Columnist Lee Pitts is 2012 Veritas Award winner

Editor and columnist Lee Pitts was awarded American Agriculture’s highest honor, the Veritas Award.

For the past 40 years Lee Pitts has been riding herd on the agricultural industry while serving as Executive Editor of the Livestock Market Digest. Somewhere along the way he became one of the most widely syndicated agricultural writers in the country.

Pitts’ articles have been reprinted in hundreds of newspapers and magazines and his essays were regularly recited on Paul Harvey News and Comment and National Public Radio. A collection of Lee’s video essays were featured on the Voice of Agriculture television show and were compiled into the hour long video, From A Western Point of View. Pitts is the author of eleven books.

Pitts graduated with an Animal Science degree from Cal Poly University in San Luis Obispo, CA, and has seen the highs and lows of agriculture both as a rancher and as a sheepherder.

He began his writing and speaking career nearly 40 years ago while serving as the state president of the California Association of the FFA and since then his work has been syndicated in publications in this country, Italy, Australia, England and Canada. For 20 years he was also a co-owner and the voice of Western Video Market, the second largest livestock auction company in the country.

Says Pitts, “In my life I have been blessed with one good wife [Diane], a marginal horse, 14 worthless dogs and a few dimwitted bosses. That’s much more than any man deserves.”

Pitts was unable to attend the AAW convention in Denver but was able to convey his thanks on Skype, saying, “Please do not mistake my missing in action at your convention for a lack of appreciation for the wonderful award you presented me. If there was any way I could have been there I would have, for a couple reasons. It was one of the nicest things anyone has ever done for me and I appreciate it more than you’ll ever know. Secondly, when I could travel I had the pleasure of speaking to a couple of your state organizations and I enjoyed the experience very much. You have my utmost respect for all that you have done, and continue to do, for an industry we all love. You are truly what I call “The Angels of Agriculture.”

“In an era when an ever-growing urban culture understands what we do less and less, yours has been the loudest voice in trying to educate them. We need your earnest and true voice speaking up for farmers and ranchers now more than ever.

“I humbly thank you for honoring me and I promise that as a Veritas winner I will try for the rest of my life to live up to the ideals expressed in your Call To Power.”
President’s Report

Dear AAW Members,

Whoever said the New Year begins a clean slate—has not seen my desk! What with finalizing end of year business issues and getting ready for the oncoming year, there are papers flying all over the place! Not a pretty sight. There is no other time of the year that I fully realize the huge amount of time we spend to comply with regulations. Even though job growth is a top priority for many communities, I see the increasing regulations producing just the opposite effect. More and more families join the unemployment ranks and live at poverty levels, while the cost of living continues to rise—in large part because of the increased cost of compliance.

According to recent figures, over seven million people in the United States go hungry every day, and this, in a country where we have the best agriculture in the world! Where do we draw the line between common sense for a healthy economy and reaching for the stars at the expense of every family’s ability to provide for itself and to restore self-respect? “We will bankrupt ourselves in the vain search for absolute security,” Dwight D. Eisenhower once said. The “fiscal cliff” has been avoided and many are breathing a sigh of relief. I am so pleased that Kentucky Agri-Women members are helping plan the schedule. We’ll be on their turf and I know their input will make this meeting so much fun. Remember when this meeting used to be work, work, work? Now, it is work, fun, work! I am looking forward to seeing a little bit of Louisville, aren’t you?

We received a lifetime AAW membership on line from Dana Bucur, of Bucuresti Romania! Welcome, Dana, we look forward to meeting you!

As the New Year begins with great expectations, other things must come to an end. We have received the sad news of the deaths of three of our valued members: Pat Cohill, MD/MI; Pat Leimbach, OH; and Pachy Burns, MT. I am thankful for their lives and the dedication each of them has shown toward AAW and agriculture and we extend our sincere sympathies to the families.

I leave you to ponder today’s relevancy of the words of Charles Dickens, from A Tale of Two Cities written many years ago. “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

Don’t despair, have faith that what you do will make a difference, even if it is a difference you may never yourself see.
Whalen is new StART chair
Deb Whalen, Minnesota Agri-Women, has graciously agreed to assume the position of AAW StART chair for 2013. Anna Morrison has stepped down as StART chair, but will continue as Timber Chair.

Deb has a lifetime of experience in agriculture. She was raised on a dairy and grains farm and married a farmer. Besides her active roles in AAW, Deb currently works as Chief Deputy Auditor for Red Lake County, keeps books for the farm and serves on the “Harvest of Knowledge” program committee. The Whalen family has been awarded numerous awards in agriculture and Deb is involved in several other civic committees and offices. “Welcome, Deb!” and “Thank You, Anna for a job well done.”

Syngenta applications available on AAW’s website
The applications are available on the website for the 2013 Syngenta Leadership at its Best (LAIB) Conference at the O’Henry Hotel in Greensboro, NC, April 15th through 18th. Many of you have requested information for this highly-desired opportunity for AAW members only. Make sure your membership is current and submit your application to me as soon as you can. This seminar fills up fast and the space is limited.

If you have already attended, recommend this leadership opportunity to another member who you think will benefit. The application requires the approval of your affiliate president or executive officer. If you do not have web access, please contact Karen Yost and she will mail one to you.

Photos needed for TV show
Have any of you tuned into AAW’s TV show on RFDTV? This year we are excited to re-vamp the show with a new format, additional network (FamilyNet) and are looking for some help from our members!

Please send in high-resolution digital photos of your farm, ranch, grandkids, animals, or any other interesting agriculture topic.

This is not a photo contest, as we will use as many as we can, but only four submissions per member please. Just send us a short description of your subject with your name, state, and affiliate.

Please remit to Tiffany Marx at cabr1713@gmail.com. Photos will become artistic property of AAW and will not be returned.

AAW Mid-Year Meeting
April 4-7, 2013, Hilton Garden Inn, Louisville, KY

Registration

| Name ________________________________________________________ |
| Affiliate __________________________________________ |
| Address __________________________________________ |
| City _____________________State ___________  Zip______ |
| Phone ________________________Fax_________________ |
| Email ____________________________________________ |
| Date of  Arrival______________________________________ |
| Roommate needed? ____________________ |

Fees

- Full Registration (breakfast, breaks, & lunch on Friday and Saturday) .... $175
- Full Non-Member Registration..........................................................$200
- Partial Registration (Friday or Saturday only)............................ $100
- Collegiate Full Registration............................................................ $100
- Partial Collegiate Registration (Friday or Saturday only)............ $75

Total $ _______

To Register

- Mail completed registration and payment to:
  Peggy Clark, Treasurer
  2274 E. Lytle Five Pts. Rd
  Dayton, OH 45458
  Phone: 937-885-5965
  Fax: 937-885-5942

- Email treasurer@americanagriwomen.org
- Register online at www.americanagriwomen.org

Hotel Information

We will be meeting at Hilton Garden Inn, 2735 Crittenden Drive, Louisville, KY 40209. Room Rates: $109 for up to quadruple room occupancy. Call 502-637-2424 or 877-STAY-HGI and ask for AAWGROUP, or go online: www.louisvilleairport.stayhgi.com. Please make your hotel reservations as soon as possible so we know if we will need to request a larger room block. Final reservation deadline is March 5.

Silent Auction Information

Each year, at Mid-Year, AAW has a silent auction to benefit the AAW Resource Center’s education projects. Individuals and affiliates alike are encouraged to bring an item to include in the auction. Keep in mind that winners will have to carry or ship their items home, so don’t make the item too big or bulky. Thank you!

The Mid-Year agenda is coming soon to AAW’s website at americanagriwomen.org. You can also register online.
American Agri-Women Leadership Academy

American Agri-Women presents its first annual Leadership Academy, a free webinar series designed to supplement and sustain our live leadership development events.

**CLASS 1 | FEBRUARY 8**

**START WITH A DREAM, END WITH A GOAL: SETTING AND ACHIEVING GOALS**

As Dave Ramsey says, “Goals are dreams with work clothes on.” Great leaders have a strong vision for themselves and their organization(s). Nothing happens, no forward steps are taken until a goal is established. Learn the basics of turning your dreams into goals and then putting them to work.

**CLASS 2 | APRIL 12**

**MEANINGFUL MENTORING: A WIN-WIN FOR WOMEN**

As Madeleine Albright stated, “There is a special place in hell for women who don’t help other women.” Many women credit a mentor for helping them achieve their successes. Learn how to engage into a mentoring relationship and ensure that the relationship is win-win for all parties.

**CLASS 3 | JUNE 7**

**ARE YOU SOCIAL? USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO INFLUENCE YOUR KEY STAKEHOLDERS**

Do you Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat, Tumblr, or blog? Social media is here to stay and it is a powerful tool to help you share your personal or business brand. In this webinar, learn how to capitalize on social media to connect with others to share your story.

**CLASS 4 | AUGUST 9**

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION: BUILD BRIDGES, DON’T BURN THEM**

In the agricultural industry, we face conflict everyday – from family members, business partners, colleagues, consumers, and activists. How one handles conflict can be a true test of their character. A leader must be able to influence others even in a time of conflict. Learn tips to constructively manage conflict.

**CLASS 5 | OCTOBER 11**

**WOMEN AS CONSUMERS: GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CORE CONSUMER**

Women make or influence 85% of the purchasing decisions in the United States. We all know men and women are different, but what role does one’s sex play in their purchasing decisions? You may be surprised. Learn about these gender differences and how you can use them to connect with the most powerful consumer in the world: women.

**CLASS 6 | DECEMBER 13**

**WORK-LIFE BALANCE? HOW TO MAKE YOUR HOME AND WORK LIFE PLAY NICE**

Is there such thing as work-life balance? Whether you are involved with a production operation, work off the farm/ranch, or both – learn how to find the right balance between your home and work lives so you can effectively contribute to both.

Registration information available at [http://www.americanagriwomen.org/leadership-development-2](http://www.americanagriwomen.org/leadership-development-2)
Town Hall Notes from the convention

By Ruth Jensen

The American Agri-Women 2012 Annual Convention offered members and guests great opportunities for issue updates, workshops, excellent tours and one of the favorite forums the “Town Hall” gathering.

I always enjoy this feature of AAW conventions because it affords participants a platform in which to share an issue from their affiliate state or commodity affiliate, as well as comment on whatever subject you want to discuss. Each person gets three minutes to tell her story.

It was my pleasure to thank Colorado Agri-Women for hosting the convention. It gave me the opportunity to share my connection to Colorado agriculture, as it was December of 1980 when I moved to Golden, Colorado, right after Ronald Reagan won his Presidential seat.

Holly Coors helped me start the Jefferson County Young Republicans. I served as the legislative assistant to House Agriculture, Natural Resources and Water Committee Chair, Walter Younglund of New Raymer. He was a great mentor to me, sent me on many agricultural learning tours around the state and sent me out to speak on his behalf on many occasions.

I also worked on the congressional race for Jack Swigert who was a graduate of the Colorado School of Mines. Jack often spoke of the connection between the United States and the Middle East, including Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. The connection was not oil. It was and still is our reliance on strategic minerals like cadmium, molybdenum, manganese, beryllium, and many more. These strategic minerals are needed for heating mechanisms such astoasters, microwave, cell phones, TVs, airplanes and cars. We might as well include everything mechanical we take for granted. My experiences in Colorado helped propel me in my journey as an independent international agribusiness consultant.

About the recent elections...

It is important to move forward now that the election is over. Get out and meet newly elected representatives at the local, state and federal levels. It’s all about relationships! When elected officials are in the district, stop by their office or make an appointment and take the opportunity to educate them. Tell them your story and offer yourself up to serve on a board or commission. After all, that is where the regulatory process starts.

About the media... Take the time to encourage members to educate the media and the public about American agriculture. Learn from them what it is that they want to report on with regard to local agriculture. How do they like to receive press releases? Set up a meet and greet with your local media. Invite local members from the media to affiliate/chapter meetings or hold a panel discussion with a representative of TV, radio, and newspapers. Consider inviting them for a tour.

Access the AAW website for updates from committees and remember what the organization is all about. Our fundamental mission is to educate each other, educate the consumer and educate the policy makers. Each year, a great way to start is by attending the AAW Town Hall!

AAW’s new book club is underway

This year AAW started a book club and invite you to join. We will have a Facebook chat every three months, and discuss a pre-chosen book that we’ve read. 

Our inaugural book was “The Try” by Jim Owens, a 2012 convention speaker. There was a Facebook chat discussing the book on January 11th, with 34 participating. Our next book will be Our Daily Bread: The Essential Norman Borlaug by Noel Vietmeyer and available at Amazon, as a hardcover or free right now in the Kindle version. Check our web site for more information.
Convention Photos

Colorado Agri-Women’s Lori Helzer and Danell Kalcevic greeted conventioneers in red.

CAW members Becky Ravenkamp, Phyllis Mellot, and Dianne Clark make sure we get the message about their great state.

Heather Baker, MT; Heather Hampton+ Knodle, IL; Katie Yost, MT; and Kellie Kittelmann, MT, were having way too much fun as they discussed the workshop they attended.


Linda Swiercinsky receives deserving recognition for her work on the convention.

Sandy Harrington and Eleanor Zimmerlein look at Mary Meinhart’s great pictures of the convention.
Miss America 2011 Teresa Scanlan, who was the keynote speaker on Saturday morning, visits with past president Alice Dettwyler’s husband, Sam.

Three influential AAW members pass away

Pat Leimbach, known for her hilarious sense of humor as an entertainer and writer, died January 5 following a brief illness. She was 85.

From 1965-2003 Pat penned “The Country Wife” columns describing life on an Ohio family farm. She published three books of her columns — “A Thread of Blue Denim,” “All My Meadows” and “A Harvest of Bittersweet” — and was invited to speak before groups in 48 states and five Canadian provinces. She appeared on TV programs like “The Today Show” and “Larry King Live.”

Leimbach’s farm has survived five generations and still is going strong as a grain farm with 260 farmable acres.

A long-time member of Ohio Agri-Women and a charter member of AAW, Pat was awarded the LEAVEN award by American Agri-Women in 2007.

Pachy Burns was killed in a car accident in Hermiston, Oregon, January 6.

Pachy was a member of the AAW 2003 Montana convention committee and a devoted member of Montana Agri-Women until she moved her lambing operation to her ranch in Oregon. She is best known in AAW circles as the woman who wore the Stetson. Pachy was 63 years old and is survived by her husband, Horatio (Rasch) Burns of Big Timber, MT, two daughters, and several grandchildren.

Pachy’s passion for agriculture was exhibited in the unique experience she offered to urban women to come to her ranch to help during the lambing season, “Jam to Lamb” and later during shearing, “Gear to Shear.” She reached out to these women and they gained new appreciation for the hard work and devotion involved in agriculture.

Pat Cohill, one of the founders of Women for the Survival of Agriculture in Michigan (WSAM) and AAW, died on January 2nd.

She was most active while living in Michigan, and was one of the “Arrowhead 7 plus 1” who wrote AAW’s Call to Power. After her husband's death in an automobile accident in which she was severely injured, she returned to Hancock, MD.

Pat was active in United Press Women, writing articles about agriculture. She appeared before a congressional committee to give testimony about the family farm at one time.

She is survived by four of her five children and two grandsons and their two children.
Affiliate News

OWA’s president Marie Bowers is Agri-Business Council of Oregon’s 2012 Ag Connection of the Year winner

In December, the Agri-Business Council of Oregon announced that Oregon Women for Agriculture president Marie Bowers was their 2012 Ag Connection of the Year recipient. At just 27 years old, Bowers is the youngest person to ever receive this award.

Marie Bowers started attending legislative hearings on field burning issues with her dad when she was in the second grade. He believed she would learn more in a legislative hearing than she would in the classroom. Throughout her youth, Bowers’ mom regularly brought her to Oregon Women for Agriculture meetings.

Bowers is a fifth generation farmer, growing up on her family’s grass seed farm in Harrisburg—Bashaw Land & Seed, Inc. As a kid she always worked on the farm, enjoying field burning and driving a truck. Bowers attended Washington State University to study general agriculture, ag economics and management.

While in college she worked for the Washington State University Creamery, then after college Bowers worked for Farm Credit Services for three and a half years, but she began to miss the farm. She was passionate about production agriculture and what goes into making a farm work. At the end of 2011, Bowers left her office job to return to her family’s farm to work with her dad.

Bowers is not what you might consider an old-fashioned farm girl. When she’s not outside working, she’s online connecting rural with urban. Bowers got involved in the AgChat Foundation two years ago by participating in their weekly Twitter chat. Every Tuesday night she joins in a two-hour conversation with fellow farmers, ranchers and the general population about food and agriculture.

Her Twitter page has 1,200 followers listening to what she has to say. Last December, the AgChat Foundation approached Bowers about becoming a member of the board, opening new doors and expanding her involvement in telling the story of agriculture. “It’s easy to sit back and not do anything. But what are you going to have left if you just sit back and don’t do anything?” says Bowers, “If you’re not part of the conversation, then you’re left out of the conversation.”

In February 2011, Bowers read an article that said women weren’t involved in “big ag.” As a woman in “big ag,” she was disappointed by the article. Not one to say nothing, Bowers started a blog called Oregon Green to be an outlet for her thoughts, opinions and clarifying misconceptions about how conventional agriculture works. People were interested in what she had to say, and today she has an impressive 1,383 followers on her blog.

Being inaugurated as president of OWA was a special moment for Bowers because her great grandmother, one of the founding members, was there to support her. “They put my president pin on me and then my mom came up and surprised me and put my great grandma’s pin on me,” says Bowers.

OWA’s president Marie Bowers is Agri-Business Council of Oregon’s 2012 Ag Connection of the Year winner

Continued on next page.

NYAW member and NY City Ag Lawyer Cari Rincker receives Outstanding Early Career Award

Cari Rincker, a New York food and agriculture lawyer, who received her Bachelors in Science in Animal Science from Texas A & M University, was identified as an Outstanding Early Career Award recipient from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at that university in October.

Rincker didn’t take a normal career route. She hung her own shingle in Manhattan and made her own path. “Growing up in production agriculture, its hard not to have a passion for the people who grow our food. I wanted to pursue food and agriculture law yet reside in the city that I love,” says Rincker. “The only way for me to have an agriculture law practice in New York City was to do it on my own.”

And so she started Rincker Law, PLLC over three years ago from her apartment on the Upper East Side. Since then, Rincker Law, PLLC has grown to a national law practice concentrating in the areas of food and agriculture with an office space located on Fifth Avenue.

Rincker also obtained her Masters in Science in Ruminant Nutrition from the University of Illinois-Urbana and her Juris Doctor from Pace University School of Law in White Plains, NY.

Rincker is also a trained civil and family law mediator and a member of the New Jersey Agriculture Mediation Roster.

Rincker’s Food, Farm & Family Law Blog located at www.rinckerlaw.com/blog was recognized as a Top 100 Blawg from the American Bar Association ("ABA"). Rincker, an All-American member of the Texas A & M University’s livestock judging team, continues to judge cattle shows in New York and throughout the Northeast.

Continued on next page.
Seven ANCW members selected for Cattlemen's Board

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced 33 appointments to the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board including seven American National CattleWomen, Inc. (ANCW) members: Barbara S. Jackson, Arizona; Genevieve Lyons, Louisiana; Judith M. Reece, Nebraska; Joan Ruskamp, Nebraska; Danni K. Beer, South Dakota; Annalynn Settelmeyer, Nevada; and Laurie L. Munns, Utah.

The 103-member board is authorized by the Beef Promotion and Research Act of 1985. The Secretary selects the appointees from nominations submitted by eligible organizations representing beef, veal, and dairy producers and importers.

Tammi Didlot, ANCW President said “CattleWomen board members bring many valuable skills to the table. They’re passionate about beef and ready to roll up their sleeves and set the course for how the beef community will market our product.” Barbara Jackson, ANCW President-Elect, and CBB Board member shared her excitement for her 3-year term appointment by saying “Having a seat at this influential table, representing cattle producers from across the country is an honor. I’m looking forward to partnering with my peers to implement programs that will keep beef at the center of Americans’ plates.”

Cari Rincker, continued from previous page.

She also is the founding member and past president of New York Agri-Women, who recently held a conference in Brooklyn for women involved in agriculture in Greater New York City. Rincker also hosts “Fridays with Cari” webinars and Skype presentations for those interested in a career as an agriculture lawyer.

“People always ask me what my secret to success is. Put simply, it’s hard work – hard work that I learned growing up on my family’s beef cattle farm in rural Illinois. That work ethic stays with me in whatever I do.”

Affiliates and committees report at convention

Wisconsin Women for Agriculture sponsored and presented the “Price It Right” game at Wisconsin Farm Technology Days in July. This hands-on game compared today’s food prices to prices in 1960. That modern Americans spend less of their income on food and other necessities surprised some visitors.

Our organization was honored by a formal proclamation, presented by Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Lyon, who commended our group for our dedication to producing healthy food and communicating about our businesses to others outside agriculture.

California Women for Agriculture has been active in the opposition to California Proposition 37, the California Right to Know Genetically Engineered Food Act. While CWA supports the individual’s right to choose what they consume, this proposition creates a double standard for GM purity in organic versus non-organic foods, and exemptions that don’t make sense. CWA supports the development and incorporation of biotechnological tools into agricultural research and production. We also believe it is unnecessary, confusing and will be costly to the consumer to label for GM products or processes. If this had passed in California, we would expect similar initiatives to be issued in other states.

Oregon Women in Timber’s “Talk About Trees” forest education program reached 139,029 participants this last year, bringing our total contacts since its inception in 1991 to 2.4 Million! Program numbers are predicted to rise slightly in the 2012-2013 school year.

New York Agri-Women continues to grow as a promising organization throughout the state. Currently we have 60 paid members and 10 business sponsors. We have launched a membership drive using social media to pursue new members. New York Agri-Women members maintain a website, www.newyorkagriwomen.com in addition to a blog www.newyorkagriwomen.com/blog.

New York Agri-Women strives to utilize social media outlets to build a strong social media presence in the agricultural community using a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/newyorkagriwomen) and Twitter account (http://twitter.com/NYAgriWomen). Constant contact allows us to maintain email contacts by organizing paid New York Agri-Women members in addition to industry contacts.

Texas Agri-Women has also moved into the electronic age by developing a web page and having a Facebook page. By having a web page we hope to create interest in TAW and bring in new membership. The Facebook page hopefully will do the same. Now if only we can remember to post events . . .

Michigan Agri-Women has been working on ideas and locations for hosting of the 2014 American Agri-Women National Convention. We are looking at different ways to increase membership. Membership brochures were available at the 2012 Great Lakes Fruit and Vegetable Expo in Grand Rapids in December.

CWA member Ellen Way appointed to water board

Ellen Way, 45, of La Quinta, California, has been appointed to the Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board, where she has served since 2004.

Way has been owner of Sanders Way Ranch and a partner at Prime Time Produce since 1990. She was an agricultural specialist for Assembly member James Battin from 1996 to 2000. Way was marketing director at the California Apple Commission from 1995 to 1996 and merchandising representative/food service manager at Sun World International from 1990 to 1993.

Ellen is a graduate of the California Agriculture Leadership Program and a member and former president of California Women for Agriculture.
News About Agriculture

Sugar is soooo sweet but soooo controversial
By Karolyn Zurn, Grains/Sugar Chair

Recently in the presidential debates there have been some statements that are not representing the American sugar growers rightfully.

Comments about big sugar subsidies and how these subsidies would be examined and done away with are ridiculous.

First of all the sugar program is not classified as a subsidy. Farmers do not receive any money at all.

The program is just that—a very successful planned program that protects sugar from being exploited. Several years back the main candy companies of the U.S.A. wanted the program to go away, thinking the price of sugar was too high and their bottom line was hurting. Lawmakers finally gave in and did just that—they cut the sugar program. Within a year candy companies asked for the sugar program back that protected the price and flood of foreign sugars. Why??? Because there was a sugar shortage worldwide that year and the price went higher than ever. Also the quality of the foreign sugar was just not there. The candy companies learned a big lesson and so should we.

Debates on the Farm Bill in June and throughout the summer always had an undercurrent of strong feelings toward the sugar program both for it and against. As the Farm Bill failed to come to a vote last year, one of the strong factors was a big push to rid the U.S. of a perfectly good sugar program. This program insures the U.S. of the best quality sugar in the world and helps regulate cost to end-users.

In an article for the American Sugarbeet Association, Dale Murden stated, “A lot of people think that it is oil and energy that drives the economy, but it is candy, it is chocolate that’s doing well in this economy.”

Candy is recession-proof on Wall Street, increasing production during a downturn, adding jobs and making a lot of money for shareholders.

Lobbyists for the confectionery people want to flood our markets with foreign sugar, wanting to bring down the price, but guess what? Out of every $20 box of chocolates, 30¢ is sugar—so what do you think? We need to maintain our sugar policy that is operated at no cost to the taxpayer and that has been so successful for years.

Companies are trying a new twist and are angling to have foreign governments underwrite their proposed windfall. By allowing subsidized foreign sugar to cascade into the U.S. market in unlimited quantities, prices would drop and candy company retail profit margins would climb, but the price of chocolates would not come down; the candy companies’ margin would just increase, and it is already 35 percent.

Actually, many people in agriculture do not understand the sugar program, but we really need to stand together when it comes to agriculture programs. If you don’t understand a program, talk to industry people before passing judgment.

LFTB: Too important to disappear

From an article by John Maday, in Drovers CattleNetwork, 7/18/12

Can lean, finely textured beef (LFTB), or as the media dubbed it, “Pink Slime”] make a comeback after this spring’s public relations nightmare? Analysts with Rabobank International believe it can, but it will take time and a concerted effort by industry to build consumer trust.

Rabobank’s Food and Agribusiness Research and Advisory group released a report titled “LFTB: Beef’s latest battleground for survival,” which details the role of LFTB in the beef production chain and how its decline impacts markets. The group believes that as U.S. beef production and supplies continue to decline, the market cannot tolerate loss of the two percent of production LFTB represents, which is equivalent to one million head of cattle.

Don Close, vice president of the group’s animal protein division, says the company decided to take a second, objective look at LFTB after allowing time for the emotional public debate to subside. Even among industry proponents, he says, there is an overwhelming bias that the product is a lost cause, but the Rabobank analysis approaches the issue from a different perspective and suggests otherwise . . .

Rabobank analysts believe market forces will play a role as declining supplies drive beef prices higher, but they also say the industry needs to recreate the product. The effort should include upgrading the product, renaming it, and supporting it with promotions and consumer education. The ingredient will need to be clearly included on product labels for transparency.

With a concerted effort, the Rabobank analysts believe the product could return to the food chain within two to three years.

For the future, the report’s authors encourage the industry to learn from the LFTB experience, identify vulnerabilities and prepare responses for negative publicity. In particular, industry groups and stakeholders must learn to monitor and engage in social media, which played such a key role in the viral spread of negative messages surrounding LFTB.

Although the LFTB controversy seemed to come out of nowhere, Close says there were earlier hints it could become an issue, including the “Food Inc.” movie in 2008 and a New York Times article in 2009.
A reality check for organic food dreamers
Modern farming methods offer best hope to feed the world’s billions

*From an opinion piece by John R. Block in the Wall Street Journal, 12/23/12*

I grew up on a farm in Knox County, Ill., and I still farm the family land. We grow corn, soybeans and wheat, and we raise hogs. A generation ago, we lost yield every year to corn borers, root worms and other pests. Today, with advanced technology and genetic engineering, our family farm is better protected and so are its products. We use fewer chemicals and produce better-quality crops.

Yet instead of celebrating that progress—especially with the recent debate around the labeling of “genetically modified” foods—some Americans are asking, in effect, why can’t we just go back to the way we farmed in the 19th century? Why can’t we eat foods—some Americans are asking, in the labeling of “genetically modified” produce better-quality crops.

Well, there’s a reason for that. Several, actually:

- **Food safety.** The American food supply has never been as safe as it is today. During the industrial revolution, as manufacturers started to process and package food, poor hygiene and dirty manufacturing conditions (not to mention questionable ingredients) resulted in unhealthy products. Since then, America’s farmers and ranchers have led the way in building a sophisticated food safety infrastructure to improve the health of their animals and deliver fresh, clean produce.

- **Without modern sanitation and industry testing,** we would see a lot more illness. As for genetically modified foods, despite all the hysteria, there has never been a single case where a GM food caused an illness or contributed to a contaminated product.

- **Food choices.** In this economy, as families grapple with utility bills, high college tuition costs and meager 401(k) savings, the ability to select from a variety of affordable, healthy choices in the grocery store aisle can offer some relief. Not long ago, what we ate was entirely dependent on the farmer’s skill, the weather and other unpredictable variables. Preindustrial yields were low and stagnant before the introduction of machines, fertilizers, plant and animal breeding, pesticides and genetic engineering.

- **Stewardship.** While early farmers didn’t really think in terms of environmental stewardship, since the 1960s farmers have taken it seriously. New technologies allow American farmers to do more to protect the land’s natural resources. Water conservation technologies have been especially invaluable during this year’s severe drought, thanks in large part to lessons learned during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s.

Today’s farmers also use new practices to improve the sustainability of the land and limit the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers. And the goal of much of the research into genetically engineered crops is higher yield with less water and chemical use. Alternative energy is also a growing trend, with some farmers reusing manure from livestock and turning it into biodiesel that can power farm equipment. Others are installing solar panels and wind turbines to produce power for their farm or community.

- **Sustainability.** The large scale, sophisticated farming of today is simply better equipped to produce the abundance of food needed to sustain the world’s growing population. America’s farmers grow five times as much corn as they did in the 1930s—on 20% less land. The yield per acre has increased sixfold in the past 70 years, to 154 bushels today from just 24 in 1931.

Still, America’s farmers and ranchers will need to produce about 75% more food per acre by 2020 in order to help feed the more than eight billion people the United Nations expects by 2030. To meet that goal, farmers and ranchers will use the latest and most effective technologies to produce more with less. I support organic and conventional farming. But organic farming cannot produce the amount of food that is demanded in today’s world.

Indulging in a romanticized image of the farming industry stands in the way of progress. Do we want a smart, sophisticated approach to food supply that we can depend on for safety, healthy choices, environmental stewardship and long-term sustainability? Or do we want to return to food shortages, higher prices and the days of two horses pulling a corn planter?

Mr. Block, secretary of the USDA from 1981 to 1985, is a senior policy adviser at OFW Law in Washington, D.C.

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**Judge uses common sense in Clean Water Act decision**

*By Warren Formo, Executive Director, Minnesota Agricultural Water Resource Center*

A U.S. District Court judge threw out a suit on Dec. 20, by attorneys representing the Waterkeeper Alliance against a Maryland family and Perdue Farms, saying that the environmental group led by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. failed to prove its allegations that runoff from the farm violated the Clean Water Act.

The decision by Senior Judge William M. Nickerson will be regarded as a setback for environmental groups who hoped to hold poultry integrators such as Perdue liable for pollution from farms where their poultry is grown under production contracts and as a major victory for the poultry industry, which helped finance the defense of the Berlin, MD, couple’s farm.

Waterkeeper sued contract chicken growers Alan and Kristin Hudson of Berlin, and Perdue in March 2010, claiming that chicken manure seeped from the farm into local waterways that ultimately flowed into the Chesapeake Bay.

“The plaintiff has failed to meet its burden of establishing that there was a discharge of pollution from the poultry operation on the Hudson farm,” Nickerson said in a 50-page opinion. He also found “insufficient evidence to impose CWA liability on Perdue.” . . . He added that the evidence suggested that because Perdue had educated its growers about management practices to limit pollution, the Maryland-based company “should be commended, not condemned. Perdue appears to have tried to take the lead in addressing some of the very issues about which the plaintiff is concerned,” Nickerson wrote.

“It appears to the court . . . that Waterkeeper has a goal of using the CWA to force integrators, like Perdue, to seriously alter, if not abandon, their operations on the Eastern Shore,” he said. “They have continuously changed their story to find some reason to vitilify a hardworking farm family just because they raise chickens. The best they could come up with is that dust from the poultry house fans and the small amount of litter from foot traffic in and out of the poultry house constitute a violation of the Clean Water Act.”
Presenting our 2013 officers, initiated at the AAW convention in Denver

Left to right is Past President Chris Wilson, Kansas Agri-Women; Secretary Lisa Condon, Wisconsin Women for Agriculture; Vice President of Education Kris Zilliox, Minnesota Agri-Women; First Vice President Sue McCrum, Maine Agri-Women; President Karen Yost, Montana Agri-Women; and Vice President of Communications Abby Amick, Kansas Agri-Women. Not pictured is Treasurer Peggy Clark, Ohio Agri-Women.