

Winter Newsletter 2012

Greetings from the farm,

“Did you hear that the Christmas Nativity scene in Washington D.C. was cancelled this year?” my friend asked. I replied, “Political Correctness I bet.” His response, “No they couldn’t find 3 wise men and they’re still looking for a virgin but as a positive aside, the place is flush with asses.” This little diddy was the first thing that popped into my mind as I read the following tag line in my local paper’s farm section the other morning. It read in bold print, “Beef industry threatened by ethanol industry’s increased use of corn.” Talk about dumb and dumber. The glaring lack of Washington Wisdom here is that both these industries are heavily subsidized by taxpayer (that’s us’s) money.

Yes, we’re paying people to feed corn to a ruminant animal perfectly designed for grass at the expense of our health, the animal’s well-being, and the environment’s sustainability.

And yes, we’re paying people to convert corn into ethanol at a net energy saving of zero according to many credible studies. That’s right, zero. Apparently, it requires so much fossil fuel energy to grow corn, haul corn, dry corn, grind, ferment, distil, blend, etc, etc that by the time you get a gallon of ethanol in your tank, you could have driven just as far on the fossil fuel used to make it.

I submit to you that neither of these ridiculous agribusiness groups should be using corn. Neither would of course, should those corn subsidies be eliminated. Without those, feedlots and ethanol distilleries would be harder to find than that D.C. virgin.

A few good words

The real problem is that word Agribusiness. Don’t you just love it? Take agri “culture” and remove the love of the land, the fidelity to it and the burning desire to leave it better than you found it, in short the “culture” and replace it with the primary purpose of making a profit and all the other sociopathic traits that define “business.”

In my mind, I see a kindly country doctor in a horse drawn buggy making a house call to an idyllic rolling green small farm. “Evening soil, you look a little peaked, nothing a good dose of compost won’t fix though and I’m gonna prescribe an old fashioned manure and cover crop poultice as well. Why, you’ll be good as new by spring, ready to grow.” That’s agriculture.

Next scene; At the dimly lit corner of Cargill and Monsanto Avenues, there stands a shadowy figure. He’s wearing baggy pants hanging down low, a cap turned around backwards with a Farm Credit logo. He sports a jacket with the green and yellow colors of his gang, the Jon Deeres. One of his sleeves is rolled up exposing a tattoo on his inner forearm which says, “I heart subsidies.” “Whassup Dirt. You looking to score? I’ve got some Ammonium Nitrate powder or you can shoot up with the liquid nitrogen form and really soar. If you get too high, not to worry, we’ll Round you back Up with some glyphosate, aminopyralid, 2-4-D or I can hook you up with some of those new designer GMO seeds that are out of this world.” That’s agribusiness.

Arguing over corn, really? It's like watching two drunks leaving a bar fighting over the car keys for the drive home. If the consequences weren't so predictably tragic, it'd be funny. Did someone mention asses?

“We thought, because we had power, we had wisdom.”

-Stephen Vincent Benet

Our Marketing Plan

We just completed our 5th year at the Saturday Market in Charleston, and we've thoroughly enjoyed it. But we've decided to market our beef differently in the future so we won't be at the market next year. In the past we've sold beef by the cut and if a cow was all ribeyes, it would be such an easy business. However, to remain grassfarmers, we need to sell the whole cow in a timely manner and with that in mind, we'll be selling our beef from now on in 1/2s and wholes. This allows us to offer it at a lower price while maintaining a margin that keeps us in agriculture and not agribusiness. It will work something like this: A whole beef will be between 300-350 lbs of packaged meat and will sell for \$6/lb. A side (half) of beef will be 150-175 lbs of packaged meat and will sell for \$6.50/lb. We won't know the exact weight until they go to the processor. We dry age the meat 21 days after which you'll be able to pick it up in Kingstree. You'll have a say in how you want it cut but generally you'll get in a whole cow approximately 24 ribeyes, 24 NY Strips, 20 Sirloins, 12 filets, 20 roasts, 6 lbs liver, 20 lbs marrow bones, 20 lbs of ribs, 30 lbs of misc (oxtail, heart, tongue, cheeks, brisket) and 100-150 lbs of hamburger. For a little extra, you can have some of the hamburger turned into brats, breakfast sausage, or hot dogs. A large chest freezer will accommodate a whole cow and a medium sized freezer does nicely for a half, or you can get together with friends and divvy one of these portions to fit whatever is your freezer capacity. It will be vacuum packed and frozen and will last in the freezer for up to two years.

So, if you think you may want one of these sometime in 2012, respond with an e-mail address and a phone number, and I'll put you on the list. As I get some cows ready, I'll go down the list and contact you to see if you're ready for it, and if you're not, I'll move you to the bottom of the list for later contact.

Thanks for allowing us to be your grassfarmers and may all your sustainable dreams come true in the New Year.

The Olivers of River Run Farms