013 with your help. Again, may you and your family have a safe and prosperous New Year. May you be encouraged, that with your help, CPL will set the standard of excellence as a cattle organization that provides information for the growth of our industry and promotes the value of our Louisiana cattle. Great things can happen when one or two gather together for a common goal.

*Dave Foster, CEO*

## LEACHMAN'S FUTURE BEEF TRENDS

Source: John Maday, Managing Editor, Drovers CattleNetwork

The U.S. beef industry operates in a global market, and an array of socio-economic forces will drive changes in the production and marketing of beef cattle over the next two decades. Seedstock producer Lee Leachman, of Leachman Cattle of Colorado, recently shared his crystal-ball projections with an international group of beef producers and processors during Novus International's Global Beef Roundtable.

Following are some of his predictions, as summarized by public relations consultant Kenna Rathai, of Kenna B. Rathai Communications:

**Increasing incomes** – There will be 50 percent more people, they'll have more money and they're going to want to spend it on higher quality protein. Global food demand will at least double in the next 40 years.

**Energy and the environment** – Climate change discussion will continue. Oil will exceed \$100 per barrel. Nuclear energy will be a factor and 50 percent of global corn will continue to be used for ethanol.

**Higher commodity prices** – If oil trades higher than \$100, corn will trade higher than \$6 per bushel. If the global economy is good, leading to high oil prices, we'll have a global shortage of protein. The only way to increase protein is to feed more grain to cattle, chickens and hogs.

**Expensive steaks** – By 2020, steaks will cost more than US \$16 per pound, compared with the current average of more than \$8 per pound. North Americans and Europeans will grill fewer steaks they become less affordable, and the wealthiest people will be the ones eating steak.

**World's wealthiest people** – In 2009, there were 3 million millionaires in the United States, India had 185,000 and China had 600,000. That number has not increased in the United States in a decade, but the numbers in the other countries are increasing by 20 percent every year. By 2020, India and China will have more than 6 million millionaires and they'll be able to eat whatever they want.

**Global cattle numbers have peaked** -- CattleFax estimates that global cattle production is down by 6 percent over the last decade. Grazing land prices have more than tripled in the last decade. High crop prices will also contribute to reduced availability of grazing land.

**Cattle as pets** – More and more people think animals have rights like humans and we will not win this battle. The reality is we'll have to alter our animal handling to satisfy the public. Livestock will be treated more and more like pets by 2020.

**High-tech meat** – We will continue to use technology to increase volume of meat per head including beta agonists to increase carcass lean yield. We will develop ways to select for improved rumen efficiencies. DNA testing, selection indexes, sexed semen and more will aid genetic improvement. We'll produce more meat per head, but we will have fewer animals and tighter supplies. We'll have to push to get more meat out of animals because we won't have more cattle, and packers will offer incentives to use all the technology possible to increase meat quantity.

**New value signals** -- Market forces will lead to improved value signals because the technology is better and competing products make it mandatory. An increasing number of calves will be source verified and certified due to consumer-driven demands and more stringent markets.

**Feed efficiency becomes a new tool** – This is a highly heritable trait and more and more cattlemen will seek more feed-efficient animals. With rising fuel and feed costs, feed efficiency is one of the most economically significant traits.

---

## COMMENTARY: BYE BYE 2012

Source: Dan Murphy

It's almost mandatory for columnists to crank out a "What a Year It Was!" column as a finale each time we prepare to flip the calendar. I'll spare you that obligatory slog through news you've already endured and instead offer a single word I believe will occupy a prominent place in both news coverage and industry messaging in 2013.

That singularity parallels trends elsewhere.

For example: In the fitness industry, the word is "intensity." More and more research—coupled with real-world experience—is showing that the best results in strength training, endurance training and even body shaping all derive from shorter, harder, more intensive workouts. Not everyone's overjoyed to learn that, but it's becoming increasingly clear that if your idea of exercise is reading a magazine while you leisurely pedal a stationary cycle machine, you're not going to get the results you want.

In education, the word is "outcomes." Rather than such metrics as graduation rates (though important), or new technologies or even teacher credentialing, the primary tool for measuring academic success is how well students perform on core curricula and standardized tests. Again, everybody's not happy about it, but that's also a development rapidly reaching consensus.

In food production, I believe the single most important descriptor in both media coverage and industry messaging in 2013 will be "sustainability." That's certainly not a new concept, nor are other industry-specific buzzwords; they tend

(continued on page 3)

## COMMENTARY: EATING IS JUST TOO DANGEROUS

Source: Greg Henderson, Editor, Associate Publisher, Drovers CattleNetwork

Our food system is broken. It's true. I read it on the Internet.

In fact, there are hundreds – if not thousands – of “experts” on the Internet more than happy to inform you that in this modern age of iPhones and iPads, eating is just too dangerous. Further, you should be aware that the food you're eating is not just killing you and your family it's killing the planet, too.

If you were hoping that 2013 might bring some sanity into the discussion about the safety and sustainability of the food American farmers provide, New York Times columnist - and self-proclaimed foodie - Mark Bittman dispelled such notions with his first column of the New Year.

“Heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes kill more than a million people a year – nearly half of all deaths – and diet is a root cause of many of those diseases,” Bittman wrote. “And the root of that dangerous diet is our system of hyper-industrial agriculture, the kind that uses 10 times as much energy as it produces.”

Wow. That part about agriculture using “10 times as much energy as it produces” without any attribution stopped me dead in my tracks. I guess folks are just supposed to swallow that whopper whole, but Bittman doesn't stop with the criticism.

He says our food system has “been a major contributor to climate change, spawned the obesity crisis, poisoned countless volumes of land and water, wasted energy, tortured billions of animals...I could go on.”

There you have it – agriculture is the root of our nation's health and environmental problems. If we believe half of what Bittman claims, those of us who have ever driven a tractor or bucked a bale of hay should feel guilty about contributing to diabetes, heart disease and the melting polar ice caps.

Bittman, however, cares not a whit about whether you or I feel guilty. His objective is to use half-truths, twisted logic and emotionally charged rhetoric to convince gullible Americans that our only source of salvation is to build an organic garden on the balcony of every high-rise in Manhattan, and start eating beef from 5-year-old steers that have been read a bedtime story every night.

Livestock production is one of Bittman's primary targets, as he calls on Americans to “un-invent this food system.” Specifically, he calls for a movement to improve the living conditions of livestock.

“Well-cared-for animals will necessarily be more expensive, which means we'll eat fewer of them; that's a win-win,” he wrote. “They'll use fewer antibiotics, they'll be produced by more farmers in more places, and they'll eat less commodity grain, which will both reduce environmental damage and allow for more land to be used for high-quality human food like fruits and vegetables.”

Taking Bittman's words at face-value – and many readers will – is so much easier than questioning them. The problem in debunking such emotionally charged prose is that the truth can't be boiled down into a sound-bite. With just two sentences Bittman throws a blanket over animal welfare, rising food costs, antibiotics, grain production, environmental issues and the changing structure of agriculture in rural America.

Where do we start? How do we combat this charlatan's blatant misinformation that is routinely fed to folks who sleep with a cat? And how do we hope to compete with a media Goliath such as The Times that seemingly has no interest in discovering the facts about modern agriculture?

Drovers/CattleNetwork has published many articles about the specific topics Bittman questions. In the coming weeks, however, we'll examine these issues again in an attempt to provide you with useful information about the success of agriculture, why it offers hope for people and the planet, and how we must work to counter the propaganda distributed by our critics.

For clarity, we do not oppose alternative food systems such as local, natural, organic, grass-fed, etc. However, we acknowledge that such production systems are more expensive and that significant trade-offs result for both producer and consumer.

But we don't have to abandon the science and technology that helps us provide safe, abundant and affordable food to folks from every walk of life.

(continued from page 2)

to rise to the top of the list by a process of attrition.

However, in animal agriculture, defining and communicating what sustainability is all about will be ultra-important. Why? Three reasons, in ascending order of importance.

First, there is no clear and universally accepted definition of sustainability, or sustainable. Like “natural,” sustainable is what anyone wants it to be, and unfortunately, production agriculture has too often let activist groups with agendas do the defining.

That needs to change, so that debates over policies and positioning can be conducted on a level playing field.

Second, the issue of animal welfare is an emotional one. From sad-eyed puppies used by animal rights groups to fund-raise for ag-related campaigns—such as eliminating gestation stalls—to doctored videos intended to shock the public, virtually all of such messaging surrounding is driven by the gut reactions people and politicians have to imagery

(continued on page 4)

## COMMENTARY: BYE BYE 2012

(continued from pages 2&3)

and feelings. Facts rarely enter the discussion.

Show a photo of chickens in a cage, no matter how clean and spacious, and while producers see efficiency and welfare, much of the public sees barbarity and abuse. No amount of scientific data nor economic analysis is going to change that, and the reality is that industry is fighting the battle to win over people's perceptions from late in the game and several touchdowns behind.

But that's not true of the other critical issue confronting producers and their industry allies, and that is the growing conflict over the environmental impact of meat and poultry production. Increasingly, activists are gaining ground with the argument that raising beef or producing pork consumes far too many resources, wastes excessive amounts of water and energy and end up contributing disproportionately to the specter of global warming.

That is an argument based on facts and driven by data—however suspect—and thus vulnerable to a counter-argument fueled by stronger, more credible data. That's where sustainability enters the picture.

No food product, no food crop can be produced without inputs: land, water, energy and other resources. Yet somehow, anti-industry activists have been able to buffalo both media members and policymakers with the idea that eliminating meat and the nutrition it represents would result in a straightforward subtraction of all the above-named resources and inputs required to raise livestock and process various animal foods. Rarely is mention made that substituting corn, wheat, rice, soybeans, seafood—whatever—for red meat and poultry in the world's diet would consume enormous additional resources of energy, land, water and fossil fuels. And yet such a switch, despite its environmental cost, would not provide humanity with superior nutrition.

Moreover, and this is the key point, the world does not have those additional resources available to convert all of animal agriculture's nutritional contributions to alternative plant-based sources. Such a transformation in the face of continuing global population growth would be decidedly unsustainable.

That's a fact, and it's one that industry ought to focus on communicating during 2013 and beyond.

Happy (sustainable) New Year.

*The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Dan Murphy, a veteran food-industry journalist and commentator.*

CATTLE PRODUCERS OF LOUISIANA  
P.O. BOX 886  
PRAIRIEVILLE, LOUISIANA 70769  
WEBSITE: WWW.LACATTLE.ORG  
TOLL FREE: 888-528-6999