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GOOD MORNING: The Van Trump Report 12-19-19

1 message

The Van Trump Report <reply@vantrumpreport-email.com>

Thu, Dec 19, 2019 at 5:30 AM

Reply-To: Jordan <reply-fec3107373600278-1142_HTML-68584704-100003450-8@vantrumpreport-email.com>

To: josh@farmdirection.com



"You're more likely to drown in the sea of sameness than get eaten by a shark while navigating new waters." -
Amy Jo Martin

Thursday, December 19, 2019[Printable Copy](#) or [Audio Version](#)

Morning Summary: Investors are happy to hear Federal Reserve members talking up the U.S. economy with both Chicago Fed President Charles Evans and New York Fed President John Williams yesterday saying the country is in good shape! Both credited the central bank's decision to cut interest rates three times for boosting the U.S. economy and expressed optimism about 2020. Evans said he is "personally worried" about low inflation but sees it rising a bit next year, projecting a very mild rate of just 2.2%. He also feels leaving interest rates "unchanged" through next year would be appropriate, and then follow with one rate hike in each of 2021 and 2022, which is all in-line with the median projection of his fellow Fed members. As for today, investors are hoping fresh economic data will deliver more good news for the U.S. housing market which has emerged as a star performer this year, helped along by the Fed's rate cuts that have pushed mortgage rates lower. Analysts expect today's Housing data released so far this week has surprised significantly to the upside. The Philadelphia Fed Business Outlook and Leading Indicators are also due out today. Traders are also anxious to

see Nike's corporate earnings which will be released after the market closes. Accenture, Conagra Brands, Sanderson Farms, and Neogen also report today. In Washington, the House is set to vote on the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade deal (USMCA), which is seen passing with bipartisan support. The Senate, however, won't take up the deal until after the impeachment trial, which will likely be late January or early February. Mexican lawmakers have already signed off on the deal but Canada's legislators won't take it up until late January, at the earliest - they don't return from their winter break until January 27. Also be aware that the sixth Democratic Presidential Debate will be held tonight. The debate will air live on PBS and CNN starting at 7 p.m. CST. The Democratic candidates who have qualified to participate in this debate are: Former Vice President Joe Biden; South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg; Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar; Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders; California billionaire Tom Steyer; Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren; and Entrepreneur Andrew Yang.

Few of the Worst Performing S&P 500 Stocks in 2019: *Some Wall Street investors like to start the new year by "making a dash for the trash". In other words, some believe the worst-hit stocks in the S&P 500 can be oversold because of yearend tax-loss liquidation pressure and can sometimes generate a nice rebound back in the other direction early in the New Year. A few of the worst-performing S&P 500 stocks this past year have been: Abiomed down -45%; Trip Advisor and Macy's down -44%; Occidental Petroleum down -37%; The Gap down -31%; Mosaic down -28%; Kraft-Heinz down -26%.*

SEC Proposes Giving More Investors Access to Private Markets: *More Americans would be able to invest early in the next Uber or Facebook under a proposal approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission. The proposal would expand the number of people allowed to invest in private securities offerings, hedge funds and private-equity funds. Currently, people who may invest in those markets, known as accredited investors, must have the financial resources to withstand big losses: either \$1 million in net assets, not counting their home, or at least \$200,000 in annual income. The SEC proposal would allow investors with certain qualifications, such as an entry-level stockbroker's license, to sidestep the income and wealth thresholds. Proponents, including SEC Chairman Jay Clayton, say that many people who don't meet the financial qualifications for accredited-investor status are nevertheless knowledgeable enough to participate in private markets, where startups like Uber have grown into multibillion-dollar companies before offering to sell their shares to the public. The commission is also seeking comment on whether the financial thresholds should be reduced in areas with lower costs of living, and whether investors who are advised by professional brokers should also be considered accredited. Read more from [The Wall Street Journal](#).*

Crazy Numbers from Netflix! *It's crazy to imagine, but Netflix averaged just over one new original TV program or movie for every day of 2019. The*

streaming giant released 371 new TV shows and movies on the service in the U.S. this year, according to data from Variety Insight. This is an increase of 54.6% over the 240 shows and movies Netflix released in 2018. For context, this figure is greater than the number of original series that the entire U.S. TV industry released in 2005 (the last year Netflix managed to exceed the TV industry's total). That includes broadcast networks, cable networks and premium cable networks. (Source: Variety)

Not Every Big Stock Market Winner is a Tech Company: *Netflix and chill — with some Domino's Pizza — has been a winning combination, not only for college kids, but also for investors over the past decade. Netflix shares have exploded for a rally of almost +4,000%, while Domino's has gained more than +3,300%. However, they both trail Elkhart, Indiana-based Patrick Industries, a company that has come a long way in the past decade. As Bespoke Investment Group pointed out in a recent post, the company had a market cap of merely \$22.3 million 10 years ago. Now, after a +4,622% advance, that number stands at \$1.2 billion. By comparison, the S&P 1500 has added almost +200% over the same period. So what cutting edge technology is Patrick Industries involved in? Turns out, the answer is "none." The company makes parts for RVs, manufactured housing and marine industries. As Bespoke noted, not every big winner in the stock market has to be a tech company. Read more from [MarketWatch](#).*

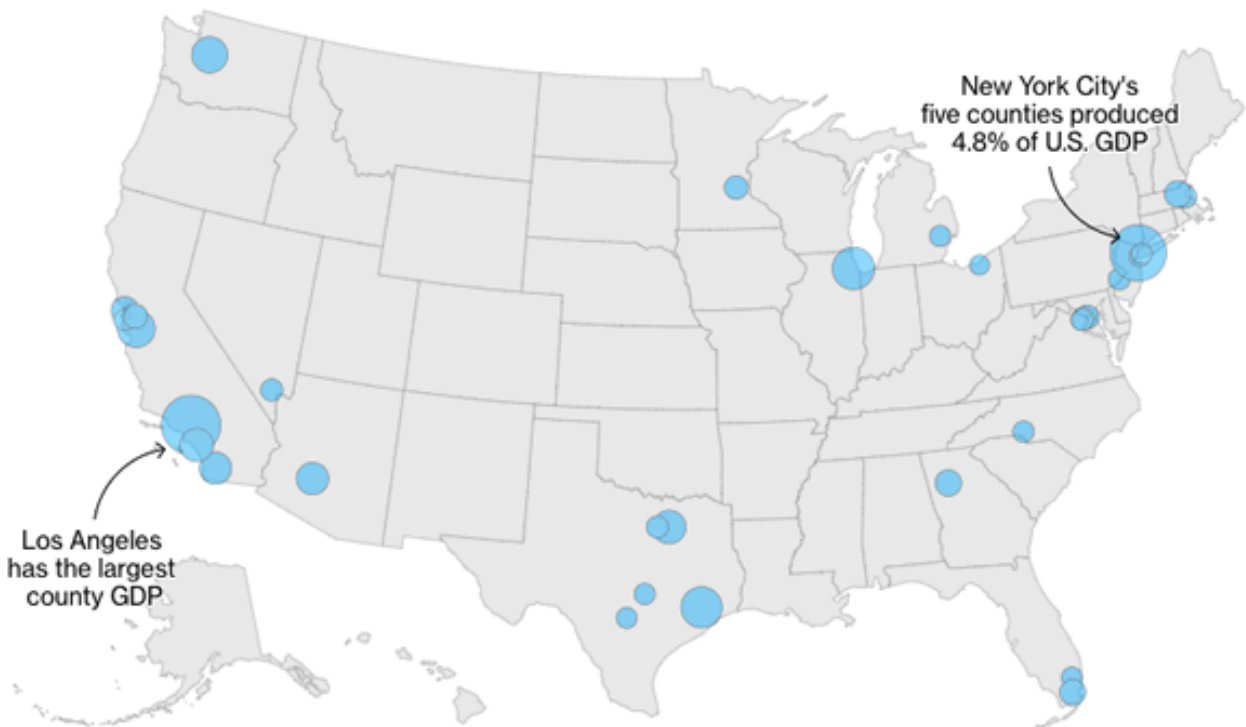
A Third of America's Economy Is Concentrated in Just 31 Counties: *While America's economy has grown for over a decade, that growth is increasingly concentrated in 1% of the nation's counties. Just 31 counties, or the top 1% by share, made up 32.3% of U.S. gross domestic product in 2018, according to data released last week by the Bureau of Economic Analysis that included nearly 20 years of county-level GDP data. That's despite these counties only having 26.1% of employed Americans and 21.9% of the population last year. Their combined GDP share is also up from a recession low of 30.1% in 2009. The nation's economy is becoming increasingly concentrated in large cities and by the coasts—and less so in rural counties—spurring the question of whether rural areas will be increasingly left behind. The growing concentration of the country's economic activity could impact a variety of things from infrastructure spending to labor mobility, but it's unclear how rural areas will fare as their share of economic output continues to dwindle. The top 1% of counties were spread across 16 states and the District of Columbia, and populous states like California, Florida and Texas each had multiple counties make the cut. But all 31 counties either included or were near major U.S. cities. A large population and workforce is only part of the story. Last year, these counties represented \$1.3 trillion more of nationwide GDP than the share of workers alone would account for. Looking at population, their combined share of GDP rose even as*

their share of overall population fell. Read more from [Bloomberg](#).

Top 1% of Counties

The largest 31 county economies made up 32% of national GDP in 2018

● Share of U.S. 2018 GDP



Note: Includes Fairfax County, Virginia combined with two independent cities, Fairfax City and Falls Church.
Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis



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Founding Partners





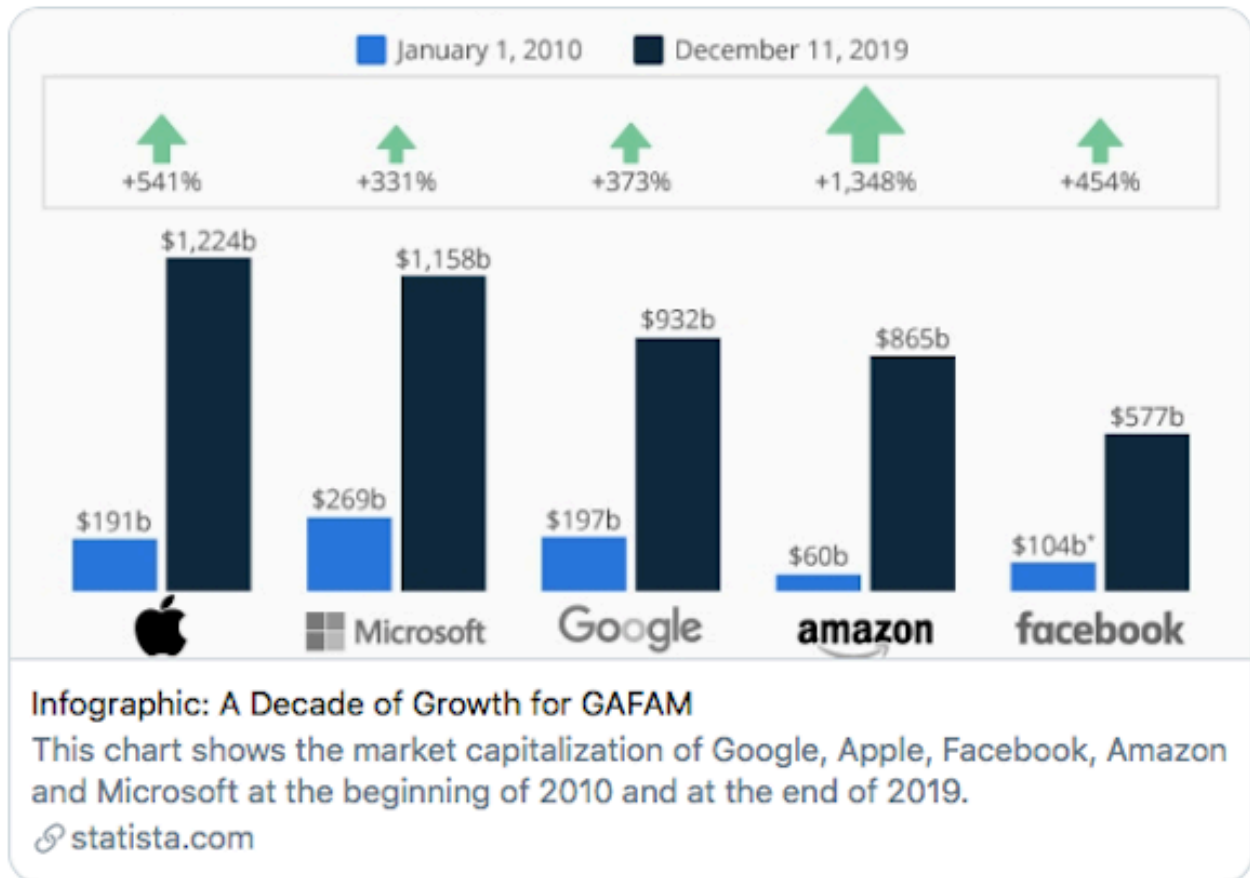
FARM TANK

Tweets of the Day





It's been a decade of growth for Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft





Jon Erlichman ✓
@JonErlichman



Number of artificial intelligence (AI) acquisitions since 2010:

Apple: 20 acquisitions
Google: 14 acquisitions
Microsoft: 10 acquisitions
Intel: 9 acquisitions
Facebook: 8 acquisitions
Amazon: 5 acquisitions

Source: CB Insights, Bloomberg



Ryan Stucke
@rstUCke1



The pass I've been waiting for, hey 2019, go take a long walk on a short pier [#harvest19](#)





David Rhinehart
@DavidRhinehart



That's a wrap on [#harvest2019](#)





Shawn H
@adidas_1



John Deere s670 eating 12 rows of corn with a Geringhoff head.

#farming #s670 #johndeere #vanzandwykfarming
#luymescustomfarming #tractors #agphotography
#harvest2019 #corn2019 #farmphotography #ontag
#geringhoffcornhead @RLuymes @Mutt_31
Ontario, Canada



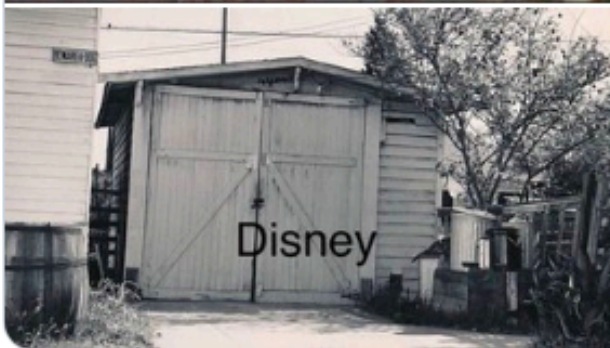


Jon Erlichman ✓
@JonErlichman



These 4 companies started in garages.

They're collectively worth \$3.2 trillion.





Jon Erlichman ✓
@JonErlichman

On this day in 1980: Apple went public.

The stock has since risen 69,000%.

In Massachusetts, the IPO was considered too risky for investors.

Apple Computer Set to Go Public Today; Massachusetts Bars Sale of Stock as Risky

By RICHARD E. RUSTIN And MITCHELL C. LYNCH Staff Reporters of THE WALL STREET...

Wall Street Journal (1923 - Current file); Dec 12, 1980;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers The Wall Street Journal (1889 - 1993)

pg. 5

Apple Computer Set to Go Public Today; Massachusetts Bars Sale of Stock as Risky

By RICHARD E. RUSTIN
And MITCHELL C. LYNCH

Staff Reporters of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Apple Computer Inc. is slated to go public today, amid signs that the current stock market slump may cool some of the investor avidity that had made the offering one of the most eagerly awaited in recent years.

The Cupertino, Calif., maker of microcomputers will sell 4.6 million shares at \$22 through an underwriting syndicate headed by Morgan Stanley & Co. and Hambrecht & Quist. The price indicates some degree of confidence on the syndicate's part because it's on the high side of the \$20 to \$22 range recently estimated for the offering.

Nevertheless, a broker at a major securities firm observed yesterday: "I think Apple will go at a premium, but I don't think it will explode. Take a look at the general market, and you'll see why. We've seen a dropping off of individual interest, and some institutions have pared back their commitments."

The Apple offering is the latest in a cascade of stocks of high-technology companies that have gone public this year. Through September, 182 companies of all types went public, markedly more than the 144 new issues in all of 1979. The almost \$800 million raised by those concerns is about one-third more than the \$592 million proceeds of a year earlier.

Under the Massachusetts ruling, the Apple stock falls short of several provisions aimed at weeding out highfliers that don't have solid earnings foundations. Unless the state later decides otherwise, stockbrokers in Massachusetts won't be able to trade the stock and Massachusetts residents won't be able to buy it.

The Apple offering is registered in 27 states, and an authority on securities law, Prof. Alan Bromberg of Southern Methodist University in Dallas, said that he wouldn't have been surprised to see "a domino effect" with other states following the Massachusetts lead.

One provision of Massachusetts securities law stipulates that the per-share offering price can't exceed 20 times earnings. Apple last year earned 24 cents a share and the \$22 offering price is about 90 times earnings.

Officials in California and Ohio, two other states with stringent securities laws, said they didn't plan to bar the offering at this time, but Ohio had looked carefully at such an action.

Massachusetts officials said the offering isn't being made in at least six states with strong securities laws. They are Illinois, Wisconsin, Texas, Michigan, Alabama and Oklahoma.

Apple and the two lead underwriting firms declined comment yesterday because the issue still is in registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

cisions on stock offerings even though an offering is cleared by the SEC.

Reflecting on the Genentech stock offering in October, an official for the Massachusetts securities division said: "If we had it to do over again, we would have barred Genentech." The company, which offered its shares at \$35 each, earned two cents a share in 1979.

One firm at first worried about the Massachusetts decision was Nautilus Fund, a closed-end investment company that owns 180,000 unregistered shares of Apple. Nautilus, a highflier itself because of its Apple holdings, plans sometime in the future to register those shares and distribute them to Nautilus holders. "We don't think there will be any problems," Albert L. Toney Jr., Nautilus president, said.

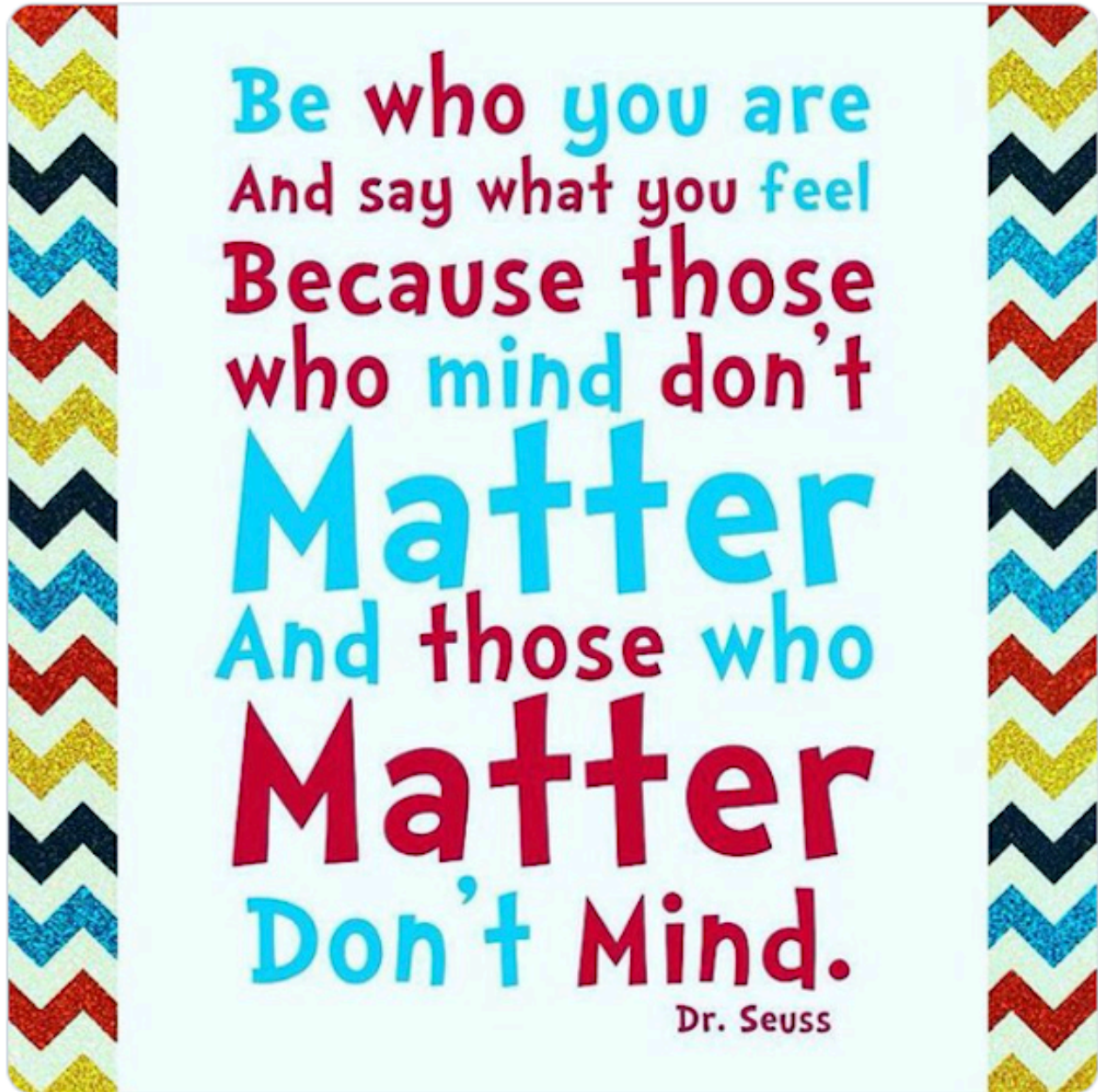
Under terms of the Massachusetts order, the Apple underwriters withdrew the offering from the state, rather than await a formal notice from regulators.



Think Different
@LifeLimits



So true!!!

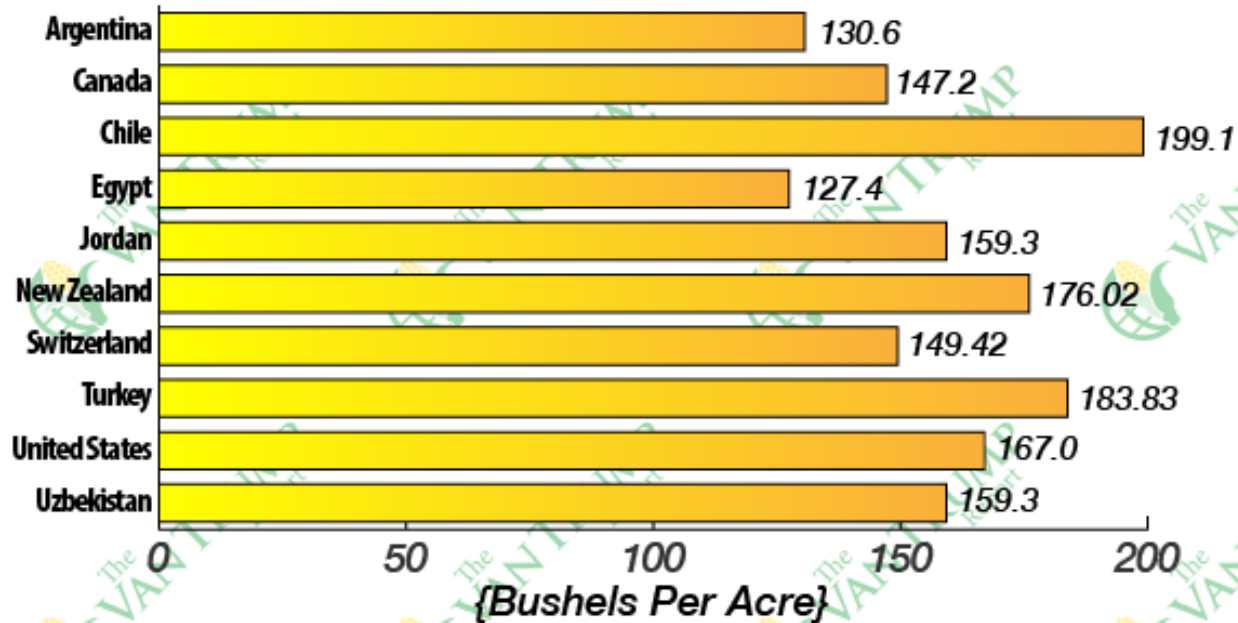




Corn bulls are looking for the next set of headlines that will attract fresh money flow on the buy-side. There's some argument and debate that a large portion of the recent rally has been primarily fueled by short-covering and fund cross-hedging. The bullish hope is that China will soon step in as a larger buyer of U.S. corn, ethanol and DDGs. At the same time, bulls are hoping to see the USDA trim its current production forecast in the upcoming January 10th report. Weekly ethanol production actually slipped a bit after climbing higher for eleven straight weeks. The weekly report showed ethanol production of 1.064 million barrels per day, down just slightly from the prior week. The four-week average, however, is still up +1% compared to last year. I should also note, despite ethanol stocks creeping higher on the week, overall stockpiles are down over -8% compared to a year ago. At the same time, U.S. gasoline demand is up slightly compared to last year at 9.411 million barrels per day. Bottom line, ethanol margins have improved at many plants but there's still a lot of uncertainty moving forward, especially regarding total U.S. ethanol exports and the EPA's political positioning regarding RFS.... stay tuned! I continue to believe U.S. corn exports are going to improve especially as South American exporters make the bigger switch to exporting new-crop soybeans. South American weather seems to be mostly mixed to slightly bearish at the moment with some improved chances of rainfall for a few dry areas in both Argentina and Brazil. There is some continued talk circulating that cash corn prices in Brazil are going to continue pushing higher and that will ultimately push producers towards planting more second-crop corn acres.

Top 10 Corn Yielding Countries

{Measured in Bushels Per Acre}



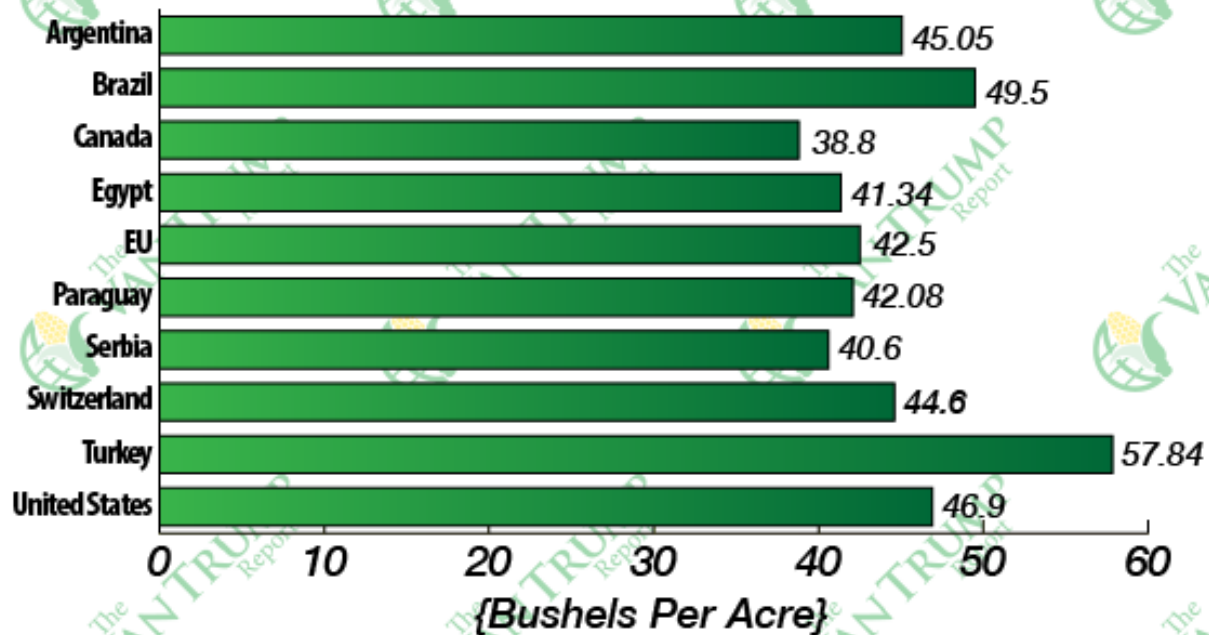
Source: PS&D December, 2019

Soybean bulls are pointing to rumors and headlines that China has been buying a few U.S. shipments. There are also numbers and talk floating around that China could be buying much bigger quantities in the days and weeks ahead. Bulls are hoping this increase in demand along with a slight reduction in the USDA's production estimate will start working to shrink the balance sheet and push prices higher. Bears still aren't fully in agreement with many saying they've seen the Chinese renege too many times to take it to the bank. They are also pointing to cooperative weather in Brazil where the country could produce another record crop. Many inside Brazil are forecasting a crop somewhere between 123 and 125 MMTs vs. 117 MMTs last year. And keep in mind, Brazil's export offers in early-2020 are cheaper than U.S. export offers. Meaning perhaps increased market share again for Brazil. On the flip side, it feels like the Argentine soybean crop will be -2 to -3 MMTs less than last year. Obviously this depends on how the weather shakes out in the coming weeks and if some of the really dry areas catch a few timely drinks? As a spec, I've now banked profits and blown out of the majority of my bullish positions. I might be exiting the party way too early, but I've learned to stick to my pre-written plans and objectives. I'm just going to take a moment and stand on the sideline until I get a more clear view. As a producer, I'm paying very close attention to price, especially in next year's NOV20 contract as it trades near \$9.70 per bushel. Remember, the yearly high in that contract was posted early-

January of last year at \$9.84⁶, by mid-May the bears trimmed more than -\$1.00 per bushel from the price. Keep paying close attention! Keep your eye on today's weekly export sales data. The trade seems to be looking for a number between 900,000 and 1.4 MMTs.

Top 10 Soybean Yielding Countries

{Measured in Bushels Per Acre}

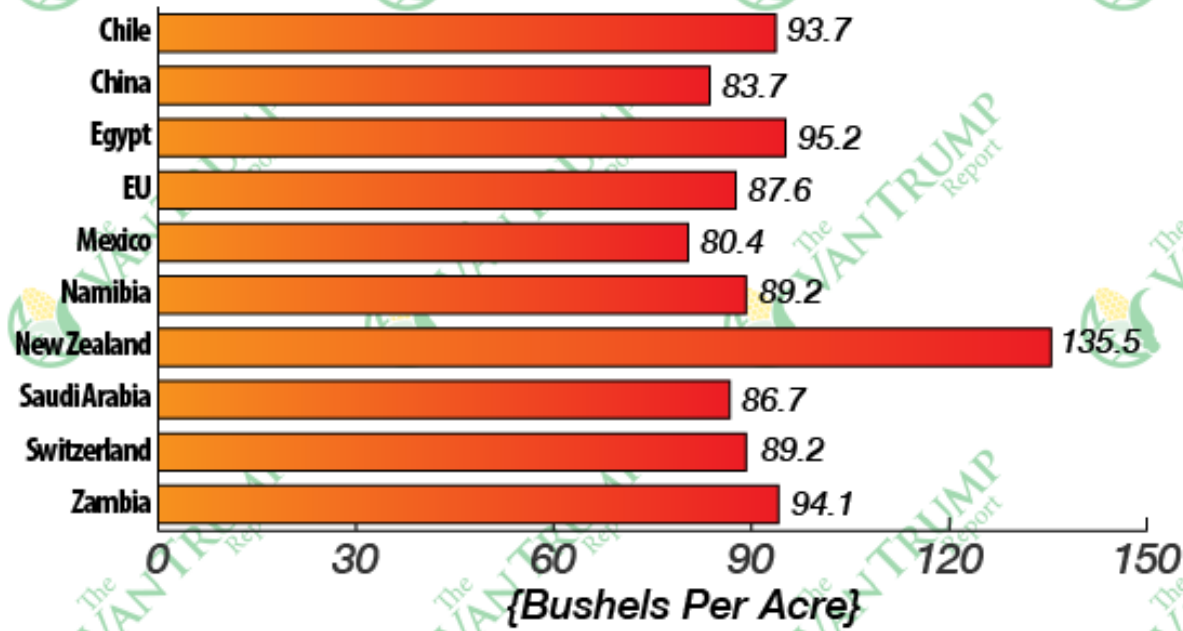


Source: PS&D December, 2019

Wheat bulls are hoping to see strong weekly export sales numbers this morning. The trade is forecasting a U.S. wheat export number in the 200,000 to 600,000 MT range. The bears have provided a nice short-covering rally but now we need interest from new money-flow to help create more bullish buzz. Remember, bulls need to be fed fresh headlines on a regular basis. The production problems in Australia, Argentina, parts of the Black Sea region and parts of the European Union have all been well advertised. It also feels like bulls have been talking about fewer U.S. winter wheat acres for some time. In other words, there's nothing really fresh or new to excite new buying. The recent rally in price might have pushed U.S. markets to levels that make U.S. exports even less competitive? The market will be paying close attention to the export numbers and any new headlines that might include talk of Chinese buying. As a spec, I've banked profits in most of my spring wheat positions and am now holding a very small longer-term position. I would like to add a bit on a bigger break in price but I will remain extremely patient. As a producer, I still like the thought of feathering in some small new-crop sales with JUL20 north of \$5.50 per bushel.

Top 10 Wheat Yielding Countries

{Measured in Bushels Per Acre}



Source: PS&D December, 2019



> Corn Based Ethanol Gaining Momentum in Brazil: *There are nearly 350 sugar-based ethanol plants operating inside Brazil. Several large players, however, are starting to make the push towards corn-based ethanol. From reports I've seen circulating, there are now eight corn-based ethanol plants up and running with at least six more currently under construction and perhaps a half-dozen to a dozen more in the planning stages. Inside the trade, I've heard this being viewed as both bullish and bearish U.S. corn prices. Bullish in the fact more Brazilian corn will be used domestically to produce corn-based ethanol and perhaps less moving into the export market. On the flip side, bears see it as longer-term bearish as it fuels more infrastructure spending on corn, creates more interest in corn production, and may eventually compete more heavily with U.S. corn-based ethanol in the export world. The fresh interest from COFCO, AMaggi and the world's No. 1 sugar producer Raizen - co-owned by Royal Dutch Shell Plc and Cosan SA — could quickly ramp up Brazil's nascent corn ethanol industry. UNEM, an association representing corn ethanol makers in Brazil, sees total corn ethanol output at 8 billion liters and total DDGs (dried distillers grains) production at 6 million metric tons per year by 2028. Read more from [Reuters](#).*

> USDA Extends Public Comment Period on Hemp Regs: *The Agriculture Department extended the deadline for public comment on its proposed hemp regulations from Dec. 30 to Jan. 29, meaning implementation of the new rules could be delayed. More than 1,000 comments have been submitted already — and the bulk of the input is likely to come in just before the deadline. USDA's plans cover everything from THC testing to hemp data maintenance. Recent requests from U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer, a Democrat from New York, and state departments of agriculture urged the USDA to extend the comment period to allow more time for hemp industry members to analyze the rules, determine how they would affect their operations and submit real-world feedback that could help inform changes to federal hemp production rules. Comments on the interim final rules can be submitted [HERE](#).*

> U.S. Beef Prices See Indirect Benefit from Increased Chinese Demand: *Reduced imports of lean beef trimmings from Australia and New Zealand have helped push U.S. cattle prices higher. Rabo AgriFinance animal protein analyst Don Close says Australia and New Zealand have been shipping more beef to China, which has caused a significant drop in their shipments of lean beef trimmings to the U.S. "Imports of New Zealand beef trimmings into the states have been off roughly a third this year," Close says, "and we're expecting to see those shipments down another third in 2020, just because of the volume of trade going to China." Close says the reduced imports of "manufacturing beef" have led to sharply higher prices, forcing fast food burger restaurants to use more domestic beef. And he expects this will only intensify in 2020, which could help push U.S. beef prices to higher than they otherwise would have been, Close says. Listen to his full interview with [Brownfield Ag](#).*

> Brazil Farm Sales to China to Shrink by \$10 Billion with Trade Truce:

Brazil could lose \$10 billion per year in farm exports to China if a recent China-U.S. trade deal is implemented as proposed, according to a study by Brazilian research center and business school Insper published on Wednesday by local newspaper Folha de S.Paulo. Brazil-China trade could return to pre-trade war levels, erasing some of the gains seen, particularly last year, said Marcos Jank, a former BRF SA executive in Asia and agricultural trade expert, who coordinated the study. Brazilian farm exports to China surged to \$35.4 billion in 2018 from \$26.6 billion the year before, as farmers and meatpackers took advantage of higher tariffs on U.S. agricultural products to boost deals, the report said. In that period, U.S. farm exports to China dropped to \$13.2 billion from \$24 billion. "The first thing that is likely to happen is a rebalancing on soy trade," Jank told the newspaper. Cotton and poultry are among other products that could be affected, the study said. Read more from [Reuters](#).

> Ukraine Corn & Wheat Exports Surge: Reports circulating showed that Ukraine exported just over +3.1 MMTs of corn in November vs. 2.4 MMTs last November. Year-to-date numbers are showing Ukraine has exported 9.4 MMT this year vs 6.4 MMT during the same period last year. Wheat exports are also aggressively higher at 14.3 MMTs this year vs. 8.1 MMTs during this period last year.

> Are Some Traders Benefitting From Leaked Government Data? *U.S. regulators are digging into a topic that has been the talk of Wall Street and Washington ever since a controversial Vanity Fair article suggested investors made billions of dollars trading ahead of market-moving news: Are government leaks fueling big profits in the futures market? For months, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission has been quietly ramping up efforts to hunt for suspicious transactions by using technology to pore through reams of market data, said three people familiar with the matter who asked not to be named because the examination isn't public. The goal is to assess whether some traders are getting a heads up before the release of key economic statistics or federal agencies' policy announcements. The CFTC began the push well before the Vanity Fair story ran in October. Upon reviewing the trades highlighted in the piece, the agency was unconvinced and couldn't substantiate its insinuations of wrongdoing. Still, watchdogs acknowledge that the article spotlighted an issue that risks undermining investor confidence: The futures market hasn't been policed for insider trading nearly as much as the stock market has. Read more [HERE](#).*

> Michigan Sues Walgreens, 3 Others Opioid Distributors: *Michigan on Tuesday sued four companies over the deadly painkiller epidemic, becoming what state Attorney General Dana Nessel says is the first state to sue major opioid distributors under a liability law that is typically used to go after drug dealers. The*

lawsuit was filed in Wayne County and names as defendants AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health, McKesson, and Walgreens, which have also been sued in other states. The move makes Michigan the 49th state to have filed some kind of legal action against the opioid industry. Only Nebraska has not. Nessel says Michigan's suit is different because it targets distributors under a 1994 state law that was enacted to combat illegal drug trafficking. The law lets people and governmental entities sue drug dealers for damages, even if the dealer did not make a sale specifically causing an injury. The suit says more than 2.8 billion opioid pills were distributed in Michigan between 2006 and 2012. (Source: Associated Press)

> Instagram is Cracking Down on Influencer Advertising Content:

Instagram is finally making rules to govern content in influencer advertising. Influencers, the photo-sharing app's most-followed users who are paid by brands to post, will no longer be allowed to promote products related to vaping, tobacco and weapons, Instagram said Wednesday in a blog post. Instagram, owned by Facebook, has long allowed people to operate their own own sponsored-content operations without the level of oversight applied to the rest of the company's advertising, taking the attitude that if an influencer had cultivated an audience willing to hear their messages, Facebook shouldn't get in the way. However, there's been a surge of sponsored content promoted by influencers, so Instagram wants to "establish clear rules to help protect our community." Instagram reaches a younger demographic than Facebook's flagship social-media app, and that audience may be more easily swayed by promotions from famous users of the platform. Beginning next year, Instagram, which recently started requiring new users to disclose their birth dates, will restrict the audience for influencer ads about alcohol and diet supplements. (Source: Bloomberg)

> Wall Street Wants Fantasy Football Bros to Start Trading Stocks: *Fantasy sports have long been a favorite past-time on Wall Street. An endless string of blog posts and chatroom threads avidly point out the similarities between following fantasy stats and following the markets, likening the right mix of position players to a well-diversified portfolio and underrated players to value stocks. CNBC stock-picking guru Jim Cramer even started his own fantasy football show this season. But in recent years, fantasy sports have grown into a multi-billion dollar industry, with nearly 60 million players, according to the Fantasy Sports & Gaming Association. The majority of players are young men in their 20s and 30s with college degrees and higher-than-average salaries. Now the financial services industry is starting to ask, why shouldn't Wall Street be a favorite past-time for fantasy sports fans? Read more from [Money](#).*

> Millennials are Leaving Religion and Not Coming Back: *Millennials have earned a reputation for reshaping industries and institutions. They've also had a dramatic impact on American religious life. Four in ten millennials now say they are religiously unaffiliated, according to the Pew Research Center. In fact,*

millennials (those between the ages of 23 and 38) are now almost as likely to say they have no religion as they are to identify as Christian. For a long time, though, it wasn't clear whether this youthful defection from religion would be temporary or permanent. It seemed possible that as millennials grew older, at least some would return to a more traditional religious life. But there's mounting evidence that today's younger generations may be leaving religion for good. Read more from [FiveThirtyEight](#).

> Holiday Wrapping Hacks: *'Tis the season to freak out over this simple holiday wrapping hack that's going ridiculously viral on social media. The short clip from DIY site Blossom shows how to wrap a rectangular object with a piece of wrapping paper that appears too short - rotate the package diagonally! The video actually shows several clever wrapping ideas but it is the diagonal hack that's blowing people's minds. Except of course the part of the internet that already knew about the neat trick - they are just annoyed. Check it out [HERE](#).*



Blossom
@BlossomHacks



Wrapping gifts got a whole lot easier with these clever ideas!

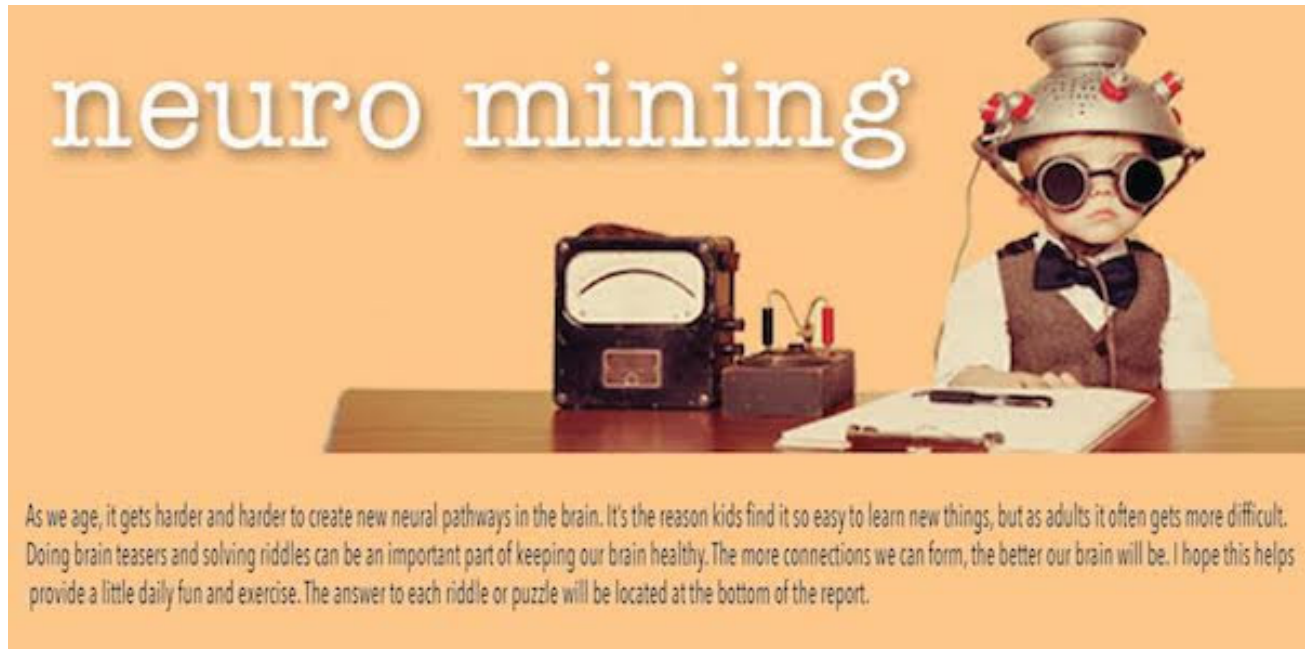




Northeast North Dakota - *Nobody in this area escaped the pain that 2019 delivered. We harvested just under 100 of our nearly 6,000 acres of corn before we were halted. Hopefully, March will provide some opportunities to get it out before the ground thaws and we have to tear things up. Like most growers, crops up this way are suffering from high moisture and low test weights. as well as yields that are 10-15 BPA below averages. I should mention that I was told by an agronomist I trust that if left on the stalk over the winter, the starch levels in the corn should elevate before we harvest in March, so I'm leaving them out there. We jumped in the hemp space this year by growing some certified hemp seed. I only did it after some due diligence and finding a market to sell it in. We chose to stay out of the CBD space as it is so unregulated and until the FDA sets some standards, we won't go there. It's an interesting crop that grows like crazy. Once it hit waist-high, it only took another week for it to be at shoulder height. It's my intention to grow it again if I get the contract renewed but I have time to decide that. If not hemp, we will go back to edible beans most likely.*

Central Illinois - *I don't know what the rest of the state looks like but we were in a pocket that yielded well across the board in both soybeans and corn. We averaged over 230 on corn and 65 on soybeans. We went through the same phase that another guy was talking about where the corn did nothing for like 4-6 weeks. It honestly looked like it didn't even grow an inch. But come the middle of July it took off and evened back out, which really helped with not seeing much of a yield drag. There were drown out spots that seem to go away for the most part. Granted we did see them a little on the yield monitor but the rest of the corn was good enough to offset it.*

Northern South Dakota - *There is some concern around here if we continue to get snow like normal through the winter we are going to see flooding all through South Dakota and North Dakota right into the heart of planting season. Our plan for that is simple - we will probably fall back pretty hard on soybeans. They can be planted much later and there are several seed companies that are offering a premium for seed beans. If we don't see the spring flooding our plan will be to go 50/50 corn and soybeans. I just don't see that happening though, especially with as much snow as we have already received and it's only December.*



TODAY'S RIDDLE: Though I live beneath a roof, I never seem to dry. If you will only hold me, I swear I will not lie. What am I?



What's in the U.S. Spending Bill for Ag?

Congress recently unveiled its spending packages for fiscal 2020, including a bipartisan compromise on the Agriculture-FDA bill. Negotiators agreed on \$23.4 billion in discretionary funding for food and farm programs, a middle-ground between what House and Senate appropriators had proposed earlier this year — \$24.3 billion and \$23.1 billion, respectively. The spending deal will also extend both expired and expiring tax breaks, including the biodiesel tax credit that expired at the end of 2017. Below are more details about what's in the package for agriculture:

Disaster Relief: *The overall package includes an additional \$1.5 billion in aid for farmers and ranchers affected by extreme weather this year. The relief funds will also be expanded to allow payments for quality losses due to weather damage, which will help sugar beet growers in states like Minnesota and North Dakota who are facing their worst harvests in decades. Those*

areas of the country suffering from the most extreme drought will be eligible for additional support. Those producers that were affected by hurricanes and wildfires will also continue to be eligible for funding.

Agricultural Research: Total funding for agricultural research is \$3.4 billion, which is the same as fiscal year 2019. Total funding for ARS, USDA's premiere in-house research agency, is \$1.6 billion. Funding for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture is \$1.527 billion, which is \$56 million more than fiscal year 2019. Included in the NIFA funding is \$425 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, \$315 million for SmithLever, \$37 million for the Sustainable Agriculture and Research Education Program, and \$10 million for a pilot program to address the high suicide rates among farmers.

Agricultural Marketing Service: The spending bill includes \$20 million for Dairy Business Innovation Centers, a \$2 million increase for the National Organic Program, and \$16.4 million for the implementation of the Hemp Production Program that was authorized in the 2018 farm bill.

Hemp Rules: Appropriators included a provision that would bar the use of federal funds to prohibit interstate transportation of hemp or interfere with processing, sales or use of legally grown hemp. Producers and shippers have faced legal snags trying to move the plant across state lines, thanks to a messy patchwork of state laws.

Rural Utilities: Water and Waste loans and grants are combined to fund clean water and sanitary waste disposal projects in small rural communities. Budget authority for these programs is \$659 million, which is \$111 million over fiscal year 2019. Additionally, the ReConnect Program, which provides funding to increase rural broadband services, is funded at \$555 million.

Food and Drug Administration: Total discretionary funding for the Food and Drug Administration is \$3.159 billion, an increase of \$91 million over fiscal year 2019. Within this increase is \$78.9 million for medical product and food safety activities and \$12.1 million for critical infrastructure improvements. The bill also includes \$2 million for FDA to continue work on a regulatory framework for Cannabidiol.



Movies Coming Out This Christmas

Every family has its own traditions for Christmas Day and one that my wife and I

have formed over the years is taking an evening trip to the movie theater with the kids. I find going to see a movie with the family is a great way to get out of the house and have some fun, especially when many other places are closed. Below are all the movies that will be playing during Christmas this year, lots to pick from. My wife tells me several are already Sold Out! I should also note, a few movies that have already been released I've heard that were very good include "Knives Out," "Ford v Ferrari," "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," "Uncut Gems," and "Bombshell."

Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker: *Some of you may have seen this last night, but this is one definitely on the list for me this year! After 40 years, the Skywalker Saga will finally be coming to a close with "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker." Keep in mind, this will be the third installment of the Star Wars sequel trilogy, following "The Force Awakens" (2015) and "The Last Jedi" (2017). Generations of fans around the globe are waiting with anticipation to see how it all ends for our beloved characters. Will Kylo Ren be redeemed? Will Rey turn to the dark side? Will they forge a new era of Grey Jedi? We'll all have to wait and find out tonight in the theaters. Click [HERE](#) to watch the trailer!*



Cats: *Also being released today as one of America's all-time favorite musicals is Cats! For everyone that doesn't know, this film is based on the stage musical of the same name by Andrew Lloyd Webber, which in turn was based on the 1939 poetry collection "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats" by T. S. Eliot. This year, the bizarre and beloved musical about a group of cats*

called the Jellicles must decide which of them will die and ascend to the "Heavyside Layer," their version of the cat afterlife. The amazing cast includes James Corden, Judi Dench, Jason Derulo, Idris Elba, Jennifer Hudson, Ian McKellen, Taylor Swift, Francesca Hayward, and Rebel Wilson. Click [HERE](#) to watch the trailer!



Little Women: *This is probably my top pick coming out on Christmas day and is another remake of the 1868 classic novel by Louisa May Alcott. Greta Gerwig's version of Little Women features a stellar cast full of some of the most talented young actors working today and a handful of legendary veterans. For everyone who hasn't read the novel, the story is about the March sisters – Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy – along with their neighbor and family friend, Laurie – as they grow up and navigate the trials and tribulations of becoming adults in Civil War-era America. According to one of its producers, the new adaptation focuses more on the sisters' young adult lives, particularly after Meg, Jo, and Amy leave their family home. I fully expect Gerwig to breathe new life into it with her retelling. Click [HERE](#) to watch the trailer!*



Just Mercy: *This one is sure to tug at the heartstrings and also comes out on Christmas day. Keep in mind, this is a true story directed by Destin Daniel Cretton, and starring Michael B. Jordan, Jamie Foxx, Rob Morgan, Tim Blake Nelson, Rafe Spall, and Brie Larson. It tells the story of Walter McMillian, a man convicted of murder, and his young defense attorney, Bryan Stevenson. Walter is accused of the murder of an 18-year-old girl, but the evidence mounts that he's innocent, with the only testimony coming from a criminal with a motive for lying while on the stand. Bryan becomes embroiled in the case that spans years as he fights a legal system that is outdated and racist, built to throw away the very people he fights for. Click [HERE](#) to watch the trailer!*



1917: *This film comes out Christmas day as well and war buffs will for sure like this one. "1917" takes place at the height of the first World War and revolves around two young, British soldiers, Schofield and Blake. The pair is given a seemingly impossible mission in which they must cross behind dangerous enemy lines to deliver a message about an ambush. If they don't make it in time, it will mean the death of hundreds of their countrymen and fellow soldiers – including Blake's brother. Click [HERE](#) to watch the trailer!*



Spies in Disguise: *The last film released this Christmas stars Will Smith and Tom Holland lending their voice talents about two spies whose mission goes terribly wrong. Lance Sterling, the voice of Will Smith, is the greatest spy in the world. I suspect he's something similar to James Bond and Ethan Hunt rolled into one. He enlists the help of genius young inventor Walter Beckett, the voice of Tom Holland, for help when he confronts a danger that could threaten the entire world. Unfortunately, Walter has to turn Lance into a pigeon to make it happen – hence Spies in Disguise. Expect lots of family fun and adventure in this animated film! Click [HERE](#) to watch the trailer!*



The Old Shoes In Church

Below is a little something that I've run in the past and it made me stop and think about doing more for folks who might be struggling. I'm sure you may have seen this simple poem before, but I wanted to pass it along this holiday season in hopes it can help rekindle and spread the spirit!

*I showered and shave
I adjusted my tie.
I got there and sat
In a pew just in time.*

*Bowing my head in prayer
As I closed my eyes.
I saw the shoe of the man next to me
Touching my own. I sighed.*

*With plenty of room on either side
I thought, 'Why must our soles touch?'
It bothered me, his shoe touching mine.
But it didn't bother him which made it fine.*

*A prayer began: 'Our Father'
I thought, 'This man with the shoes, has no pride.
They're dusty, worn, scratched and holes on the side!'*

*'Thank You for blessings,' the prayer went on.
The shoe man said A quiet 'Amen.'*

I tried to focus on the prayer

*But my thoughts were on his shoes again.
Aren't we supposed to look our best. When walking through that door?
'Well, this certainly isn't it,' I thought, glancing toward the floor.*

*Then the prayer was ended
And the songs of praise began
The shoe man was certainly loud
Sounding proud as he sang
His voice lifted the rafters
His hands were raised high
The Lord could surely hear
The shoe man's voice from the sky.*

*It was time for the offering
And what I threw in was steep.
I watched as the shoe man reached into his pockets so deep.
I saw what was pulled out
What the shoe man put in.
Then I heard a soft 'clink' as when silver hits tin.*

*The sermon really bored me, and that's no lie.
It was the same sermon told to the shoe man, but tears fell from his eyes.
At the end of the service
As is the custom here
We must greet new visitors
And show them all good cheer.*

*But I felt moved somehow
And wanted to meet the shoe man.
So after the closing prayer I reached over and shook his hand.
He was old and his skin was dark and his hair was truly a mess
But I thanked him for coming and for being our guest.*

*He said, 'My name's Charlie, I'm glad to meet you, my friend.'
There were tears in his eyes, but he still had a large, wide grin.
'Let me explain,' he said, Wiping tears from his eyes.
'I've been coming here for months, and you're the first to say 'Hi.'
'I know that my appearance is not like all the rest.
'But I really do try to always look my best.'
'I always clean and polish my shoes before my very long walk.'
'But by the time I get here they're dirty and dusty, like chalk.'*

*My heart was filled with pain
And I swallowed to hide my tears.*

*As he continued to apologize, for sitting so near
He said, 'When I get here, I know I must look a sight.'
'But I thought if I could touch you, Then maybe our souls might unite.'*

*I was silent for a moment
Knowing whatever was said
Would pale in comparison
So I spoke from my heart, not my head.*

*'Oh, you've touched me,' I said, 'And taught me, in part'
'That the best of any man, Is what is found in his heart.'
The rest, I thought, This shoe man will never know.
Like just how thankful I really am, That his dirty old shoe touched my soul.*





ANSWER to riddle: Your tongue.



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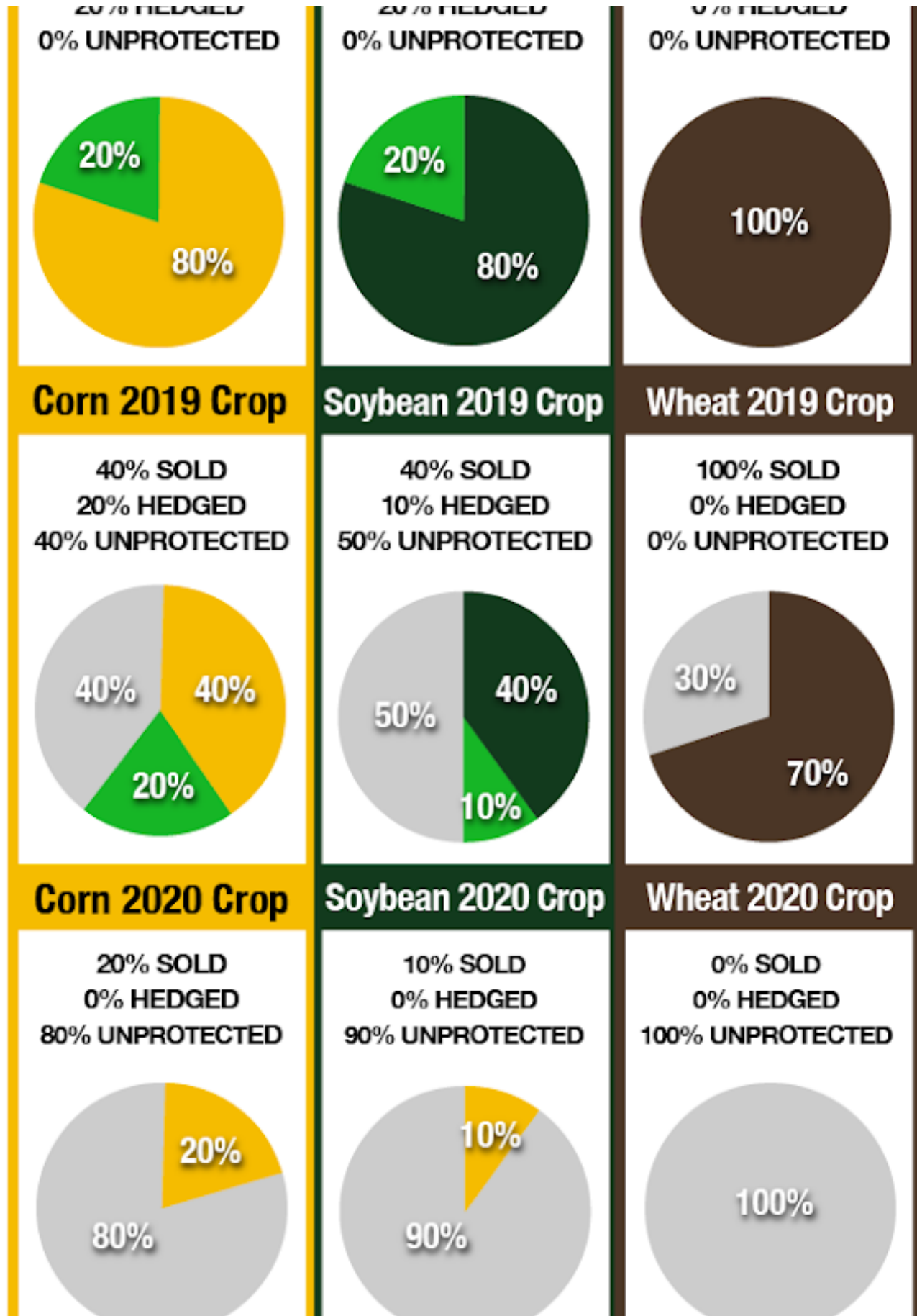
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