

# Less talk, more action on climate



## Guest Comment

By MICHAEL HOFFMAN

**A**SK any farmer about changes in growing conditions. Most will agree that today's climate is very different from the one in which their parents and grandparents farmed.

More extreme weather events and temperatures mean that crops that once flourished and readily fed Americans perhaps no longer can. And new pests now thrive in these different environments.

Agriculture is on the front lines in our battle with a changing climate. Food supply is an issue of critical importance to each person. It's the non-negotiable baseline of existence.

### Impacting global supply chains

For U.S. agriculture to continue to thrive and meet the challenge of feeding an estimated 9.6 billion people globally by 2050, action must be taken immediately. Major companies such as Coca-Cola and Wal-Mart acknowledge that extreme weather is affecting their global supply chains.

Monsanto recently paid nearly \$1 billion to acquire The Climate Corporation to provide Midwest farmers with accurate weather predictions and help minimize crop risks.

Climate change and agriculture were a focus of discussion at January's World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The White House's recent announcement of a new data-driven website will help individuals and communities see how climate change will impact their corner of this world.

### Information-sharing is key

We can't leave it to just the global conglomerates and government officials to spur innovation. For agriculture, climate change adaptation and mitigation must not begin only in the boardroom, but in farmers' fields; not just in the White House, but in the greenhouse. It must be a true grass-roots movement.

Solutions must be available to farmers, regardless of operation scale. Farmers are resilient and innovative; they have to be to stay in business.

Many farmers are already adapting to the real effects of climate change. They're changing crop varieties, taking advantage of longer growing seasons, timing management practices to predicted weather, paying attention to soil health and conserving water. They're measuring greenhouse gas emissions, reducing nitrogen fertilizer use, utilizing renewable energy, and starting many other initiatives affecting their bottom lines.

### Base change on sound economics

When does it make sense to add more ventilation to a dairy barn to keep cows cool as summer temperatures rise? When should an investment be made in equipment to protect fruit trees from the increasing risk of unusual cold snaps? When should irrigation equipment be installed because of increasing dry spells between rains?

To ensure our food supply security, these and many other questions need to

### Key Points

- Some recognize climate change as weird or extreme weather.
- Heavy rainfall events and U.S. heat extremes have substantially risen.
- Farmers must have access to better info and decision-making tools.

be answered. And the answers need to be quickly shared among those who grow our food.

Those best practices must be widely adopted, and farmers must have access to information and decision tools to do so.

These resources must come from trusted partners. They must include information about how the climate of their

particular region is going to continue to change, guidance on how they can adapt, and perhaps most importantly, manage operations efficiently and sustainably.

### Cascading impact

Climate change, and its cascade of impacts, is changing the world around us. If we don't step up, it might well be changed

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