

Agriculture Up for Grabs: Where, Oh Where, Did the Science Go?

Sometimes, no matter what the delusionary fog we're in when we "launch the boat," those holes we accidentally missed—or purposely ignored—will in the end make for a very short trip.

It's nice to know in the middle of an economic crisis like ours, with shortages of everything from "clunker cash" to sugar, there's something we'll never run out of: Personal opinion. And that's a very good thing. It's the hallmark of freedom and the legacy of democracy. Personal opinion runs electricity through our choices, switching on the "Choice—Action—Consequence" continuum. And, yes, whether we accept it or not, there are consequences for every choice, even though they sometimes take awhile to get here. **[Photo courtesy of Corpus Christie Charter Fishing]**



On occasion, some of our opinions can be shocked into "cement." We bar the entranceway, block the windows, and gather forces to defend the concrete—all without validating the accuracy of our own "insider information." That's bad enough when we do this in our own lives—sometimes resulting in professional, financial, and relationship crises. But when we do this as a group, the exponential fallout can reach—and disable—people and places far from the epicenter, even as we proclaim we're coming to save them. Science holds little sway in such an emotional theater, where being part of the "cause" often trumps being in possession of facts. **[Photo courtesy of California State Parks]**

Sustained as we are in this world supported by plants and animals, it's no wonder that many agricultural issues today are on the line and in the voting booth. From California to New York and many places in between—including Ohio in the very near future—individual votes may significantly determine the future of U.S. agriculture. Are we prepared for such decisions, having credible input from all sides and a clear understanding of benefits, drawbacks, and consequences? Will our choices—and the results that follow—be driven by reliable, tested science or by loud bias and anecdotal evidence? What do we *really* know about confined poultry, abandoned horses, and dealing with bacteria in lettuce? Just how well will today's self-proclaimed "moral high ground" hold up if the future also includes loss of species, dwindling food supplies, animal abuse, and foodborne illness? **[Photo courtesy of American Family News Network]**



This is a time when accurate, objective, science-based information—without motive or agenda—is critical. For almost four decades, CAST has been offering just that. CAST's mission is to communicate the science of agricultural issues, bringing together various viewpoints for honest discussion and informed decision making. CAST publications cover topics ranging from invasive species, to biofuels, to fresh produce, to animal welfare. To access a complete list of CAST publications, click [HERE](http://www.cast-science.org/publications.asp). <http://www.cast-science.org/publications.asp>. To support the communication of facts regarding agricultural issues today and into the future, become a member of CAST. For more information, click [HERE](http://www.cast-science.org/membership.asp). <http://www.cast-science.org/membership.asp>. **[Photo courtesy of the USDA Agricultural Resource Service Photo Gallery]**