

After over 1100 columns and more than 22 years, we are winding down our weekly agricultural policy column

After more than 22 years of writing this weekly agricultural policy column and years since we retired from the University of Tennessee, the two of us have decided that the time has come to announce our semi-retirement. We will conclude our weekly duties after we write a final series of columns that outline the agricultural, economic, and humanitarian principles that have driven our analysis since the first column in July 2000.

So far, including this column, we have written 1143 columns. When we started both of us were in our late 50s and thought that if we were still writing the column in 10 years it would be amazing. We never thought we would still be doing this in our late 70s. It has been an honor to have your support and readership all these years.

While we will stop the weekly writing of this column after we finish the summary of the principles that we hold dear, we are not ready to hang up our spurs. We will write occasional columns when we encounter an itch that we just have to scratch. For the foreseeable future we will maintain the www.agpolicy.org website while looking for an agricultural organization that will host it permanently.

In 1991, Daryll was the Blasingame Chair of Excellence and Director of the Agricultural Policy Analysis Center (APAC) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Harwood arrived at APAC in early February 2000 having been a country pastor in the United Church of Christ for 30 years and the publisher of a rural weekly newspaper for the last 8 of those years. Based on his experience, Harwood suggested that Daryll should consider regularly writing an agricultural policy column for rural and agricultural weeklies.

Daryll thought that the weekly demand might be too ambitious and besides that he was in the process of developing an occasional mailing to disseminate his ideas and help in the development of good ag policy. This mailer would be sent to Congressional agriculture aides and others on a mailing list he had developed over the years.

About the middle of May, Daryll asked Harwood to come into his office where he told Harwood that Barbara Ross, Rural Life Director of the Diocese of Jefferson City, Missouri had sent him a letter stating that she had recommended him to replace Harold Briemeyer who was retiring as author of a weekly agricultural policy column for the Mid-America Farmer/Grower (MAFG).

Daryll asked, “Do you think we should do it?” Harwood said yes, and here we are more than 22 years later, the ones contemplating retirement from weekly writing.

In the first couple of months Daryll’s work over the decades provided sufficient material for the column. But that changed when the announcement that StarLink corn, a GMO that had been given a split approval—it could be used as an ingredient in animal feed, but not in food for direct human consumption—had been found in corn chips and eventually in over 300 food products. Corn markets tanked and farmers were confused and enraged.

We quickly turned our attention to the crisis farmers were facing, explaining what had happened and what the policy implications were. We then examined the growth of soybean production in Brazil and projections for agricultural imports by China.

Our analysis drew the attention of readers and soon additional agricultural weeklies were carrying some of all of our columns.

As we wind down our commitment to the weekly writing of this column, we want to express our thanks to you, our readers. Without your readership, the column would have quickly died. Barbara Ross, without your recommendation to MAFG none of this would have happened.

In addition, our thanks go out to the Mid-America Farmer/Grower, the other ag weeklies who have faithfully used our columns and all the people who sent out electronic links for our columns to their friends and listservs.

None of this would have been manageable without the able assistance of the administrative assistants in our office, Wanda and Julie. Brad helped us develop the [agpolicy.org](http://www.agpolicy.org) website and Mozghan helped us port the site over to our current webhost and is responsible for posting each new weekly column. Thanks to all of you.

We appreciate the many invitations we have received that have given us the opportunity to talk to farmers in the US and other countries. We have learned as much as we have taught.

But most of all we want to thank our spouses who have endured 22 years of late night emails as we polished up the columns you, our readers, have read.

Policy Pennings Column 1143

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