

FFD President's Message - *Joel Greeno*

Family Farm Defenders

President

Joel Greeno (WI)

Vice Presidents

Anthony Pahnke (CA)

Marlene Rojas (CA)

Secretary

Lisa Griffith (IL)

Treasurer

Rebecca Goodman (WI)

Board Members

Frances Bartelt (FL)

Ben Burkett (MS)

Jim Goodman (WI)

Peter Kinsman (WI)

Mary Lippert (WI)

Viva MacDougall (WI)

George & Patty Naylor (IA)

Isidoro Quezada (TX)

Tyler Short (KY)

Maria Whittaker (OH)

Executive Director

John Peck - (WI)

Bookkeeper

Mary Lippert - (WI)

Newsletter Editor

Frances Bartelt - (FL)

Mailing Address

PO Box 1772 Madison, WI 53701

Phone/fax

608-260-0900

email:

familyfarmdefenders@yahoo.com

Website:

www.familyfarm.org

FFD Mission

Family Farm Defenders is a tax-deductible non-profit activist organization made up of farmers and concerned consumers. We are seeking ways to bring fair prices back to farmers and to insure a safe and sustainably produced food for consumers.

I hope this finds everyone well and in good spirits. I know all too well that there is plenty not to be happy about. Yet, we all are truly blessed to have what we have.

This summer there has been plenty to be HOT about.

The weather has been hot for all too many of us. But it has been not so much the temperature, but the lack of rain that has put many of us in dire straits as vegetable crops wither, corn and soy beans struggle, and pastures burn up, forcing more and more cattle onto an already stressed cattle market.

Another Hot Topic has been the Farm Bill.

Many of our farm groups have given their 2 cents on the legislation, trying to glean what crumbs they may for their farmers. And crumbs it is, as what groups receive is a mere pittance of what farmers really need or deserve for their labor.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has projected that the 2023 Farm Bill will require \$1.51 trillion, \$31 billion more than the previous Farm Bill, making this the most expensive band aid package in human history.

This is exactly what I told Congressman Glen "GT" Thompson at the Farm Bill listening session that took place in La Crosse, WI on August 16th. Did I say listening session? I meant farce or "dog and pony show," which was nothing more than a photo op. I was told that I would have an opportunity to speak, but I did not get that chance. Nor did anyone else because what can really be said in a one-minute time slot? NOT much!

We did get to hear from Milk Source, a company that admittedly works for large farms and that claims that they need to be protected. They say we need more trade and the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) needs to be enforced. We also got to hear from the Dairy Business Association, Farm Bureau, other industry leaders, and even a cranberry grower, who asked for more funding for a research facility in Black River Falls, WI.

One thing that was shocking was the number of speakers called upon and who simply thanked everyone for being there. Wow, what a waste of a minute! At least they could have made some kind of relevant comment, but again it make for a great photo op.

One almost had to laugh when GT said that the Farm Bill was all about small and medium sized farms, because we all know how hard our small and medium farms struggle to survive with the pittance they may receive from the Farm Bill.

So, after two hours into the discussion and with nothing of substance having been said, it was announced that no more questions would be taken. Then, I planned my next move. I was seated in the front row and that gave me the perfect opportunity to rush to the stage and speak directly to G.T. When I got his attention, I reminded him that this Farm Bill would be the most expensive band aid ever sold to the farmers of America in history. I asked why the issues that caused us to need a Farm Bill were not addressed instead. He asked what I meant.

I told him how I lived near former WI Gov. Tommy G. Thompson's farm. I told him that when Black Friday occurred in September of 1996, when cheese was dumped on the National Cheese Exchange in Green Bay WI and farmers lost 30% of their pay in a single day's trading. I told him that at that time, then Gov. Thompson launched an investigation into what caused this drop in farmers' pay. As we know, the investigation found the guilty party was Kraft Foods.

Ironically, at that time, Phillip Morris owned Kraft Foods, Miller Brewing, and Oscar Mayer - and Miller Brewing Company gave Tommy a \$21 million donation for Miller Stadium. Consequently, the investigation ended and cheese trading moved to Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) in Chicago. The move only made cheese trading less transparent, and farmers (and consumers) still suffer the consequences of this move.

I went on to remind him of the US Dept. of Justice (DoJ) investigation conducted by Ali Ramadan that found the US dairy industry was more corrupt than Enron, and how Ali, who was a 30 year veteran of DoJ, was terminated for reaching this conclusion. I also told him to look up my testimony to Christine Varney (then the head of the anti-trust division) in June of 2010 when I asked her to open the investigation into DoJ cover up and finish it. And that when she was denied that opportunity, she resigned her position.

I went on to ask him about how - without parity - farmers were supposed to survive when there is never any justice. GT looked pretty shocked that I brought these issues up, kind of like when USDA Sec. Tom Vilsack sees me and says, "Oh, it's you again." LOL

I asked GT that the next time he saw my dear friends - Joe and Brenda Cochran, Gerald and Tina Carlin, and Arden Tewsbury - who are all fine people of Pennsylvania, to give them a hug and say hello. He looked like he saw a ghost.

I'm not holding my breath on anything of value coming out of the Farm Bill.

The Other Hot Topic I would like to Address is WATER.

We all need it. We all use it, but oh my, how it is abused! In 2016, bottled water surpassed soda for the first time to become the number one beverage in the U.S. Companies like Nestle have made huge profits by siphoning off our free public water and selling it at huge profit. This process has decimated the water tables in many areas. How many of us have fallen for the bottle water farce and made Nestle and others very wealthy? Probably too many of us.

Many people purchase it thinking that it is safer than tap water, but studies are finding that not to be true. In some cases, the very filtering process that makes people feel safe is contaminating the water further, sometimes even with elements that cause cancer and other health related issues. Let's all remember to think before we drink.

Also, on the topic of water, do we really need to irrigate already dry land to grow more corn and soybeans? The markets suggest that maybe we don't need to do that as we just further flood the markets. Another issue is exporting our water. It is being discussed that huge farms managed by Fonda Monte are growing alfalfa for Saudi Arabian dairy farms. It is illegal to grow alfalfa in Saudi Arabia because it uses too much water. Go figure! So farms in Arizona have wells going dry due to Fonda Monte using up all the water to export alfalfa to Saudi Arabia. Fonda Monte is doing this in many areas of the U.S.

So where do we draw the line in foreign ownership of land and extraction of our most valuable resource: water? This is much like China's ownership of Smithfield and becoming the largest hog owner, grower and processor in the U.S. Again, this is another example of having foreign ownership of land, and extracting feed and water for profits of foreign owners, often in collaboration with U.S. based corporations.

It's time to draw the line on farm gate income and our invaluable natural resources. We need a Farm Bill that addresses real issues and helps us get towards parity prices for our farmers. It is long overdue and much needed.

Some Food for Thought