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## GOOD MORNING: The Van Trump Report 12-23-19

1 message

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

Mon, Dec 23, 2019 at 5:30 AM

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"One of the most glorious messes in the world is the mess created in the living room on Christmas day. Don't clean it up too quickly." - **Andy Rooney**

**\*LAST VAN TRUMP REPORT UNTIL THURSDAY JAN 2nd** - Due to the Christmas holiday and abbreviated trading sessions I will not be issuing another morning report until next Thursday the 2nd day of January. If something dramatic happens or I make a sizeable adjustment to my portfolio or cash marketing strategy I will update paid subscribers via a live podcast or Special Report. I hope everyone enjoys the holiday break. I am looking forward to some quality time with friends and family. I wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas! If you were planning on attending our **FARMCON** conference in mid-January in Kansas City, you need to pull the trigger over the holiday break as we will be fully SOLD OUT when we return in 2020! Click [HERE](#)

**Monday, December 23, 2019**

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**Morning Summary:** Stock markets are on track to close out a decade long massive bull run. Despite all of the "doom and gloom" that has been sold to small investors, the S&P 500 is up +250% on a total return basis from December 31st

2009, compounding at an average of +13.3% per year. In 2019, we are going to end the year with double digit gains, with an overall U.S. economic outlook in a much better place than it was last year at this time. Last year, the S&P was on its way to a -15% month-to-date decline at the close on Christmas Eve. This year, the S&P 500 is headed toward a +30% gain. Nine out of eleven sectors up by at least +20%, with Technology leading the pack with gains of over +45%. There are also signs that global growth is starting to pickup, trade tensions have lessened, and central banks have reaffirmed that they will maintain ultra-low interest rates and continue to be extremely accommodative. Financial volatility is very subdued, and there are reasonable expectations that the solid investor returns of this year will carry over into 2020. Analysts at Bespoke Investments point out the S&P 500 has returned an average +6.6% in years following a +20%-plus rally. Remember, stock and bond markets close early on Tuesday for Christmas Eve and will be closed entirely for Christmas on Wednesday. Economic data is very light this week, with today's Durable Goods Orders and New Home Sales being the only reports of any real significance. Analysts expect New Home Sales for November to rise slightly to 735,000 from 733,000 in October, which is their best level in 12 years. There are very few worries that anything market-moving will come out of Washington in the weeks ahead with the Senate in recess until January 3 and the House out until January 7. It's hoped that once Washington returns to business-as-usual that the U.S. and China will sign the "Phase 1" trade deal. Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Trump reportedly had a "very good talk" on Friday and there are rumors that they may sign the new pact as early as January 9, though there has not been any formal announcement. Here at The Van Trump Report we will return to the markets on the morning of January 2nd. Be safe and have a happy holiday!

**U.S. Housing Poised to Remain Strong:** U.S. home sales have been picking up in the second half of the year, a sign that low mortgage rates and a solid economy are helping the housing market. With U.S. unemployment at a 50-year low, and wage growth has picked up modestly, it really wasn't any big surprise when National Association of Home Builders recently reported its housing market index, which measures industry confidence, rose in December to its highest level since June 1999. Historically low mortgage rates and an increase in millennials looking to buy their first home are luring more buyers into the market. Millennials now account for nearly half of home-purchase mortgage originations and that number will soon be rising. The median sales price for an existing home was up +5.4% compared to last year at \$271,300. Sales of homes priced at \$250,000 and below declined further from year-ago levels, while sales of those in the \$500,000-to-\$750,000 range posted the strongest gains, rising +8.0%. The average interest rate on a 30-year fixed mortgage was around 3.73% as of mid-December, up slightly from September's lows but below year-ago levels.

**The Winter That Changed The World:** *Thomas Payne wrote in 1778, "Let it be told to the future world, that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, a great nation was born." It was in the fall of 1777, that British forces had captured the American capital of Philadelphia.*

*After failing to retake the city, Washington led an estimated 12,000-man army into winter quarters at camp, called Valley Forge, located approximately 18 miles northwest of Philadelphia. They remained there for six months, from December 19, 1777 to June 19, 1778.*

*Contrary to popular perceptions, Valley Forge had a high percentage of racial and ethnic diversity, since Washington's army comprised individuals from all 13 states. About 30% of Continental soldiers at Valley Forge didn't speak English as their first language. Many soldiers and commanders hailed from German-speaking communities, others spoke Scottish- or Irish-Gaelic, and a few descended from French-speaking Huguenot as well as Dutch-speaking communities in New York State. Local residents sometimes conversed in Welsh. Several senior officers in the Continental Army originally came from France, Prussia, Poland, Ireland, and Hungary. By January 1778, nearly 10% of Washington's effective force consisted of African American troops. Women also played a huge role in helping to fight the cause. There are stories that hundreds of women made long and treacherous journeys to Valley Forge in an effort to help their husbands, sons and other troops.*

*Disease as well as lack of food and supplies killed hundreds that winter. Historians say over 1,500 horses and over 2,000 men and women died from starvation and disease.*

*A turning point came when a group of women drove ten teams of oxen to the camp for slaughter. The women also brought hundreds of handmade shirts and other clothes smuggled from behind enemy lines.*

*It was once written that few places evoke the spirit of patriotism and independence, represent individual and collective sacrifice, or demonstrate the resolve, tenacity, and determination of the people of the United States to be free as does the story of Valley Forge.*

*George Washington and his troops hunkered down at Valley Forge for six-months, using the time to allow his men to recover, get better trained, and to build an amazingly strong bond. During the encampment, Washington inspired the soldiers through his own resilience and sense of duty. In fact, the Continental Army's transformative experiences at Valley Forge has been called unexplainable by many world historians.*

*Bottom-line, whatever happened or transformed the men while in the pit of Valley Forge forever changed our nation and the world.*

*I think we should all take a moment and remember back to a Christmas past, and perhaps one of the least hopeful Decembers in American history—the*

*one where George Washington and thousands of other great men and women spent the holidays in the hell at Valley Forge... all so future generations could have the freedom to sit in the comfort and safety of their own homes on Christmas Eve.*

*Let's also not forget Washington's bold Christmas night crossing of the Delaware River in 1776 that also holds major significance in America history.*

*The sacrifices that were made for this great country are all around us. I suspect if we all spent more time remembering back to the great sacrifices that were made before us, we would be much more appreciative about what we have and less apt to argue and complain about our current differences.*

*I give a special thanks to all those men and women, both from the past and present, who had to spend their holidays fighting for and defending our families freedom. We are forever grateful and appreciative! (Source: Valley Forge National Historical Park)*



**Holy Cow... Great Art and Great Message!** *Gene Hanson, the North Dakota farmer created this message in his field last year right before Christmas. Instead of using his plow he used the cows -- approximately 150 young black Angus cattle to form a cross. "It's the Christmas season, and I thought that would be really nice if we put the feed down in a sign of the*



*cross", Hanson told reporters. The retired great-grandfather wanted to form the cross to remind people of "the birth of Jesus" as the reason for the season. Hanson also has a large cross erected in his cow pasture, 25 feet tall and 15 feet wide, along U.S. Highway 281. He put solar lights on it so people can see it at night. Gene and his wife, Darlene, also dress up as Mr. and Mrs. Claus every year for the "Christmas on Main" event in their town and visit the local nursing home. Together they have 13 great-grandchildren and grandkids. Awesome pic! (Source: Fox, NBC, USA Today)*



**Merry Christmas From The Farm:** *What do you get when you mix a Tractor, a Drone and 10" of Snow? We've ran this video a couple of times but I couldn't help running it again - Merry Christmas! Click [HERE](#) to watch.*



# Founding Partners





# FARM TANK

Tweets of the Day







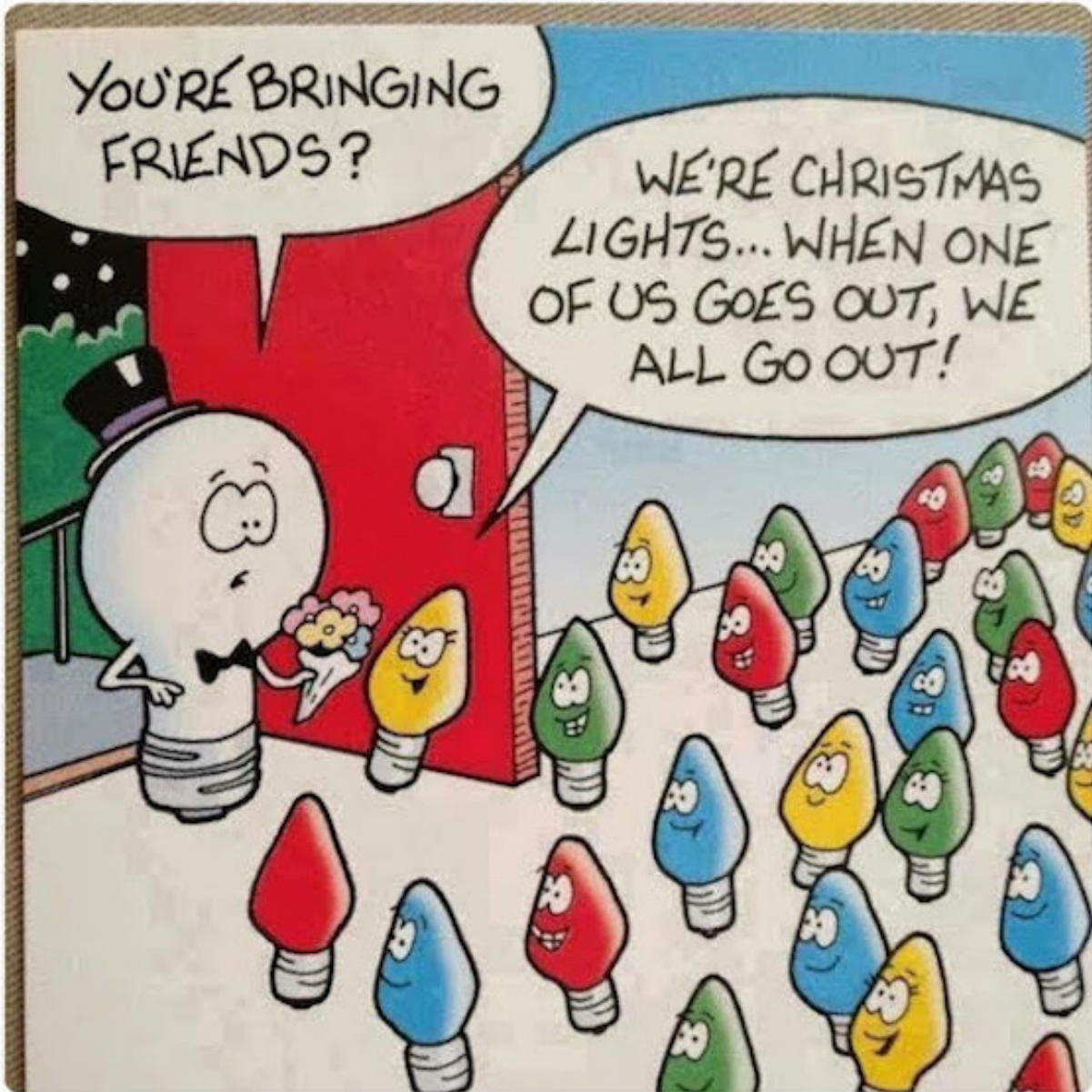
**Brittany Wilbanks**

@HotMessFarms

Following



#ChristmasJokes





**James Breakwell, Exploding Un...** ✓

@XplodingUnicorn

Following



My pig knocked over the Christmas tree.

My wife is still upstairs taking a shower.

It's been nice knowing all of you.







**The Cutting Globe** 🌱 ✂️ 🌳  
@cuttingglobe

Following



#ChristmasTree on the way .....



**Gwun Chin**

@GwunChin

Following



The greatest gift you can ever give someone is your presence. #meditation #inspiration #quotestoliveby

## Christmas To-Do List

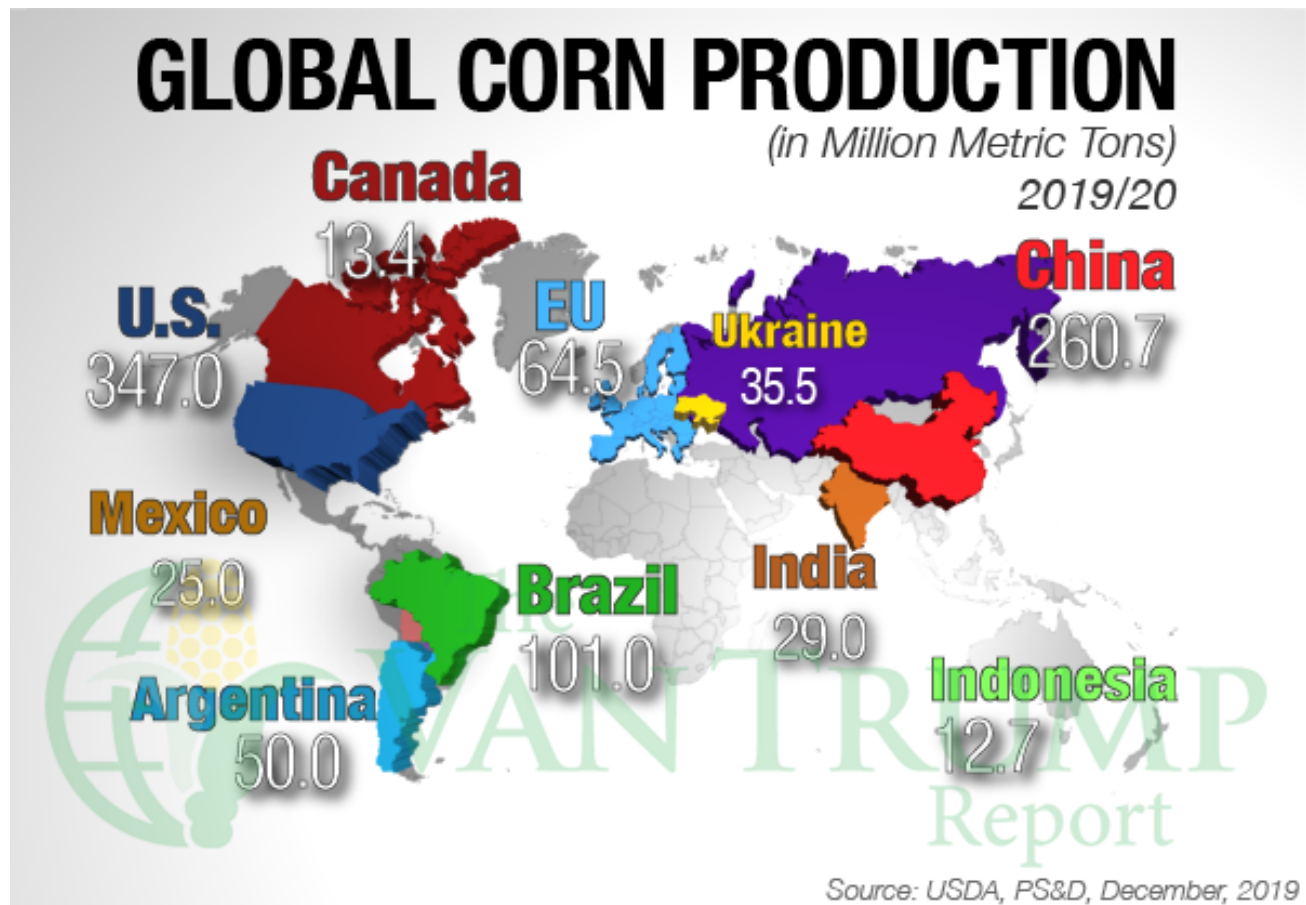
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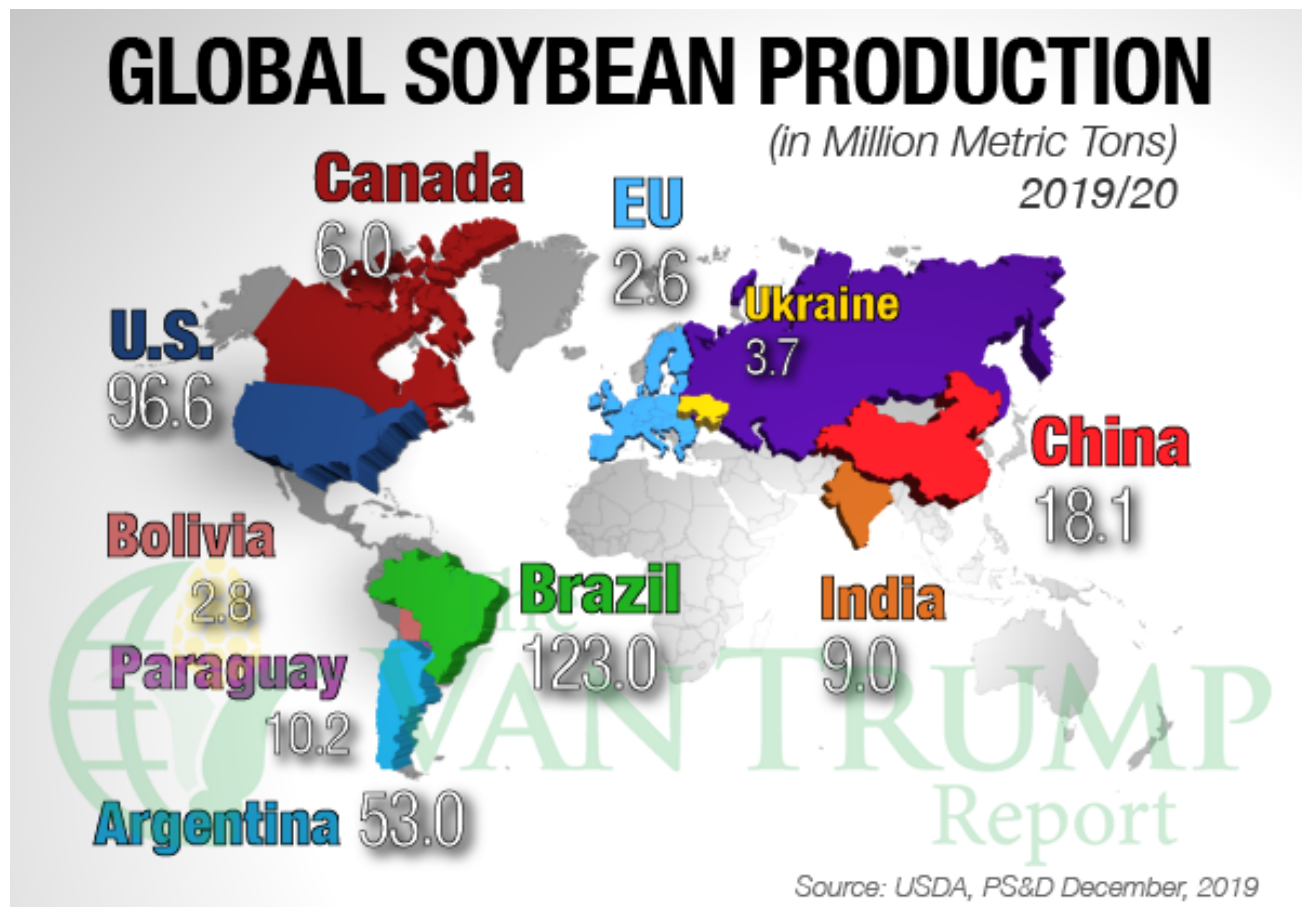
**Corn** bulls will be trying to gain on last week's momentum. We picked up about +6 cents last week and added that to the +10 cents picked from the lows set the week before. Net-net, the MAR20 contract is still stuck mostly midway inside the \$3.65 to \$4.10 range, an area we haven't traded outside of since early to mid-August. Bulls are talking about rumors and rhetoric out of Washington that President Trump is going to deliver some big money to help aid E15 infrastructure. This could obviously help improve ethanol demand and erase some of the uncertainty surrounding the recent EPA talk. There also seems to be more talk of the "Phase 1" trade deal being officially signed sooner rather than later. Meaning perhaps additional improvements in demand will soon be coming from Chinese purchases. Bottom-line, perhaps the demand bears might backpedal a bit if they believe there's a chance for stronger buying. I continue to keep a close eye on South American weather headlines but at the moment there's not really much of a market-moving story. We have had some well-advertised areas of concern in southern Argentina and southern Brazil but nothing fresh or new in the headlines. In fact, bears argue the recent rounds of rain and moisture in the South American forecast is actually acting neutral to somewhat bearish at the moment. I suspect the next couple of weeks will be choppy and somewhat unpredictable as the U.S. markets thin out around the holiday sessions. Looking forward it's all about the

upcoming January 10 USDA report. I will be paying close attention to money-flow and price movement heading into the report. I have this feeling bears could look to move to the sideline and smaller specs add a bit of length ahead of the numbers which combined might create a little rally. As both a spec and producer, if that rally occurs, I will be looking to reduce a bit of bullish risk. Just not sure where the next bullish catalyst comes during Feb & Mar?



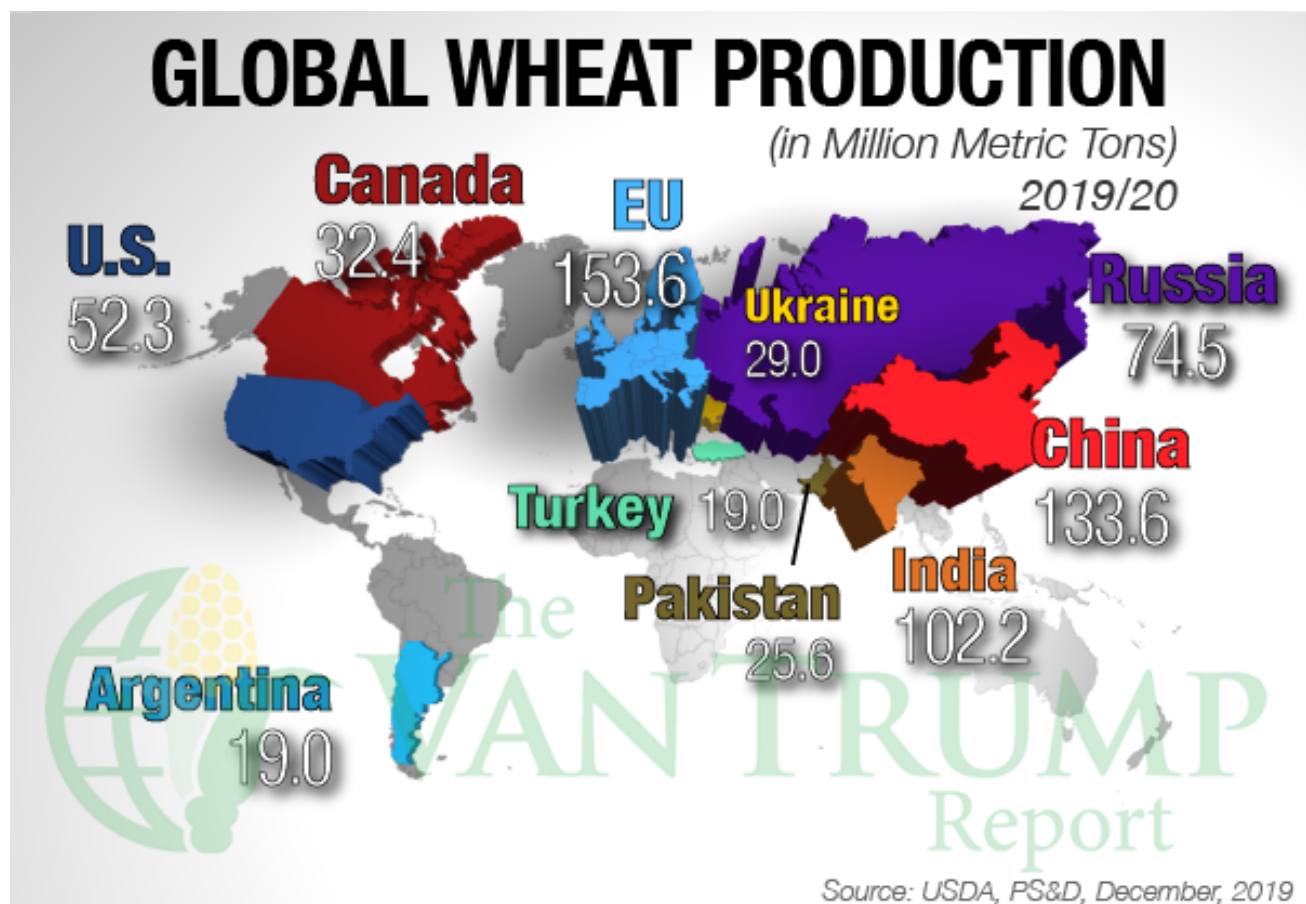
**Soybean** bulls were able to add +20 cents to prices last week. Since the beginning of December, bulls have added almost +50 cents from the lows. Technically, the chart looks strong as some now talk about a bullish pennant forming as the trade consolidates. As both a producer and a spec, I've elected to take advantage of the recent runup in price, selling some additional cash bushels and banking profits on spec positions and moving to the sideline. I can easily argue the bull's perspective for even higher prices, but at the same time, I can also easily argue and understand the bearish bets that are now being placed. When I find myself mentally debating and being easily persuaded in either direction I've learned to step to the sideline and catch my breath. I currently have no spec positions and have further reduced some production risk. I'm hopeful that the Chinese come through with heavy buying but I'm also aware of the improved weather in South America and the very real chance of Brazil harvesting another record crop and U.S. exporters soon losing their competitive edge. There's been

talk and rumors that the "Phase 1" deal could bring +45 MMTs of buying by the Chinese in 2020. Bears are quick to question this number since the Chinese are battling ASF and the most U.S. beans they've ever purchased were just over +33 MMTs back in 2016. Moral of the story, similar to corn, I'm thinking we could catch a little run-up in price ahead of the report as bears move to the sideline on the improved demand headlines. I'm just wondering if that's part of the rally we've seen to this point. Hence the reason I've elected to reduce some cash exposure and bank profits as a bull. I suspect if we continue to push higher I will make a few more cash sales or look for ways to build a stronger floor and lock in flat-price on more bushels. Remember, there's already talk of +9 to +10 million more soybean acres in 2020 coming from producers here in the U.S. Like corn, I'm trying to figure out where the bullish catalyst comes during February and March if the Chinese are busy booking SAM soybeans and U.S. producers are talking about big acres? Remember, it's how we are psychologically impacted three and four moves down the road that often determines our success or failure in the markets.



**Wheat** bulls are trying to add to last week's gains. It was the March HRW contract that lead the way last week gaining +19 cents, spring wheat gained +10 cents and SRW wheat gained +9 cents. As a producer, I reduced a bit of new-crop risk by selling the JUL20 SRW and reowning the board with a couple of call strategies. Technically the charts look are encouraging the bulls, but I just worry

about the next few cycles of headlines and our ability to fundamentally keep the bulls fed on a regular basis. I'm still thinking the upcoming USDA report on January 10 could lean bullish with fewer wheat acres being reported. It's that next wave of headlines that has me a bit concerned. If the Chinese don't step in as bigger buyers how does U.S. wheat stay competitive at higher prices? I could argue some improved wheat demand for livestock in several parts of the world, especially in parts of Brazil where cash corn is in tight supply and higher in price. But again, with near record global supply it's not enough to attract fresh new bullish money to the market. Once the bears are done covering their short positions and the early fundamental bull is on board we will need another wave of fresh headlines to attract new buyers. At the moment, I just can't pinpoint where that comes from. The market has had a lot of eyes on Chinese trade headlines and weather. The Chinese trade headlines are somewhat out of the bag and there's really no new weather story that can pick up the weight. bottom-line, bulls might need to find a new weather story or see some confirmation of Chinese buying to keep price moving higher beyond the January 10 USDA report. Just trying to look out past the holidays and out into mid to late-January.







**> Cattle on Feed Report Considered Bearish:** *USDA estimates 12.031 million head of cattle were in U.S. feedlots as of December 1, up +2.5% from last year and slightly higher than what most were anticipating. Placements were thought to increase by +4.9%, while Marketings fell by -3.0%. Net-net, the report is considered by most to be bearish nearby. the trade will look to cash wholesale prices to determine if the setback is only a temporary blip on the radar or the start of a bigger pullback in price?*

**> Hog & Pig Report Probably Shows More U.S. Expansion:** *Most sources expecting USDA to show December 1 pig herd up +3% compared to last year at just over +77 million head.*

**> Government Says Verdict In Bayer's Roundup Case Could be Reversed:** *The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Justice Department said a federal appeals court should reverse a lower court verdict finding Bayer AG liable in the case of a California man who blamed its Roundup weed killer for his cancer. The government said in a friend of the court brief filed on Friday that glyphosate, the weed killer's active ingredient, is not a carcinogen and as a result a warning on the label was not required as California state law demands. The backing by the EPA and Justice Department comes days after Bayer asked a U.S. federal appeals court to throw out a \$25 million judgment it was ordered to pay Edwin Hardeman. Bayer had denied its Roundup weed killer causes cancer. Bayer argued it would be impossible to comply with the Hardeman verdict, a lawsuit brought under state*

*law, because any warning label would be in conflict with guidance from a federal agency. The EPA and Justice Department agreed in their Friday filing. "It is unlawful for manufacturers and sellers to make claims on their labels that differ from what EPA approves," the U.S. government said. (Source: Reuters)*

**> Lawsuit Alleges Turkey Companies Conspired to Keep Prices High:** *A new class-action lawsuit brought by two food distributors alleges that the country's top turkey companies conspired for most of the past decade to raise turkey prices. The allegations mirror those brought in recent years against beef, pork, and chicken companies, and all revolve around the use of reports on industry production and pricing made by a secretive data company called Agri Stats. The defendants in the case control approximately 80 percent of the market for turkeys, and the top four — Cargill, Hormel, Butterball, and Farbest — control more than half the market, according to the complaint. Other defendants include Agri Stats, Foster Farms, Kraft Heinz, Hormel Foods, and Tyson Foods. Read more from [Ag Insider](#).*

**> Commercial Pig Farm in China Jams Drone Signal to Combat Swine Fever Crooks:** *One of China's biggest animal feed producers said it had used a radio transmitter to combat crooks using drones to drop pork products contaminated with African swine fever on its pig farms, as part of a racket to profit from the health scare. In July, China's agriculture ministry said criminal gangs were faking outbreaks of swine fever on farms and forcing farmers to sell their healthy pigs at sharply lower prices. And on Thursday, a state-backed news website, The Paper, reported that a pig farming unit of Beijing Dabeinong Technology Group Co Ltd had run foul of the regional aviation authority, as its transmitter had disrupted the GPS signal in the area. Dabeinong confirmed on Friday that its pig farming unit in Heilongjiang province had unwittingly violated civil aviation rules in their attempt to prevent people from using drones to drop contaminated pork into their facilities. (Source: Reuters)*

**> On Farming YouTube, Emu Eggs and Hay Bales Find Loyal Fans:** *Creators uploaded +61% more farming-related videos to YouTube this year than the one before, and views on farming content are up +69%, according to Madeline Buxton, a culture and trends manager at the company. Buxton says YouTube has seen an influx of new creators who specifically chronicle what it's like to open a farm after living in a city or working a corporate job. Like #VanLife videos, where creators share how they abandoned the mainstream to live on the road, farming content serves as a how-to guide to an alternative way of living. Farming YouTube also offers the chance to experience a way of life that's often idealized, but practically inaccessible to most people. Some farmers use YouTube as a way to teach people about where their food comes from and how the profession of farming really works. For many farm creators, YouTube isn't just an educational outlet, but an important source of revenue. One farmer that WIRED talked to says he generates between \$2,000 and \$3,000 in advertising per month, while another farming*

*family says it's now become their main source of income. Read more from [WIRED](#).*

**> Tech IPOs in 2020: Five Things to Watch:** *This was not quite the banner year for tech initial public offerings that private investors had hoped for. All told, 49 tech companies went public in 2019, raising \$25.7 billion. That compared with 54 IPOs raising a total of \$20.8 billion last year, according to Dealogic. But while the overall amount raised was higher, several high-profile IPOs haven't performed anywhere near as well as expected. Both Uber and Lyft are trading about 34% below their IPO prices, while Pinterest stock has fallen to 4% below its IPO price. There was also the epic WeWork debacle, which went from a private market valuation of \$47 billion to needing a \$10 billion bailout after scrapping their ill-received IPO plans. But the rocky road of 2019 is not deterring a number of companies who are preparing for IPOs in the coming months, including Airbnb, DoorDash, and Postmates. A need for funding, and pressure from employees who want to cash out, are motivating them to forge ahead, in many cases during the first part of the year before attention shifts more to the U.S. presidential election. The Information lists five sectors and trends to keep an eye on in 2020 [HERE](#).*

**> Justice Department and FCC Fight State Effort to Block Merger of Sprint and T-Mobile:** *The U.S. Justice Department and Federal Communications Commission filed in court on Friday to support a merger of T-Mobile and Sprint, the third- and fourth-largest wireless carriers. A group of state attorneys general has asked a judge to stop the \$26 billion deal, saying it would lead to higher prices for customers. The case is being heard in federal court in New York and could wrap up as early as Friday. In their filing, the Justice Department and FCC argued that if the states, led by New York and California, succeed in killing the deal the end result will be that rural areas of the United States will be slower to get access to 5G, the next generation of wireless. "Specifically, T-Mobile has committed to providing 5G coverage to 85% of the rural population within three years, and 90% of the rural population within six years," the agencies said in the filing. The Justice Department approved the merger in July after the carriers agreed to sell some assets to satellite provider Dish. The FCC formally approved the merger in October. (Source: Reuters)*

**> "The Rise of Skywalker" Debuts with \$374 Million at the Box Office:** *The latest "Star Wars" movie, "The Rise of Skywalker," opened in theaters with \$374 million in global ticket sales over the weekend as fans rushed to see the final chapter in the long-running film saga, distributor Walt Disney said on Sunday. Roughly \$176 million of the total came from the United States and Canada, ranking as the 12th-biggest opening of all time in the world's largest film market.*

**> How Prohibition Lives on in Counties Across the Nation:** *Almost 90 years after the end of Prohibition, almost 2,000 jurisdictions — towns, counties, and more — are dry, typically meaning you can't legally buy alcohol. Besides this*

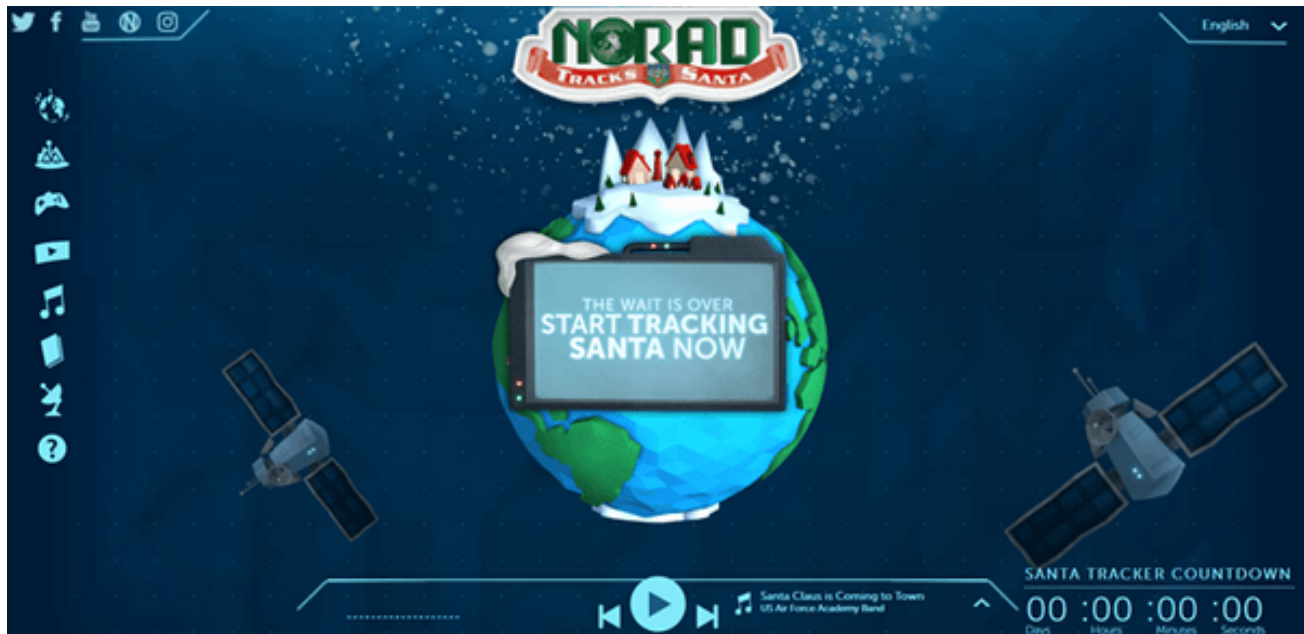
*obvious form of alcohol control, there are still often byzantine laws that govern how and when alcohol can be bought and sold that vary widely state to state. Alcohol policy after the 21st Amendment, which overturned Prohibition in 1933, was not only delegated to the states but was also frequently pushed down even further to the town, city, and county level. Legalizing alcohol was popular — 74 percent of the nation voted to repeal Prohibition — yet some Americans held onto the dream of a totally dry country. The question at the heart of Prohibition — of whether regulation can limit drinking behavior and subsequent criminal behavior — lives on in today's patchwork of local alcohol laws. Read more from [Vox](#).*

**> Techniques for Avoiding a Mid-Life Crisis:** *Ben Carlson of A Wealth of Common Sense shares his new goal of avoiding a mid-life happiness slump and how he plans on accomplishing it. He starts with sharing legendary investor Howard Marks description of how pricing works in the markets: First-level thinking says, "It's a good company; let's buy the stock." Second-level thinking says, "It's a good company, but everyone thinks it's a great company, and it's not. So the stock's overrated and overpriced; let's sell." The idea here is what matters most in the markets is not necessarily what is happening (absolute fundamentals) but what perception and expectations are baked into the price (relative fundamentals). Life and happiness work much in the same way. Your level of happiness has more to do with your current level of expectations about your life, not necessarily your station in life. True happiness requires second-level thinking. Research on happiness in basically every major country around the globe shows the average person experiences something of a happiness smile as they age, with a dip right around middle age. This isn't the case for everyone but it does appear to fit the mold for most people. Carlson contends biggest reason for this is a mismatch between expectations and reality. Read the full post [HERE](#).*

**> NORAD Tracks Santa!** *Waiting for Santa Claus to arrive can be torturous for children on Christmas Eve, but fortunately, with the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), they can get a feel for when he should be coming down the chimney. For 60 years, NORAD and its predecessor, the Continental Air Defense Command (CONAD) have tracked Santa's flight. The tradition began in 1955 after a Colorado Springs-based Sears Roebuck & Co. advertisement misprinted the telephone number for children to call Santa. Instead of reaching Santa, the phone number put kids through to the CONAD Commander-in-Chief's operations "hotline." The Director of Operations at the time, Colonel Harry Shoup, had his staff check the radar for indications of Santa making his way south from the North Pole. Children who called were given updates on his location, and a tradition was born. In 1958, the governments of Canada and the United States created a bi-national air defense command for North America called the North American Aerospace Defense Command, also known as NORAD, which then took on the tradition of tracking Santa. On Christmas Eve, kids can start tracking Santa using NORAD's technology beginning at 5 a.m. CST and continue tracking him until*



he concludes his trip around the world around midnight at the international dateline. The website also offers games and other fun Christmas activities for the kiddos. Kids also have a couple of other ways to track Santa's movements with NORAD. They can call the toll-free number 1-877-HI-NORAD, send an email to [noradtrackssanta@outlook.com](mailto:noradtrackssanta@outlook.com) or follow along via the official NORAD Tracks Santa social media accounts. Volunteers operate the phone lines on Christmas Eve, working in two-hour shifts with phones that never stop ringing. While kids can ask any question imaginable, the most important information volunteers give children on the other end of the line is that they should be in bed before Santa's expected arrival. It's such a great tradition and lots of fun for the kiddos! Check out the NORAD Santa Tracker [HERE](#).

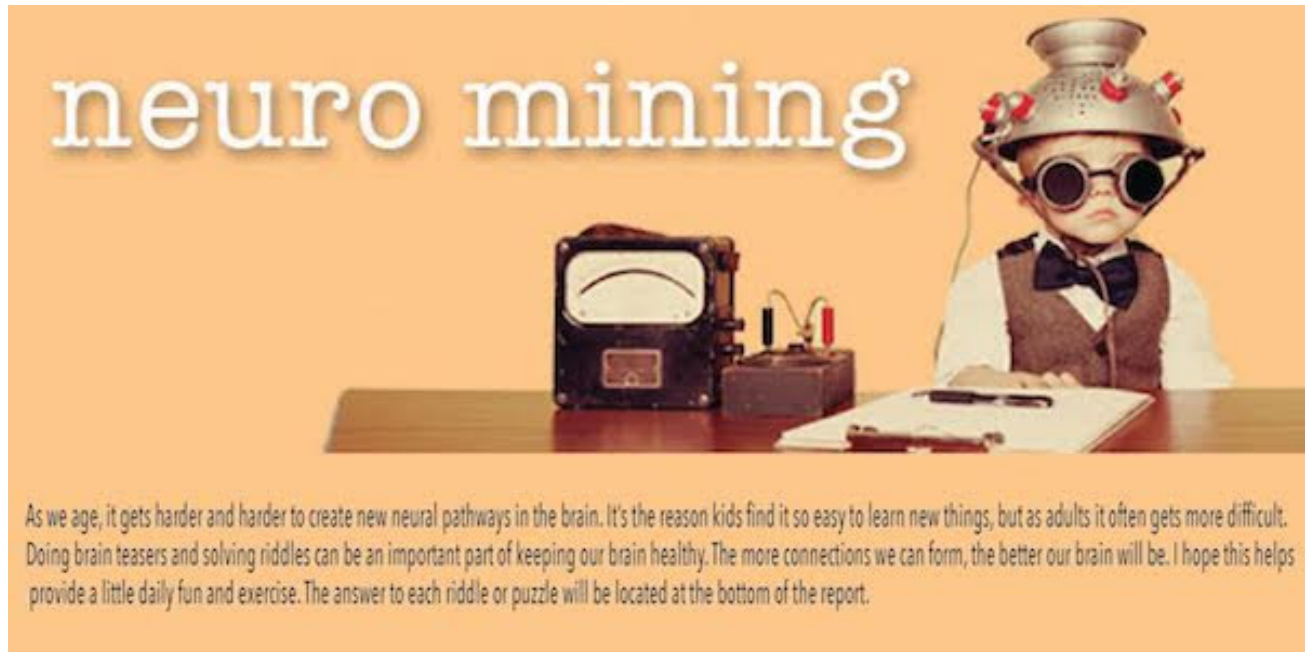


**North Central Iowa** - I saw two farmers combining their beans. Still some blown in snow in first several rows. The crop insurance adjuster needed me to sign something and he said they both tried to file claims but were told they had to try and harvest them as there wasn't any reason they weren't done earlier. I was told they were 17% and were going in an air bin and hoped to get them a little drier. Still some corn left. I didn't really need another job but local a farmer needed help and 74 year olds don't get many offers, so drove their semis as they were still

*picking and should finish today. Corn was around 22%, standing good, planted in June and test weight was around 54# but yield was down compared to earlier planted corn. I thought they got a Christmas present as this is unusual to not have much snow and temps above freezing.*

**East Central Illinois** - *Our year was better than expected overall. Corn was finally in the ground by June with beans getting finished being planted June 8th. Yields were 200 bpa for corn and 65-70 average for beans. We didn't have any of the moisture or test weight issues that I'm hearing a lot of folks did, but I did leave a bit on the table as I was late marketing my crops. We don't have storage so it all goes to town. We renewed all our rented acres, with most around the \$290 area, and following hearing Kevin give a speech about knowing what space you're in, it made me think. Interestingly, I'm on the elevator board and it's funny how I have to view being in the commodity space from two sides, as a producer I'm not looking for more acres but at the elevator, we keep on building more space for the same crops. I used to grow non-GMO beans, but after the chemical bills and paying bean walkers \$15 an hour, the premium was all but eaten up. Our family has a new millennial relative getting ready to come onboard the operation and he's already telling us all the reasons we need to acquire new tech. We have one day of chiseling left to do and we didn't get hardly any fertilizer down, which we contract out. Not sure what happened there. There is still a half-inch of snow on the ground but it is melting. Merry Christmas to everyone and let's hope for a better 2020!*

**Northwest Illinois** - *If there is any corn left, it's few and far between. I did not see a single field as I traveled through the area. Many of the stocks had been slightly ripped in some areas but others were still standing. Most fields have between 2-4 inches of snow cover. The field work is pretty much done for the year at this point. We have nearly all of our spring work done and that is a good feeling in comparison to last year when we literally had none finished. This will allow us to plant a little more corn to offset the heavier beans but nothing major in the grand scheme of things.*



**TODAY'S RIDDLE:** You can play me and pull me, I love the naive. I'm enjoyable to give, but bad to receive. What am I?



### The Christmas Tree

The argument is not about whether your family celebrates with a real or fake Christmas tree but rather how you use the holidays to build a stronger bond within your family based around traditions and togetherness. Our family has always made a commitment to go with a real Christmas tree. All I can say, it's created some interesting adventures through the years and certainly provided the kids with some funny stories. Below are a few fun facts and interesting thoughts about the origin of the Christmas tree. This could make for some fun conversation why all of the holiday craziness is unfolding:

**The Origin of the Christmas Tree** - *One of the earliest stories relating back to Germany is about Saint Boniface. In 722, he encountered some pagans who were about to sacrifice a child at the base of a huge oak tree. He cut down the tree to prevent the sacrifice and a Fir tree grew up at the base of the oak. He then told everyone that this lovely evergreen, with its*

*branches pointing to heaven, was a holy tree - the tree of the Christ child, and a symbol of His promise of eternal life. In the 1840s and 50s, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert made the Christmas tree even more popular. Prince Albert made it a tradition to always decorate a Christmas tree. Because of the public's love for their King and Queen, they immediately copied the couple's Christmas customs including the decorating of a Christmas tree and the displaying of ornaments. An engraving of the Royal Family celebrating Christmas at Windsor was published in 1848 and the earlier German traditions were copied and adapted.*

**Alternative Trees** - *Besides evergreens, other types of trees such as cherry and hawthorns were used as Christmas trees in the past.*

**Lighting the Christmas Tree** - *Thomas Edison's assistant, Edward Johnson, came up with the idea of electric lights for Christmas trees in 1882. Christmas tree lights were first mass-produced in 1890.*

**The First Presidential Christmas Tree** - *In 1856 Franklin Pierce, the 14th President of the United States, was the first President to place a Christmas tree in the White House. President Coolidge started the National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony on the White House lawn in 1923.*

**The Mayor's Christmas Tree** - *The tradition of an official Chicago Christmas tree was initiated in 1913 when one was first lit by Mayor Carter H. Harrison in Grant Park. The official Christmas tree tradition at Rockefeller Center began several years later in 1933.*

**Big Business** - *Thirty-four to thirty-six million Christmas trees are produced each year and 95% are shipped or sold directly from Christmas tree farms. In the United States, there are more than 15,000 Christmas tree farms. There are approximately 350 million Christmas trees growing on U.S. farms. The first Christmas tree retail lot in the United States was started by Mark Carr in New York, in 1851. More than one million acres of land have been planted in Christmas trees. The industry employs over 100,000 people. More than 2,000 trees are usually planted per acre. On an average 1,000-1,500 of these trees will survive. In the North, maybe, 750 trees will remain. Almost all trees require shearing to attain the Christmas tree shape. At six to seven feet, trees are ready for harvest. Christmas trees take an average of 7-10 years to mature. 82% of Christmas trees purchased were pre-cut and 18% were cut your own.*

**Top Selling Varieties** - *The best selling trees are Scotch pine, Douglas fir, Noble fir, Fraser fir, Virginia pine, Balsam fir and white pine. The top six Christmas tree producing states are Oregon, North Carolina, Pennsylvania,*



*Michigan, Washington & Wisconsin.*

**The First Fake Trees** - Artificial Christmas trees were developed in Germany during the 19th century and later became popular in the United States. These "trees" were made using goose feathers that were dyed green and attached to wire branches. The wire branches were then wrapped around a central dowel rod that acted as the trunk.

**Real vs. Fake** - The number of natural tree sales has remained relatively stagnant since 2004, oscillating between about 27 million and 33 million a year. Fake tree sales have more than doubled during that time, from 9 million in 2004 to about 21 million last year. There's been a steady decline in the number of real tree farmers for several years. Oregon, the nation's top producer of Christmas trees, had 699 licensed growers in 2010. As of last year, that number dropped to 392. The average price was \$75 for a real farm-grown tree last year, while the average price for a manufactured one was \$107 and you can use it many times. There are some arguments in play that the Millennials are going to bring back the real Christmas tree in the next decade. Might actually be a business opportunity?



**The best of all gifts around  
any Christmas tree are  
the presence of a HAPPY  
FAMILY all wrapped up in  
each other.**

### **Hey Google... What Were The Top Searches in 2019?**

As the year comes to a close, Google puts a list together to recap what topics and

news events were most fascinating for hundreds of millions of Internet users worldwide. From the viral sensation of Lil Nas X's song "Old Town Road" to Billy Porter's extravagant red carpet ensembles, the year's most popular searches have been laid out for all to see, giving us a glimpse of what America, as well as the rest of the world, really wants to know. Turns out, India vs. South Africa, Cameron Boyce, Copa America, Bangladesh vs. India, and the iPhone 11 were on everyone's minds this year, according to [Google's 2019 Year In Search Report](#), which analyzes Google Trends data to discover what the world was looking for.

Top-list of searches was dominated by celebrities who died in 2019 including: Cameron Boyce, who we already mentioned, Nipsey Hussle, Luke Perry, and Jeffrey Epstein.

When it comes to news, Hurricane Dorian and the Notre Dame Cathedral were popular search topics, as was the Women's World Cup, Area 51 raid, and Copa America.

As far as the United States goes, Disney's new streaming service "Disney Plus" was the biggest search trend of 2019, followed by Cameron Boyce, Nipsey Hussle, Hurricane Dorian, Antonio Brown, Luke Perry, Avengers: Endgame, Game of Thrones, iPhone 11, and Jussie Smollet. "Game of Thrones" was also the biggest U.S. TV show search trend of the year, followed by Netflix's "Stranger Things" and "When They See Us," then HBO's "Chernobyl" and Disney Plus's "The Mandalorian."

The most popular diets searched in 2019 include the Intermittent fasting diet, Dr. Sebi diet, Noom diet, 1200 calories diet, Keto ultra diet.

Google Trends also includes some of the people who trended over the course of the decade, including Justin Bieber, Betty White, LeBron James, as well as long-lasting TV and movie trends, including "Toy Story," "Iron Man," and "The Walking Dead."

Perhaps the best thing about Google trends in 2019 is the "Google's Year In Search 2019 Video" that highlighted "How the World Looks for Heros". The data shows there were were millions of searches for real-life super heroes, people with superpowers, supermoms, not all heroes wear capes, and unsung heroes. This is probably one of my favorite Google Trends videos..."Because living life for something bigger than yourself is a hero's journey!" I encourage you take a moment and **Click [HERE](#)** to watch!



### **One Of My Favorite Christmas Stories...**

The story I included below is one of my all-time favorites. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have though the years.

#### **For the Man Who Hated Christmas**

*The story below was originally published back in 1982. This moving story inspired the creation of The White Envelope Project, a caring nonprofit organization dedicated to developing the next generation of givers, civic leaders, and philanthropists. May this inspirational story remind us all of the true meaning of Christmas and giving during the holidays and throughout the year. The story has inspired me to give to those in need each and every Christmas, I hope it has the same effect on you!*

**By Nancy W. Gavin**

*It's just a small, white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identification, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past ten years.*

*It all began because my husband Mike hated Christmas. Oh, not the true meaning of Christmas, but the commercial aspects of it – overspending and the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma – the gifts given in desperation because you couldn't think of anything else.*

*Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike. The inspiration came in an unusual way.*

*Our son Kevin, who was 12 that year, was on the wrestling team at the school he attended. Shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue and gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes.*

*As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford.*

*Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. Mike, seated beside me, shook his head sadly, "I wish just one of them could have won," he said. "They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right out of them." Mike loved kids - all kids. He so enjoyed coaching little league football, baseball and lacrosse. That's when the idea for his present came.*

*That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes, and sent them anonymously to the inner-city church. On Christmas Eve, I placed a small, white envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me.*

*Mike's smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year. And that same bright smile lit up succeeding years. For each Christmas, I followed the tradition - one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on.*

*The white envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning, and our children - ignoring their new toys - would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents.*

*As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the small, white envelope never lost its allure.*

*The story doesn't end there. You see, we lost Mike last year due to dreaded*

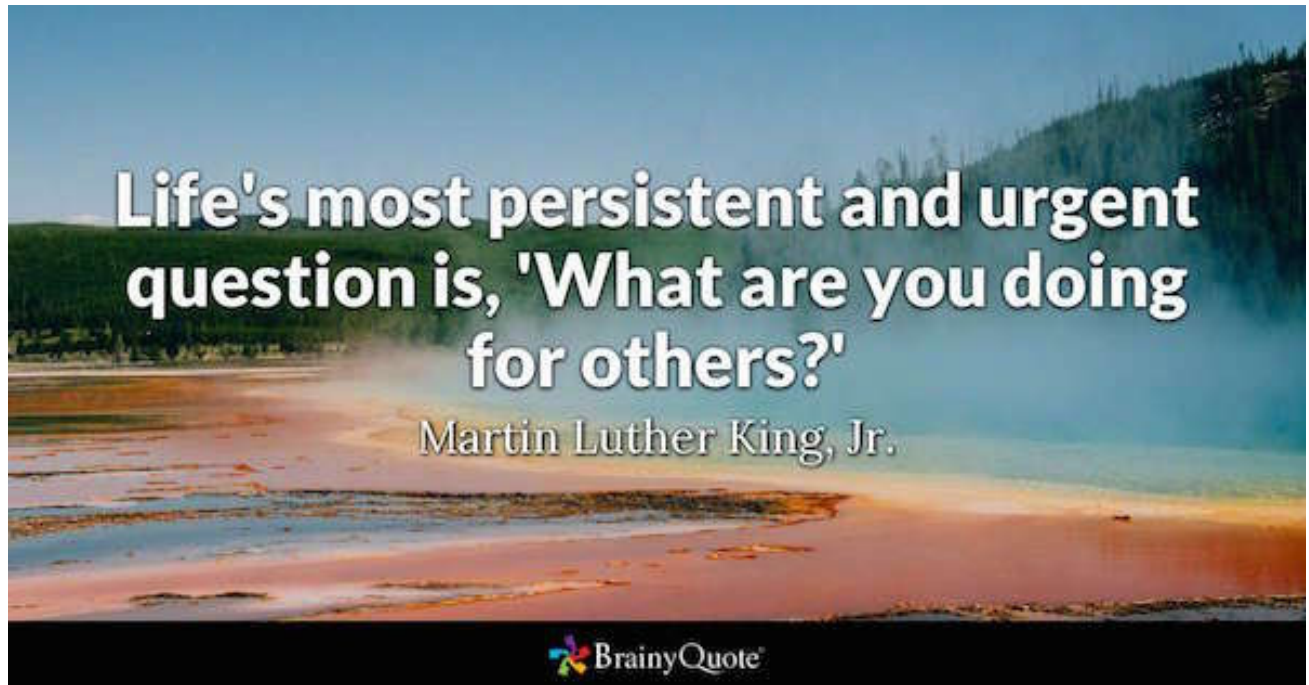


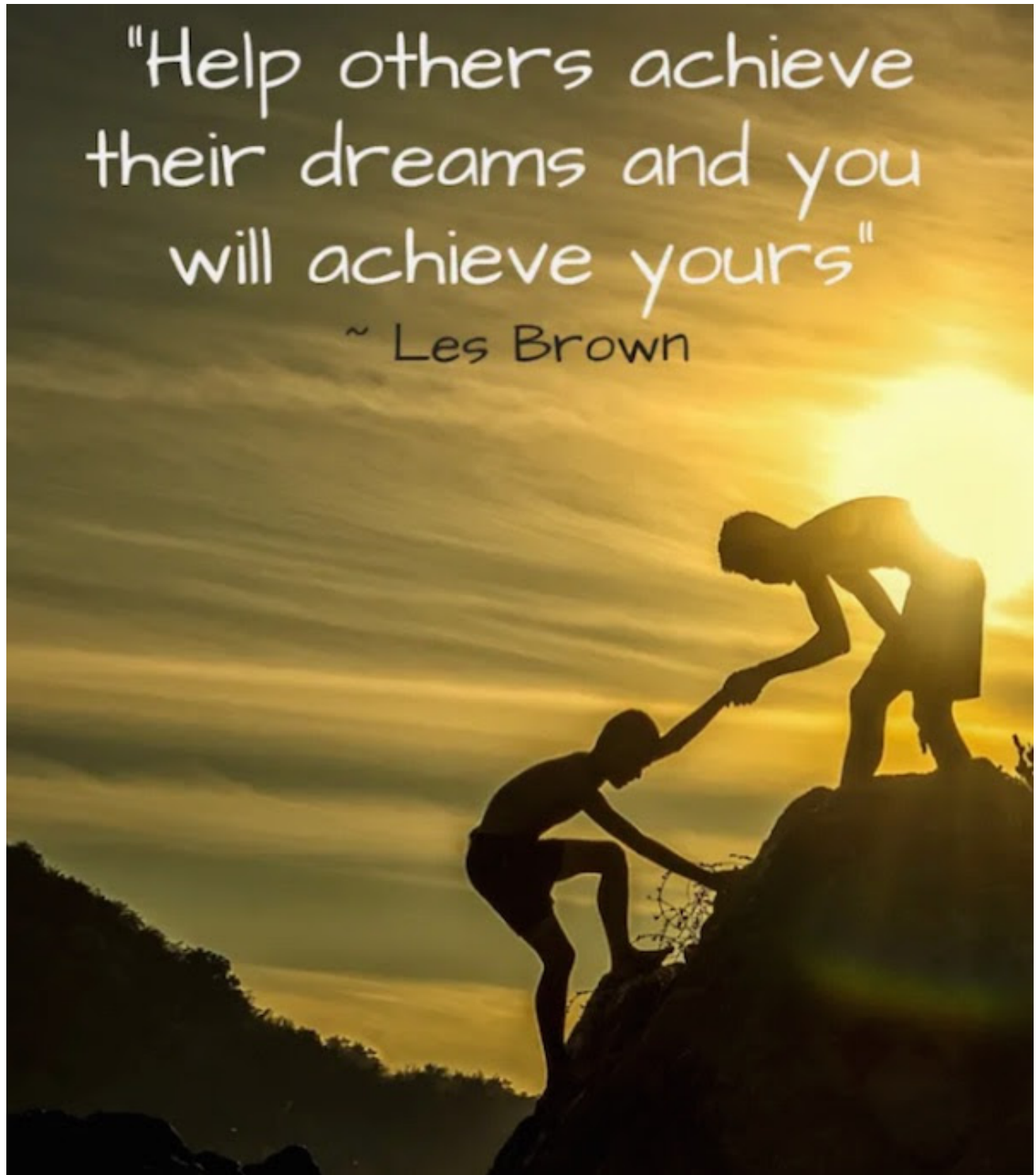
*cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree. And the next morning, I found it was magically joined by three more.*

*Unbeknownst to the others, each of our three children had for the first time placed a white envelope on the tree for their dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing to take down that special envelope.*

*Mike's spirit, like the Christmas spirit, will always be with us.*





**Great Short Video... My Christmas Eve**

Drawing from a lifetime of experiences that include a tour of duty in the U.S. Navy and 29 years as an Ohio State Trooper, Bob Welsh has mesmerized listeners around campfires, in churches, schools and auditoriums with inspirational stories. I wanted to share one that was sent my direction a few years back, and always makes me stop and count my blessings. Click [HERE](#)





### **From Our Family To Yours...**

Thank you for allowing our family and thoughts to be a part of your daily life. I fully understand you have choices and also respect the value of your time. If there's anything my family can do to be of additional help or assistance to you or your family in 2020 please let us know. This report has taken our family down an incredible path and journey. We deeply appreciate all of the support and the wonderful friendships we have made through the years. I wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday, The Van Trump's.





**ANSWER to riddle:** A prank.

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### Corn 2018 Crop

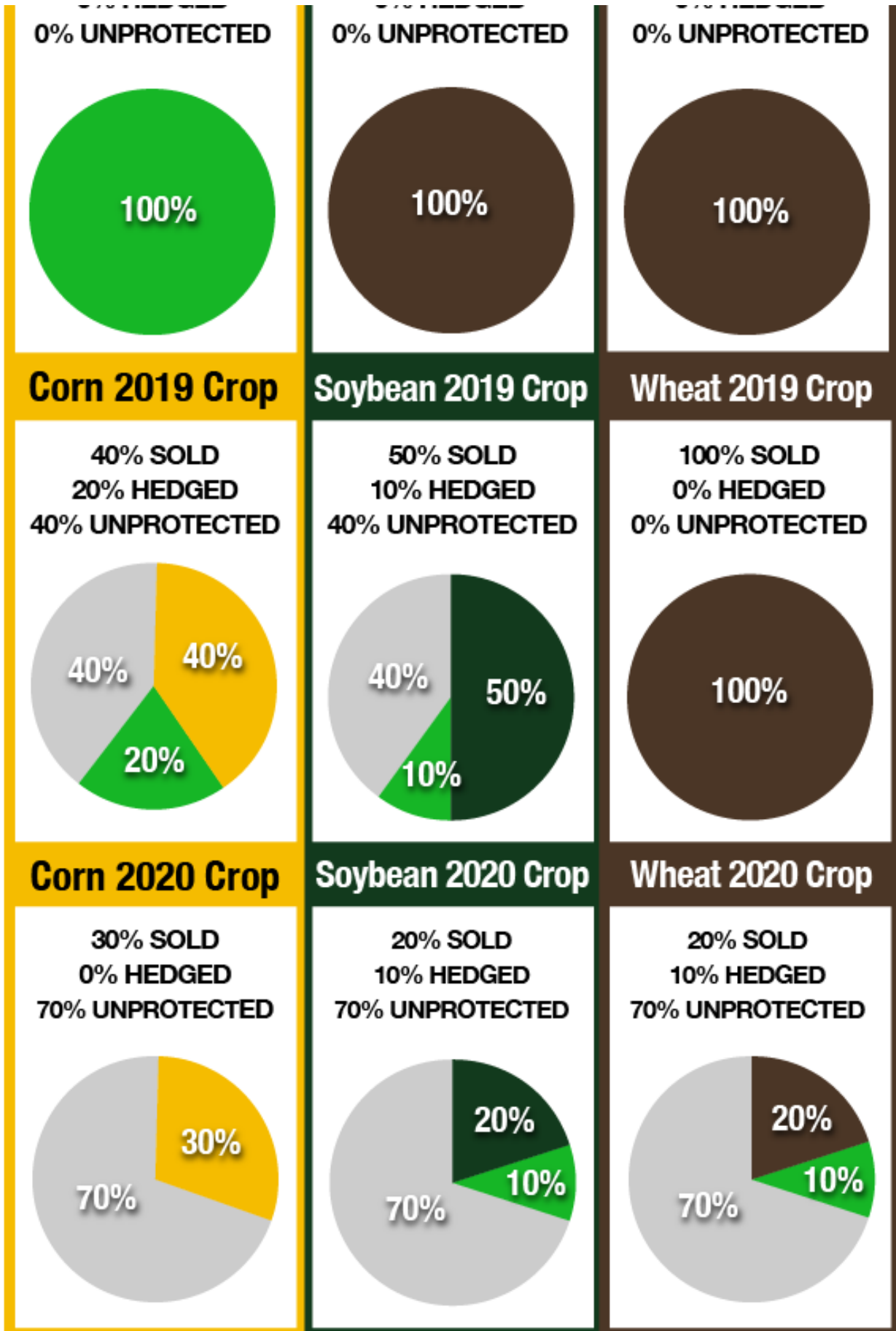
**100% SOLD**  
**0% HEDGED**

### Soybean 2018 Crop

**100% SOLD**  
**0% HEDGED**

### Wheat 2018 Crop

**100% SOLD**  
**0% HEDGED**





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