

News Nuggets

A collection of cattle industry conversations.

Commentary by Kindra Gordon, field editor

I've attended the annual Cattle Industry Convention for two decades now. In 1998, when I reported on my first convention as an associate editor at *BEEF* magazine, *alliance* was the industry buzzword, and beef demand was on the cusp of climbing out of its two-decade decline.

After recently returning from the

2018 convention in Phoenix, Ariz. as a field editor for the *Angus Journal*, I reviewed my notes to find that consumer demand and industry alliances are still getting buzz. Of course, several new topics have also come on the scene — e-commerce groceries and mail-order meal kits, sustainability parameters and genetic testing to name a few.

Many of these industry topics will be the focus of more in-depth articles I write in the near future, but there are always a few “news nuggets” from my notes and conversations that, while insightful, don't merit an entire article. Following is a compilation of some of the side comments I found interesting. You may as well.

D.C. view

NCBA's Washington, D.C., staff seemed optimistic over the current administration — presidential tweets and all. Colin Woodall, NCBA's senior vice president of government affairs, shared that one Georgetown University professor says Trump's tweets make him the most connected to the public

Sustainability

Nicole Johnson Hoffman, formerly with Cargill and now with Chicago-based OSI Group, the largest supplier of protein to McDonald's, was announced as president of the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB) earlier this year.

Johnson Hoffman, who grew up on a farm in Minnesota, addressed the American National CattleWomen (ANCW). When questioned about sustainability, she shared: “We all have trepidation about sustainability work and the impact on farmers. People believe all kinds of crazy stuff. I'm there (on

Documentaries to catch

In recent weeks, I've also heard mention of *Food Evolution*, a film (available via Amazon) offering a robust look at GMO technology and food, while the Netflix series *Rotten* examines the behind-the-scenes business dealings of the food industry. As we continue food conversations with consumers, it may be beneficial to be informed about the messages these films convey.

GRSB) to make sure the interests of farmers — like my grandpa and great-grandpa — are taken care of in this process.”

Johnson Hoffman noted that when Europe was initially talking about sustainability more than a decade ago, the United States didn't show up. That was a mistake, she says, “because they (Europe) made their decisions without our input.”

That's why she says being a part of the USRSB is so important today. She acknowledged that most GRSB stakeholders are North American

since Franklin Roosevelt used radio broadcasts — dubbed fireside chats — to reach voters. Woodall also expressed that the current EPA administrator, Scott Pruitt, and his staff have been good to work with.

“That EPA has asked for our view on issues has been refreshing,” said Woodall.

companies who believe in America's agricultural production system.

However, she added: “For sure there are naysayers, but if they weren't there, then no one would listen [to the process]. We (American agriculture) have got to show up and be part of this discussion.”

In a different discussion related to sustainability, McDonald's was mentioned by two people I visited with. Both individuals indicated they've heard about possible support by the burger chain in the form of financial resources toward grazing lands/stewardship programs in the future.

PRF insurance

Speaking of sustainability and rangelands, I had a great conversation with the folks from *InsureMyForage.com* in the trade show.

This organization offers pasture, rangeland, forage (PRF) insurance — a relatively new program for much of the country, and has educational videos explaining the program on

their website. They also have unique software that helps producers see how the insurance coverage works and pays claims. Learn more at *InsureMyForage.com*.

Greek words

“Economy and ecology originated from the same greek word — ecos (*oikos* in Greek),” rural advocate Bruce Vincent shared at the Emerging Beef Leaders luncheon. He

added, “If you beat up one, the other pays the price.”

Vincent also recommended the book titled *1491* by Charles C. Mann. Mann dispels the myth of a pristine wilderness existing

before the arrival of Christopher Columbus, and instead shows how Native Americans were using and engineering the land and plants around them to survive.

Continue to share

A conversation I overheard in the airport on the way home made me realize the cattle industry must continue to share what we do with the everyday public. Someone who had attended the NCBA Trade Show was boarding the plane with a bright orange cattle-sorting flag. These and an array of other freebies are considered trade show gold by attendees. Nevertheless, this individual was packing their flag home as a carry-on.

Another traveler — obviously not one who had attended the convention — saw the flag and immediately asked someone standing next to him with a cowboy hat if that was a “hot shot.” While I snickered, the cowboy did a great job of explaining that the flag is simply a tool used to sort cattle.

Still, the concerned traveler replied by asking, “So it’s not a hot shot?”

That snippet of conversation was a reminder that most consumers have only seen or heard about bad news as it relates to our industry. The media has geared them to think the worst about cattle producers. So, we must all take the opportunities to tell our stories and answer their questions. Many ag advocates underscore that we should be glad when consumers are willing to ask questions because it means they are interested — and creates an opportunity to share our side of the story.

For those online, one ag advocacy effort gaining momentum is the

Cattletales community. By using #cattletales in tweets and posts, you allow others to easily find, follow and

share your ag-related stories. 

Editor’s Note: Kindra Gordon is a freelancer and cattlegirl from Whitewood, S.D.

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