

Farming foundation of future

In this day and age, it is easy to lose focus on what is important, and we often forget about the many blessings that we've been given. Agriculture is one such example. It has been said that "If you eat or wear clothes, then you are involved in agriculture"; I believe this to be true. Sadly, the majority of people in the U.S. do not grasp the significance of such a statement.

Our survival, health, and comfort depend first and foremost on agriculture and the goods that are produced by the American farmer. The majority of children today rarely consider or even know that the hamburger they are eating and the milk they are drinking are animal products or that their French fries were grown underground. It is unlikely that the cotton farmer comes to mind when clothes are purchased at a department store. This trend will only continue as more and more people move from rural communities to larger cities and as the distance from farming gets greater.

Agriculture is the eco-



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economic mainstay of New Mexico. Farmers and ranchers provide nearly \$3 billion annually to the state of New Mexico's economy. Each year 17,500 farms across the state yield the many different products that satisfy our hunger and keep us warm. Farmers deserve a recognition and appreciation that is second to none. Regrettably, not everyone shares this appreciation.

Some have even proposed that we drop the term "agriculture" from the name of our college — College of Agriculture and Home Economics. I feel this would be a tragic error, especially for a university that is part of the land-grant system that was established by Congress in 1862 (Morrill Act) to provide

funding for institutions of higher learning in "agriculture and the mechanic arts." Our nation's leaders at the time understood the importance of agriculture to our economy and ultimate survival.

As a result of the benefits that the land-grant system provided through agricultural education, the U.S. went on to become a world power in the 20th century. Unfortunately, many land-grant colleges are starting to put agriculture and its associated research efforts on the back burner.

It is the goal of the New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service to continue to educate farmers on the latest advances in agricultural science and also the general public on the importance of this industry to their lives. The faculty and staff at the NMSU Agricultural Science Center at Clovis are committed to this effort, and we will strive to make this area of New Mexico a viable cropping and livestock region for future generations.

In a time when consumers are preoccupied with gas

prices and toys made in China, perhaps the most imminent danger is overlooked and forgotten. We must maintain an awareness of agricultural importance and continue to seek sustainable farming practices in our homeland. The repercussions associated with dependence on foreign countries for food are much greater than those associated with oil.

We cannot neglect our responsibility to feed ourselves and to educate our children on the sources of food and clothing supplies they so often take for granted. Farming is not a thing of the past, but is the foundation for our future. The next time you meet a farmer, thank him for what he has done for you.

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