

OUT ON THE RANGE

Colors of the Farm

The perils of American agriculture.

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Farmers are like gamblers. Every year they bet it all that their crops will succeed and the price at market will be enough to take care of their family and business. What if they don't succeed?

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 90 percent of crop losses in the United States are because of extreme weather—something even the hardest-working and most intelligent farmer cannot control. Record-breaking cold in January will kill winter wheat. Massive amounts of snow in February will strand herds of beef cattle. And lots of rain in April will flood fields and delay planting. Each of these instances are common in rural America and when they do occur, farmers run the risk of losing their only paycheck.

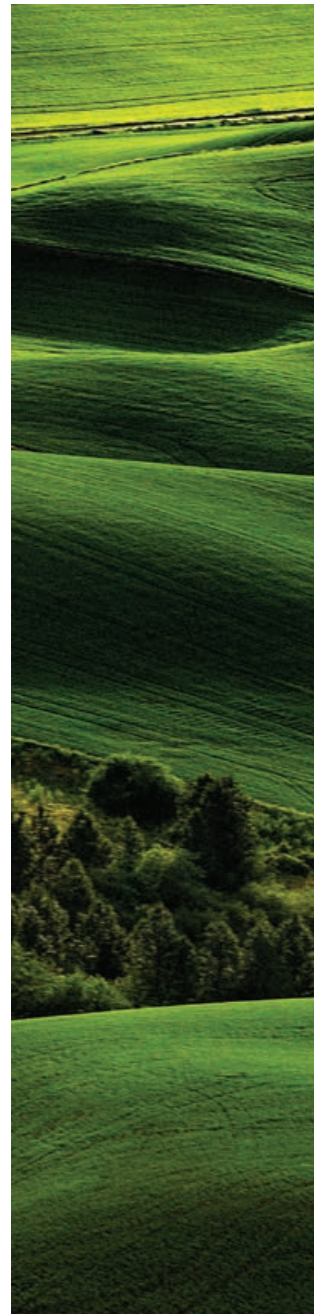
American farmers and ranchers have faced tremendous obstacles to success in recent years. Extreme weather last year made it impossible to harvest some crops and

plant new ones. While the president negotiated new tariffs with China, ag exports (and prices) declined. Then our rural food producers faced the same coronavirus disaster the rest of us experienced. Because the supply chains broke down, many were forced to abandon their harvest in the field, dump their milk, and kill barns full of chickens, pigs and cattle that could not be butchered and/or make their way to market. Most gamblers by then would have hung it up but the American farmer and rancher is stronger than that.

Those who survived work hard under the faith that “next year will be better.” There is no guarantee of that, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't appreciate their hard work and buy American-made agricultural products when we can. American ranchers and farmers have had it rough. Let's hope they are rewarded for their perseverance in the not-too-distant future. ■



A Red Holstein dairy cow at the county fair in Monroe, Wisconsin.





FROM ABOVE:

- The view from Steptoe Butte looking at beautiful rolling fields of wheat in the Palouse region near Steptoe, Washington.
- A close-up of ripe wheat almost ready to harvest along the edge of a field near Chinook, Montana.
- Fresh apples ready to pick at an orchard near Antigo, Wisconsin.

