

Farmers are the reason Americans tend to be overweight

This article is not another story about lagoons breaking, farm chemicals in the drinking water, or nutrient runoff from fields. So it will not be extremely exciting, or even lead to public outcry. But still it needs to be said.

Chances are you know someone overweight. It is a fairly well known fact that Americans are more obese now than in the past. And while lifestyles may be partly to fault, as a livestock extension agent, I know if an animal does not get enough to eat he cannot get fat. Farmers are the blame for your wife, husband, child, preacher, doctor, or whoever you know for being too fat. American farmers are

Landowner protection act is good for everyone

Investigating the unknown is one of the pleasures of riding a bicycle, taking a hike or driving a car. There was a time when Americans were much more free to roam "off the beaten path" - though the places they roamed were often on private property.

Landowners, many of which were farmers and ranchers, didn't mind if the occasional sightseer crossed their property; as long as they didn't upset the livestock or hurt themselves.

Today the wayfaring stranger is more likely to be met by gates, fences and "no trespassing" signs on his travels. The experience can be rather disappointing.

Would you believe that many property owners feel just as disappointed about having to keep people out? Often the reason for posting these signs is fear of litigation. Should someone cross private property and have an accident, they could file a lawsuit against the landowner. If the property owner is hauled into court, having posted signs helps show he tried to prevent accidents from occurring.

To help remedy this situation the North Carolina House of Representatives has passed the Landowner Protection Act which limits the liability of landowners who agree to let the public use their property. This bill goes toe-to-toe against both the blatant trespasser and the "welcome guest" who have sued landowners after coming to harm by their own carelessness.

Such legislation is a welcome addition to other efforts at both the state and federal levels to reform the American legal system - and bring common sense, common courtesy and personal responsibility back to public affairs.

Farm Bureau supports this attempt to reestablish a sense of trust between American travelers, sightseers and property owners. Unfortunately, the State Academy of Trail Lawyers views the bill with alarm and calls such legislation dangerous.

The true danger lies in continued support of a system of justice which, having lost sense of right-and wrong, rewards irresponsibility and builds a wall of fear between Americans.

May the North Carolina Senate move swiftly to approve this worthy legislation and remove the bonds which create fear of litigation among landowners, and prevent innocent travelers from discovering the great outdoors.



Extension Notes
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too good at their jobs. They produce food. In fact, farmers produce so much high quality food that we tend to take it for granted, and even though we love to eat, as a nation we tend to forget that 98 percent of us are consumers who rely on

just 2 percent to fill our grocery carts and stomachs.

Farmers are environmentalists. Their business is their land. Their success will depend on how well they nurture this land. This makes farmers good stewards for the environment, and ensures productive crop lands for generations to come. Most farmers I know feel close to nature, and enjoy the wildlife that calls their farms home. Something must be going right on our area farms if you consider the

abundance of wildlife present compared to 30 years ago. Deer are everywhere, and geese, bear, ground hogs, foxes, coyotes and beavers have all made their presence know. The farmland environment must be healthy to promote these species survival and reproduction rates. The farmers have had to share their trees and crops with the new guests although at times reluctantly.

Farmers are regulated. A pesticide license is already required, and in the future

livestock and poultry producers with lagoons will have to attend a mandatory course. Both require periodic recertification. Farmers with over 250 head of hogs will have to have a written waste management plan by the end of 1997. Pesticide misapplication and lagoons are regularly inspected. The public needs to know farmers are being scrutinized unlike any other time in history. Most farmers care and want to do the right thing. All farmers have to comply to


avoid costly fines and litigation. There is a general consensus that farming will become even more regulated in the future.

Our food supply is safe and wholesome. Our country is battling obesity, and wildlife species nonexistent to our area are now thriving on our farmland. The farmers and their support agencies like the Cooperative Extension Service must be doing something right!


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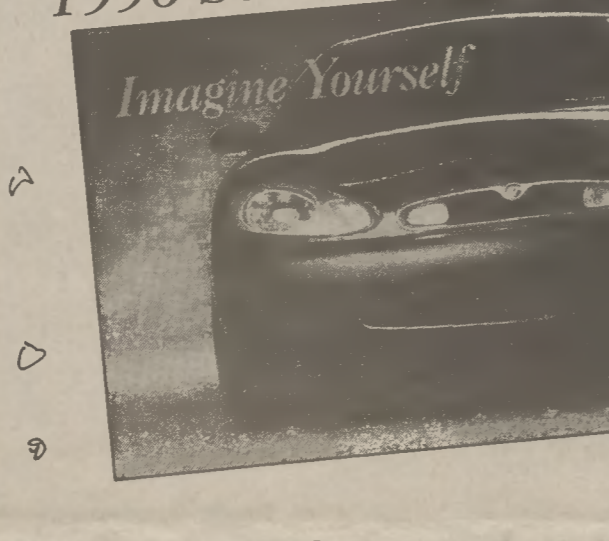
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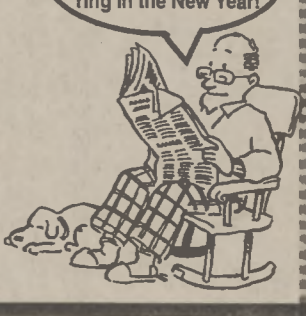
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Martha, it's time to break out the beer and ring in the New Year!



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