

Growing Up Green

by Dennis Gehler, CROPLAN GENETICS®

If you choose to read this article, I am asking that you become an advocate for agriculture ... specifically forage production agriculture. I have been involved in Midwest Forage Association since the beginning and have come to realize that all of us, not just some of us, need to get involved in our industry.

In December 2003, a group of people with the common interest of becoming a voice for the forage industry within the Midwest, gathered to create what today is known as the Midwest Forage Association. This organization is “dedicated to creating, promoting, and supporting value to the forage industry through leadership, research, and education to improve profitability for users and producers of forage crops emphasizing environmentally sound systems.” This is an awesome task and one that all of us need to take seriously.

Alvin Toffler, author of Future Shock, first published in 1970, said it this way, “The illiterate of the future are not those that cannot read or write. They are those that cannot learn, unlearn, relearn.”

Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, in his address to the World Food Prize Symposium in 2009 said, “The fact is, we need both productivity and sustainability, and there is no reason we can’t have both.”



Norman E. Borlaug

And Norman E. Borlaug who founded the World Food Prize said, “If you desire peace, cultivate justice, but at the same time cultivate the fields to produce more bread; otherwise there will be no peace.”

So what does this have to do with Growing up Green. Our industry, the forage industry, produces crops that are environmentally sound, do not compete with the human food supply, and convert nutrients from the land to feed a hungry world. How? We supply forage to dairy animals that produce milk, we supply forage to cattle that supply protein, minerals, and vitamins through the production of beef, and we will become suppliers of feedstock for the production of energy through cellulosic ethanol. An awesome task and an awesome responsibility.

According to the Yankelovich Group’s Going Green report:

- 21% of consumers say they plan to calculate their carbon footprint in the next year;
- 37% of consumers feel “highly concerned” about environmental issues, yet
- only 25% of consumers feel highly knowledgeable about environmental issues and;
- only 22% of consumers feel they can make a difference when it comes to the environment.

This is where each of you need to weigh in. Here is what I am asking you to do:

- 1) **Own Midwest Forage Association.** Make it your organization. Ensure your voice is heard on issues that are important to you by getting involved.
- 2) **Tell the forage story to everyone you meet.** Our industry has a significant story to tell – talk about the stewardship benefits of forage. Talk about your commitment to land stewardship and your pride in being a good steward of the land through the production of forage.
- 3) **Get to know your congressional delegation.** Each of you are represented by two U.S. senators and one representative. We have a voice through these legislators but it is our job to ensure they know our message and our industry.

Finally, David Michaels, in his article published by Oxford University Press in 2008 entitled “Doubt is Their Product,” gives us a call to action this way – “The moral is that we must all recognize our tendency to judge evidence with a bias towards our own interests and beliefs. This makes it especially incumbent on those with corporate connections to ensure that respect for evidence predominates in industry-financed research. Equally, those of us who care passionately about the environment must be on our guard to ensure that green causes do not ignore or distort the scientific evidence on which their success depends.”

Thanks for becoming an advocate for our industry and ensuring the next generation knows that Growing up Green is a responsibility we all need to take seriously.



