



Other Viewpoints

Conservation loses in program cutback

A U.S. Department of Agriculture program that has benefited farmers, urban dwellers and wildlife for decades is undergoing some changes that could harm the environment in Kansas.

The successful Conservation Reserve Program, which allowed farmers to take their most environmentally fragile land out of production in exchange for rental payments from the government, is being reduced to a maximum of 32 million acres from 39 million acres. Kansas landowners have about 3.5 million acres enrolled in the program, but as many as 1.1 million of those could be left out when existing contracts expire between now and September 2011.

It's unfortunate that a program that has served its designated purpose for so long and so well must be subjected to the budget ax — Congress in 2008 cut its budget by 20 percent — but the change appears inevitable at this point.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced in the spring that there would be a general sign-up for new contracts sometime this year, but no date has been set. And the overall goal to reduce the program by 7 million acres remains.

The best that can be hoped for is that Kansas' losses are much less than 1.1 million acres, and that landowners who must decide what to do with former Conservation Reserve ground are diligent in looking for ways to replace the rental payments without turning under improvements that have protected the land from the ravages of wind and water erosion for so long.

Landowners who enrolled in the program were allowed to plant grasses and trees to control erosion, improve water quality and provide wildlife habitat. The one hard-and-fast rule initially was that the land could not be harvested or grazed during the contract, although that rule has been suspended when periods of drought caused severe hay shortages.

Absent the federal rental payments, however, farmers whose contracts aren't renewed will be looking to replace the revenue. Some of the land may be suitable for crop farming, but the general consensus is that much of it would be susceptible to wind or water erosion, or both, if cleared of the protective vegetation.

Water experts say the potential loss of grass, which filters contaminants, could hurt the state's efforts to improve water quality.

Vilsack says he, too, is concerned about water quality and wants to replace 4.5 million acres to be pushed out of the program with land that, if managed properly, could reduce farm runoff into the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. He didn't say just how close to those two rivers he wants the 4.5 million acres, but from where we sit his definition would cover land along most of the draws, creeks and rivers between the Rocky Mountains and the Mississippi River.

While some of the land Vilsack is looking for might be found in Kansas, the net effect on the state most likely will be a loss of acres. Whether those acres will be devoted to row crops, hay or grazing will be decided by those who farm them, and have proven to be good stewards of the land.

We trust they're up for another challenge.

— *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press*

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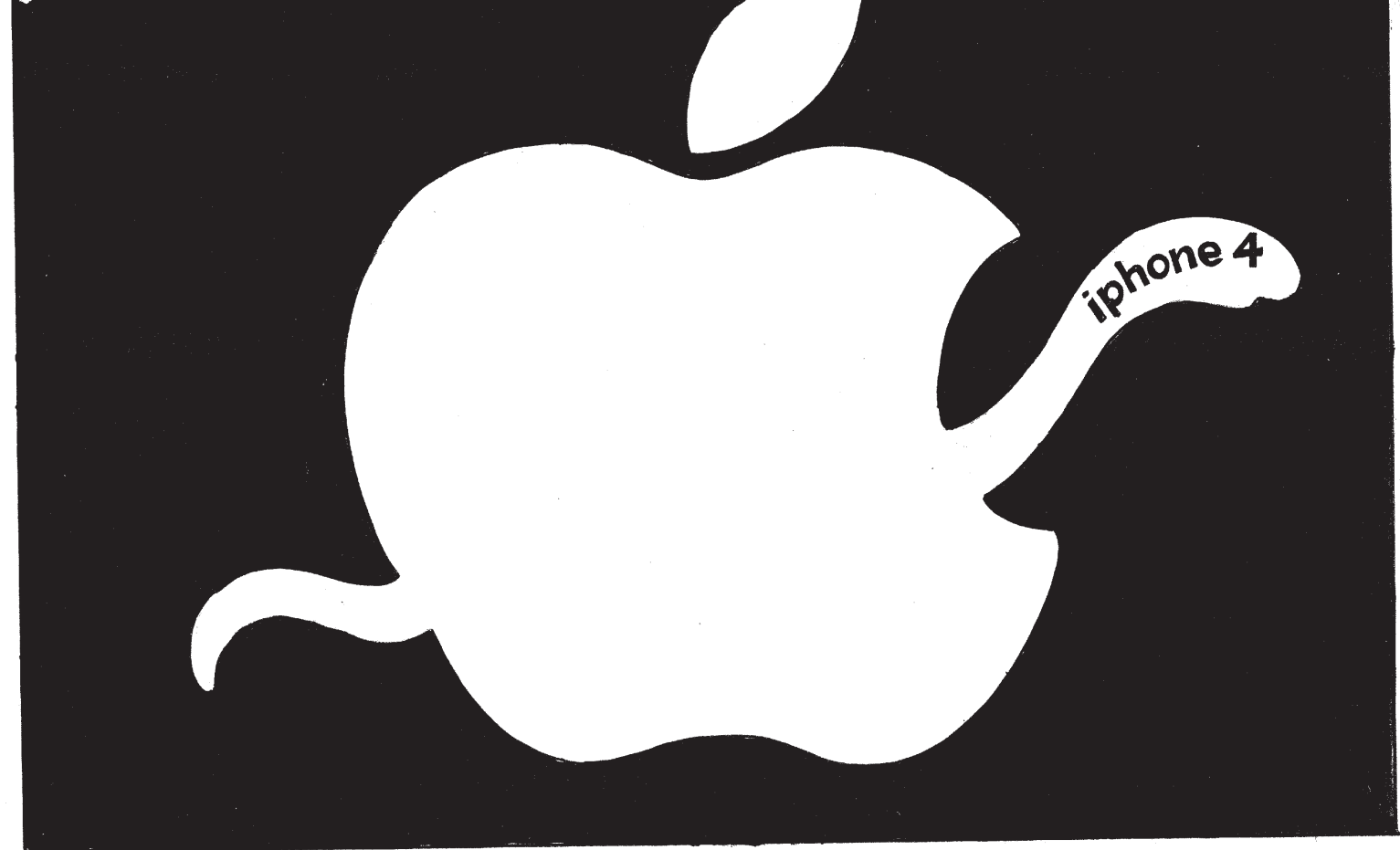
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MARGULIES
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Iran sanctions will only hurt little people

The current sanctions against Iran and the hawkish stance many neoconservatives are taking towards the country should be at least questioned by someone.

Many people in other countries probably view America's willingness to apply sanctions to Iran for allegedly attempting to develop nuclear weapons as hypocritical, given our friendly relationships with Israel and Pakistan, two countries that allegedly have nuclear weapons.

Americans should also remember that the Soviet Union and China acquired nuclear weapons during the leaderships of Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong. The fact that two of the most vile dictators in the world's history did not use their nukes should give people pause when considering the Iranian threat.

And we should remember if the Iranian government does build nuclear weapons and decides to use them against Israel, they will be committing national suicide. Any attack on Israel by Iran surely would lead to the country's destruction at the hands of Israel and United States.

Despite the fiery rhetoric of conservative Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who once said Israel should be wiped of the map, we shouldn't jump to the conclusion that this means his Islamic regime is looking use nuclear weapons against Israel. In an article featured in *Newsweek*, Fareed Zakaraia wrote



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

that the country's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, issued a fatwa in 2004 describing the use of nuclear weapons as immoral. In a subsequent sermon, he declared that "developing, producing or stockpiling nuclear weapons is forbidden under Islam."

There's the chance that he's lying, but this would be an ill-advised lie. Zakaria notes that lying about nuclear weapons development after claiming stockpiling weapons is forbidden under Islam would undermine a government whose legitimacy stems from its "fidelity to Islam."

But if the supreme leader isn't telling the truth, Iran's government is more likely to secretly sell the nukes to terrorists instead of using them itself. If this is the case, covert operations and intelligence gathering would seem more prudent for the U.S. than a military invasion of another Middle Eastern country.

Many politicians support harsher sanctions against Iran to get the regime to end its alleged efforts to build a nuclear weapon. While sanc-

tions aimed at the leaders of the repressive regime would be appropriate, blanket sanctions against the whole country could have calamitous effects on the people.

This sanctions strategy was used in Iraq as a way to cause the overthrow of the late Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein after he invaded Kuwait in August 1990. The sanctions ended up having devastating effects on the Iraqi people, who had already suffered under Hussein's genocidal rule for many years.

The United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions on Iraq on Aug. 6, 1990. According to the book, "Web of Deceit: The History of Western Complicity in Iraq, From Churchill to Kennedy to George W. Bush," by Barry M. Lando, the sanctions, maintained primarily by the United States and Britain, led to the deaths of from 500,000 to a million Iraqis.

President Barack Obama's government should voice its support for the Green Movement for Democracy in Iran, but applying blanket sanctions against the country is likely to undermine the groups efforts and hurt people already suffering under a repressive regime.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Healthy choices go beyond packaging

No doubt you've noticed all the soft drinks, flavored water and sports drinks today. They're everywhere.

You can't walk into a supermarket or convenience store without bumping into the many drink offering displays.

And flavors. Wow.

Just think of some taste you desire — fudge malted gumball, cheese yogurt yummy or silvery satin strawberry. It's out there, and you can buy it and drink it down.

Without question, the best part of these drinks for me is the packaging.

It's unbelievable. And the creativity? Almost too much to digest.

Any more, I don't even care what's in the container. I just want to hold it in my hand, caress its coolness, admire its latest, unique logo and look good doing so.

While many are content with the multitude of diet sodas and flavored waters like blackberry blush, my drink of choice is chocolate milk. I really enjoy it, by the way. I have since I was a kid.

Today's explosion of new soft drinks, flavored waters and sports drinks has one major worrisome aspect I cannot help but point out.

Pitchmen, women and yes kids are filling our heads with the idea these flavored drinks can be part of a well-rounded, balanced diet. Their ads and infomercials are as numerous as the products they're selling — and it's working.

The most alarming part of this sales pitch is that so much of it is aimed at our youth. In case you haven't been in today's schools, this drink deluge is very much a part of the contemporary scene.

Soft drinks have no business being considered part of a balanced diet at our schools or anywhere else. These drinks have little, if any, nutritional value.



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

Look at the ingredients in a soft drink the next time you pick one up. Most people wouldn't have a clue what these are, myself included.

If students or adults want a treat — something out of the ordinary — that's where soft drinks play a part. To be part of a balanced diet, a food product must have nutritional value. I believe soft drinks have such a negligible amount, they cannot be considered seriously as part of any "balanced" diet.

Unlike water, soft drinks won't even quench your thirst. They leave you longing for a tall, cool glass of water.

Talk to a nutritionist or physician, they'll tell you we're supposed to drink at least eight glasses a day of what?

That's right. Nature's own liquid — water. What about that wonderful white liquid chocked full of calcium we call milk? Where does it fit in our daily diet?

Milk belongs in almost everyone's diet. Nutritional research has shown that men and women between the ages of 11 and 24 need the equivalent of five servings of dairy products daily. This can be milk, yogurt, cheese, ice cream and a whole array of other good-tasting dairy foods.

Juice from oranges, grapefruit, lemons, strawberries and other fruits is another item that belongs as part of a balanced diet. Food products from natural primary crops — not secondary, highly processed food products — are

essential to our youngsters' diets. We owe it to them and their good health.

Drinks made from tomatoes, carrots, celery and other vegetables are loaded with vitamins, minerals and fiber. Vegetable drinks also belong as part of our daily diets.

But let's return to soft drinks. What a brilliant stroke of marketing, linking soft, sports and flavored drinks with a well-rounded, nutritionally balanced diet. Infer something often enough, and people will begin to believe. Linking soft drinks with a balanced diet and nutrition is about as palatable to me as the drink manufacturers laughing all the way to the bank.

There is no substitute for healthy, nutritious food in our daily diets. Kids and adults should reach for a tall glass of water, juice or milk the next time they're thirsty. These are truly nutritious products that belong in a daily balanced diet.

If you need to treat yourself, add chocolate to the milk. Mix a couple of the fruit juices together or just drink water. You'll be doing yourself a favor, and you'll be supporting farmers and ranchers who supply these fresh, tasty, nutritious drinks.

Bottoms up.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

