

EDITORIAL by *Judy L.*

NEWS TO PROVOKE THOUGHT!



All discussions, news, etc., lately, have been focused on the economy. For local producers to excel, more and more consumers will be needed to keep them sustainable or making

some kind of decent profit. Presently, it is popular for metropolitan consumers to look for natural products and as they search for those farms that provide those natural products, they are almost never reminded that our country's major food source is supplied by four or five big ag farms (as opposed to hundreds that it had dwindled down from in the short past.) The Farm Bill and our government is pushing "big Ag" farms and getting away with it and getting away from helping the small family farm.

If farm programs can not be implemented to help average (small) farm, organic or natural products will begin to fade rather than be on the front burner as seem to be now (and as well as the past several years.) Even locally, we producers are being effected. For instance, as Clemson University continues to make massive budget cuts, they seem to be moving away (or being forced) from being an agriculture college. Most of the programs that small farmers use are being affected immensely by the new budget cuts. Soil labs may be forced to close because of budget cuts – this will force us to use private labs that are far away and probably out of state. Extension agents have little or no travel money to make farm visits. FFA and 4-H projects are half-funded ... well, with that being said, Clemson as well as producers need to put more focus on our youth

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"Two very Important Questions We Should Ask"

1. If we do not focus on our youth, who will keep rural agriculture alive?
2. Do we really want to rely on four or five mega-government controlled farms to grow our food?

There are things producers can do to turn things around. And positively, we must try to work together to accomplish this awesome task.

Young people always love story telling ... I do not know of any child that does not hang on to every word that their parents say when they talk about their past. We can begin incorporating farm stories when they are very young and inviting them to farms activities, and involve them with animals and livestock. Because those youth are knowledgeable about farms, they will have confidence in themselves to react positively to rural life interests. Inviting young people to County Fair Livestock Shows is another good start to introduced them to sustainable living.

We must continue to produce the best products and only sell those products that are the freshest. Problems like the recent egg recall will keep fresh locally grown products in the limelight. As long as serious health issues and inferior food products are created by the "Big Ag" farms, the local farmers will continue to find consumers, or let's say the consumers will find the local and natural products.

Please contact me if you have interest in writing articles for the Southern Farm News. Our readers are interested in sustainable farming and like ideas.

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