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GOOD MORNING: The Van Trump Report 5-7-20

1 message

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

Thu, May 7, 2020 at 5:30 AM

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"If you expect life to be easy, challenges will seem difficult. If you accept that challenges may occur, life will be easier." - **Rob Liano**

Thursday, May 7, 2020
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Morning Summary: Investors are shifting their focus to tomorrow's upcoming April Employment report. Private payroll data from ADP recently showed -20.2 million job losses. St. Louis Fed President James Bullard said yesterday that he expects the upcoming report to show one of the worst unemployment rates the U.S. has ever seen, warning the rate could exceed 20% in the next few months. Insiders are also circulating Larry Fink, CEO of Blackrock, comments made to a private group earlier this week, where he said, "As bad as things have been for corporate America, they're likely to get worse." Remember, Fink has been spending a good chunk of time helping advise leaders in Washington, so he's seeing most all of the cards and he is also a very smart man. There's just a ton of worry about business and how they will be three to six months after the reopening and after forbearance from creditors and suppliers run its limit. It will again be a big day for corporate earnings which will include highlights from Anheuser Busch, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Centerpoint Energy, Cushman & Wakefield, Dish Network, Dropbox, Enbridge, Expedia, Hilton, Jetblue Airways, Live Nation, Moderna, Monster Beverage, Murphy Oil, Raytheon, Roku, TripAdvisor, Uber, Yelp, Yeti, and Zillow. I

remain cautious and highly uncertain about the market's overly optimistic enthusiasm about the reopening, federal stimulus, and peak in the virus. I'm still not sure I trust the big bounce... Technically the 2,900 to 3,000 level in the S&P 500 still remains a very big hurdle.

Perspective is an Amazing Art

This has been traveling around a bit as of late and I wanted to share...

"Imagine you were born in 1900. On your 14th birthday, World War I starts, and ends on your 18th birthday. 22 million people perish in that war. Later in the year, a Spanish Flu epidemic hits the planet and runs until your 20th birthday. 50 million people die from it in those two years. Yes, 50 million. On your 29th birthday, the Great Depression begins. Unemployment hits 25%, the World GDP drops 27%. That runs until you are 33. The country nearly collapses along with the world economy. When you turn 39, World War II starts. You aren't even over the hill yet. And don't try to catch your breath. On your 41st birthday, the United States is fully pulled into WWII. Between your 39th and 45th birthday, 75 million people perish in the war. At 50, the Korean War starts. 5 million perish. At 55 the Vietnam War begins and doesn't end for 20 years. 4 million people perish in that conflict. On your 62nd birthday you have the Cuban Missile Crisis, a tipping point in the Cold War. Life on our planet, as we know it, should have ended. Great leaders prevented that from happening. When you turn 75, the Vietnam War finally ends. Think of everyone on the planet born in 1900. How do you survive all of that? When you were a kid in 1985 and didn't think your 85 year old grandparent understood how hard school was. And how mean that kid in your class was. Yet they survived through everything listed above. Perspective is an amazing art, refined as time goes on, and enlightening like you wouldn't believe. Let's try and keep things in perspective."



Why Now Might Be the Moment to Buy that NEW Vehicle: *I should note, I've been talking to a few of my buddies that own larger car dealerships across the U.S. They were telling me this moment might be the best time to purchase a new vehicle especially if you want to take advantage of the 0% interest rates on financing. They said with many plants shut down they are starting to see inventories tighten out on the horizon. Meaning they might not be as willing to make a deal in a couple of weeks when it gets tougher to replace new inventory. Remember, U.S. automakers started shutting down U.S. production on March 18. General Motors yesterday reported adjusted operating profits of \$1.2 billion for the first quarter, down from \$2.2 billion in the same period last year. That was actually a strong result compared with its Detroit peers: Fiat Chrysler barely broke even, while Ford slipped into the red. April I'm sure was worse. In the first four months of the year Ford lost almost seven percentage points of market share in full-size pickup trucks to GM and Fiat Chrysler. (Source: [The Wall Street Journal](#))*

Shopify is now the most valuable company in Canada: *Shopify reported earnings that were up +210% year-over-year as more brick and mortar companies are forced to find a solution to pivoting online.*

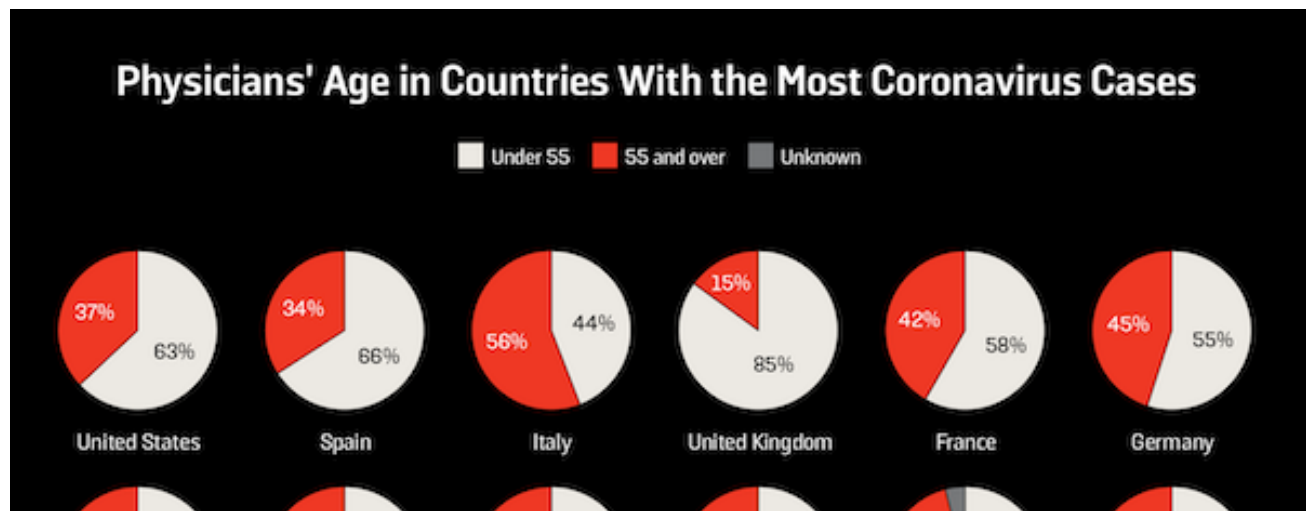
Another Amazon Worker Dies: *Headlines circulating last night detailed the fourth known case of an Amazon warehouse worker that has died from the coronavirus. The employee, who worked out of Amazon's Waukegan, Illinois, warehouse, known as MDW8, was 50 years old, left behind a wife and five children, as well as two stepchildren. The employee worked the night shift as a picker, which involves selecting items from the facility's shelves and preparing them for shipping, among other duties. The day before, officials announced that an Amazon warehouse employee on Staten Island has died from COVID-19. The employee was last onsite at the Amazon warehouse on April 5 and was confirmed to have the virus on April 11 and remained in quarantine. Amazon officials said they are taking proactive measures to protect and support the health and safety of their employees. Tensions have been growing however between Amazon and warehouse workers nationwide, as the numbers of confirmed cases and deaths at its facilities have climbed.*

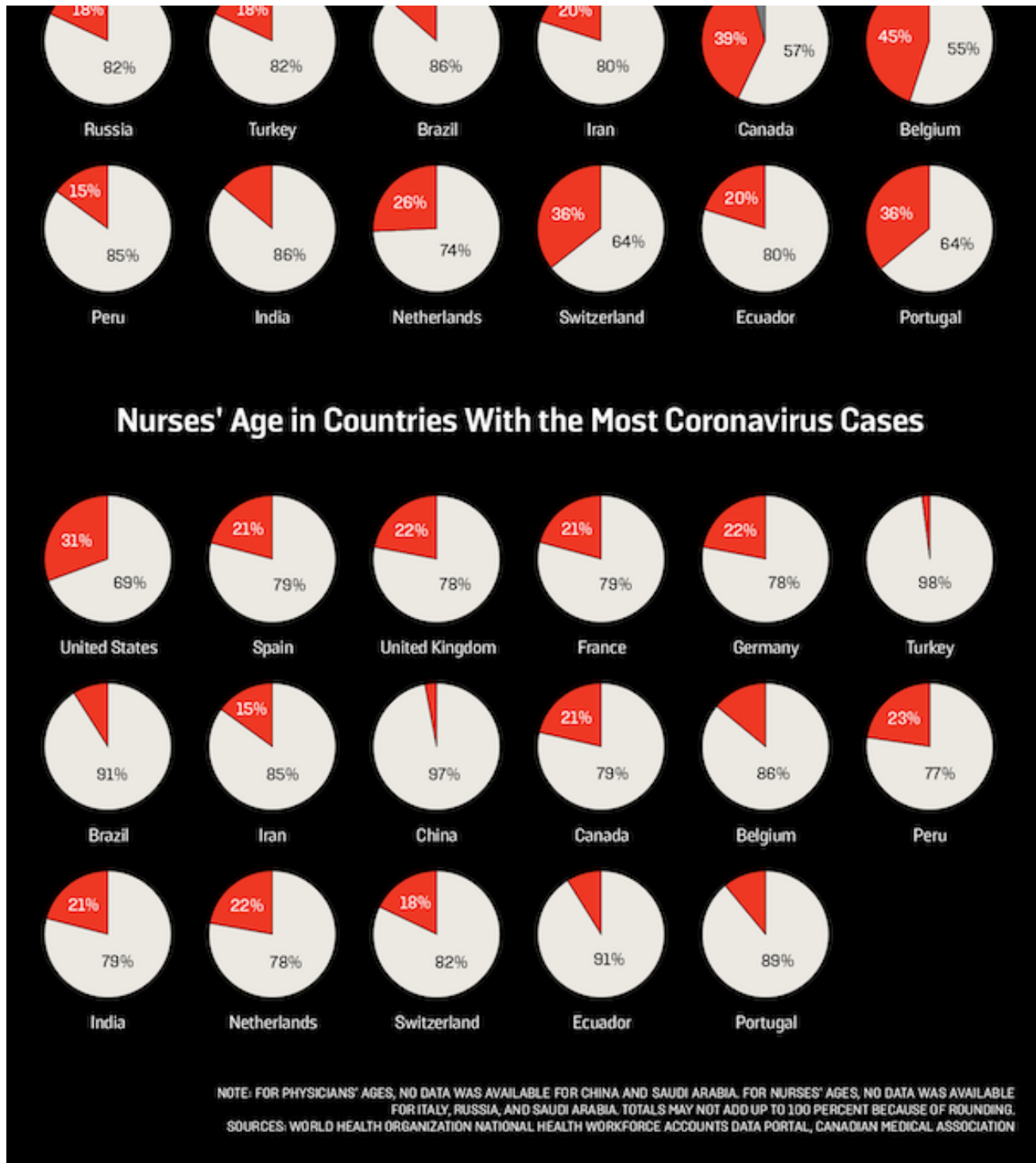
What About Schools Next Year? *I've been hearing more and more talk that schools could look much different during the next school year. Colleges kicking around the idea of large general education classes being moved to online-only trying to avoid having a large number of kids in one spot. High schools and elementary's are kicking around the idea of different grades going different days i.e. sophomores and seniors go one day, with the next day being freshman and juniors. The same type of talk perhaps for elementary schools. It's obvious, school officials are trying to find and figure*

out ways to lower the numbers and spread the kids out. Instead of 30 to 40 in an elementary classroom perhaps it is more like 10 to 15. Crazy to think about all of the moving parts being impacted.

Interesting Spending Shifts on Digital Media Platforms: *Consumer spending on movies or TV shows rented or purchased electronically jumped +48% in March to \$596 million, compared to a year earlier, according to Digital Entertainment Group, an industry research firm. Spending on electronic purchases rose +12.6% in the first quarter while spending on video on demand rose +19.5%. The New York Times' first quarter earnings report also reveals the coronavirus pandemic has spurred an increase in digital news demand. The company recorded its largest-ever increase in digital subscriptions in the first quarter. The bad news is that advertising revenue is down around -50%. The decline in digital advertising spending is actually being seen across the board, including streaming services like Hulu, where viewing is up but a massive chunk of advertisers have disappeared. Social media giant Facebook reported a -17% decline in first quarter ad revenue. Online behemoth Amazon said it's been gradually reducing its Google Ads spending since the end of January and, as of early March, has been turned off almost completely. The big question is, will these changes stick or will spending shift back to pre-pandemic trends once the economy starts rolling again? (Sources: The Information, Adage)*

Countries with Most Fragile Health Care Workforce: *As the coronavirus pandemic stretches health care workforces, it's worth looking at how well placed each country is to handle it. Some countries with high caseloads appear more vulnerable than others. The United States, for example, has the oldest nursing workforce on the list (and nursing groups had declared a nursing shortage long before the pandemic). In Italy, more than half of physicians are over 55 years old. Click the graphic for a larger view. (Source: [ForeignPolicy](#))*





FARM TANK

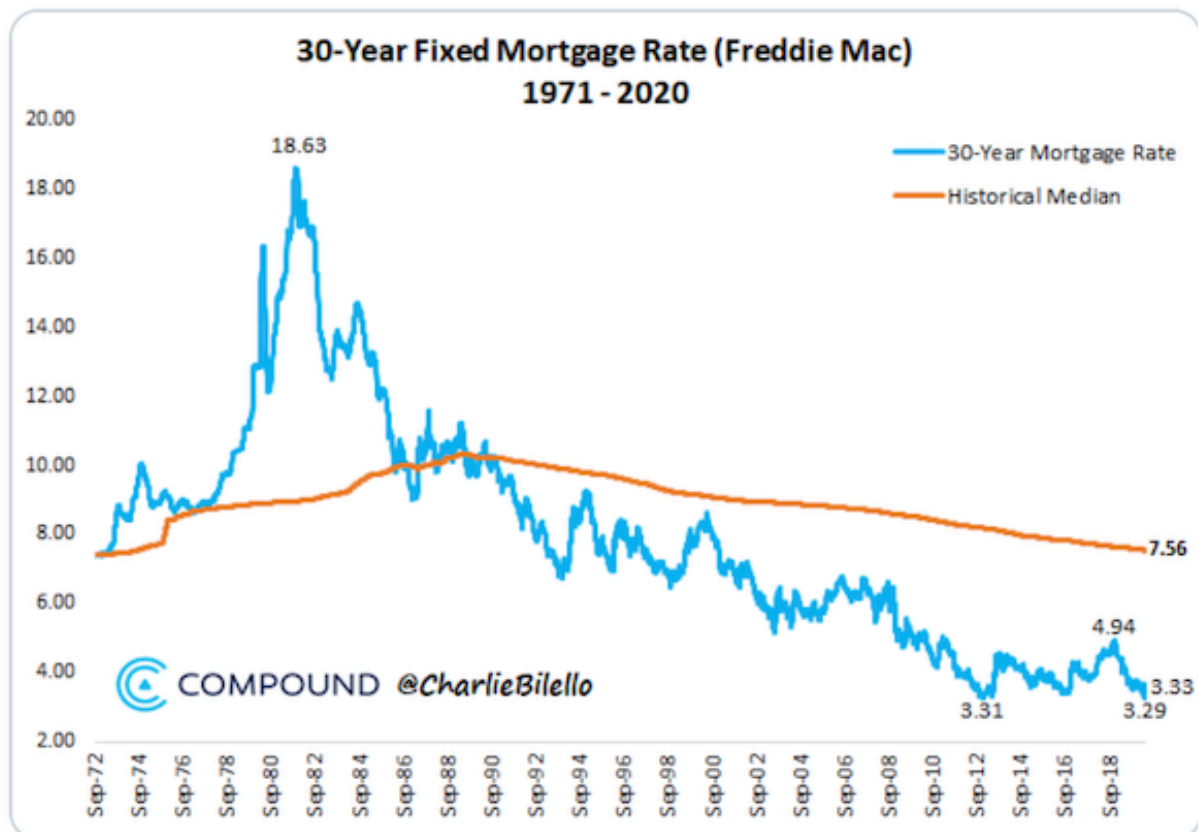
Tweets of the Day



Charlie Bilello ✓
@charliebilello



30-Year Mortgage Rate in US at 3.33%, 4 bps above its all-time low of 3.29% in March.





Vala Afshar ✓
@ValaAfshar



"What is investment?

Usain Bolt won 8 gold medals in 3 Olympics, and he only ran for less than 115 seconds on the track, earning \$119 million dollars. That's economy of effort.

But for those 2 minutes, he trained for 20 years. That's investment. Think long term. Patience pays."



Jon Deal
@silagechopper



Thankfully this guy planted another piece of grass to corn. As an end user and no Ethonal I was worried we

might not get that 97 million acres planted.



Lincoln County Smud Farmer
@PlsntVlyFarmer



Buddy of mine finishing planting in southern Iowa.



**Mission Seed Solutions**

@SeedMission



Larry Spencer, a crop advisor out of Fairgrove, MI took his dad's 46 year old tractor and planter out to plant some of our corn. It brought back memories for sure.

#plant20





Super 70s Sports
@Super70sSports



Actual children's playground, 1912. I shit you not.



**And we wonder where all of
our tough kids have gone?**



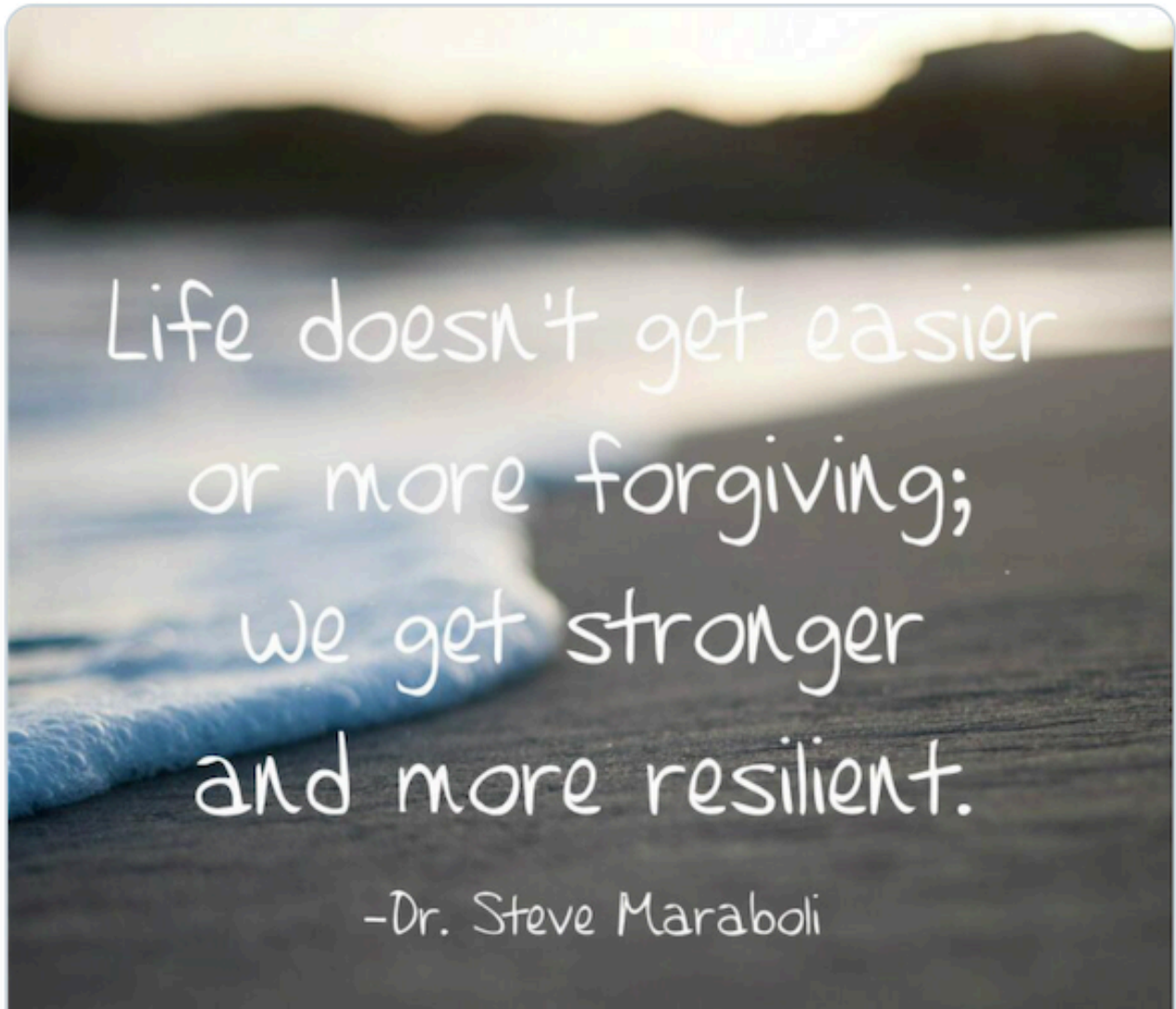
ActionComplete
@ActionComplete



Life doesn't get easier or more forgiving; we get stronger & more resilient.

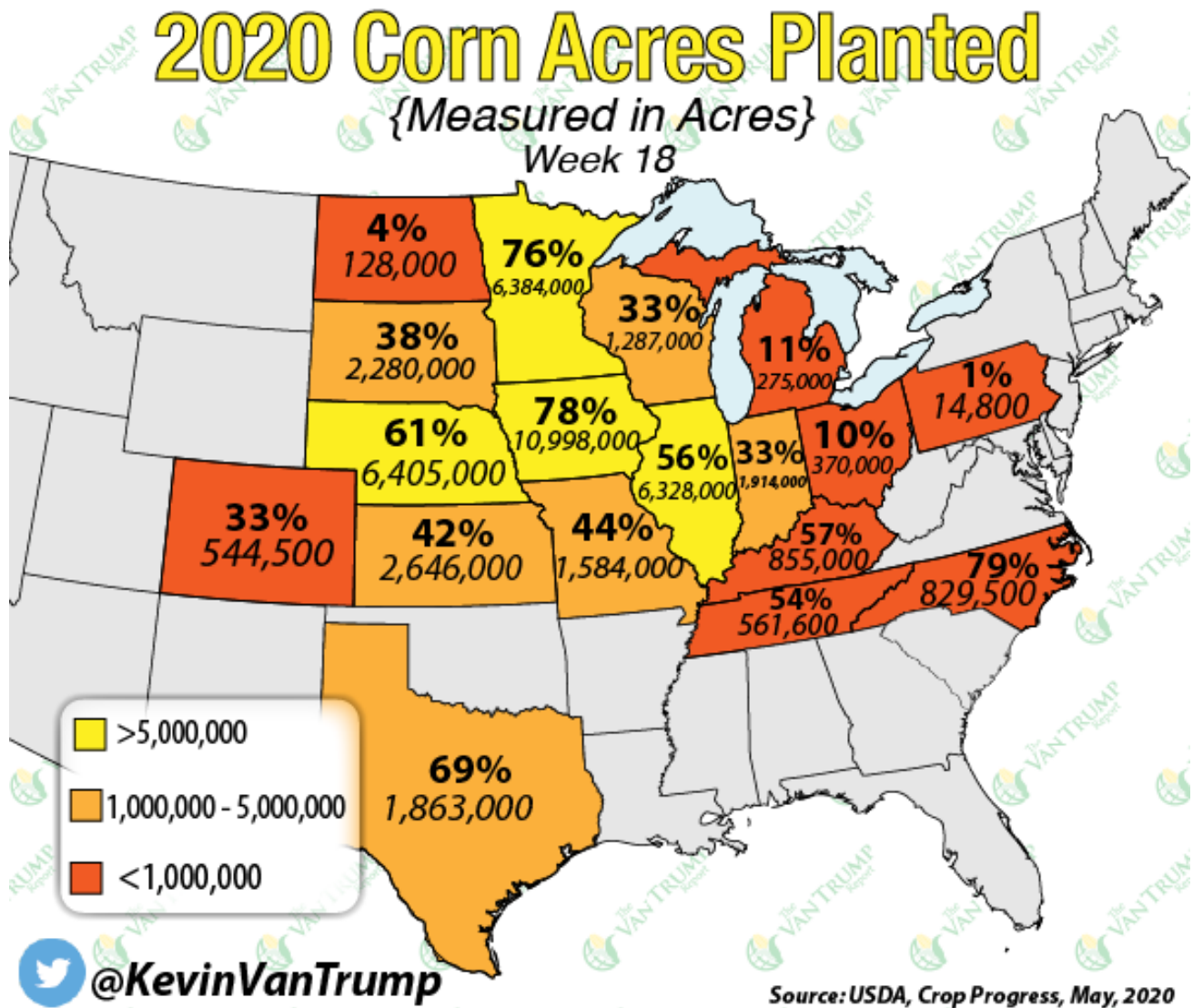
~Steve Maraboli

#quotes #NeverGiveUp



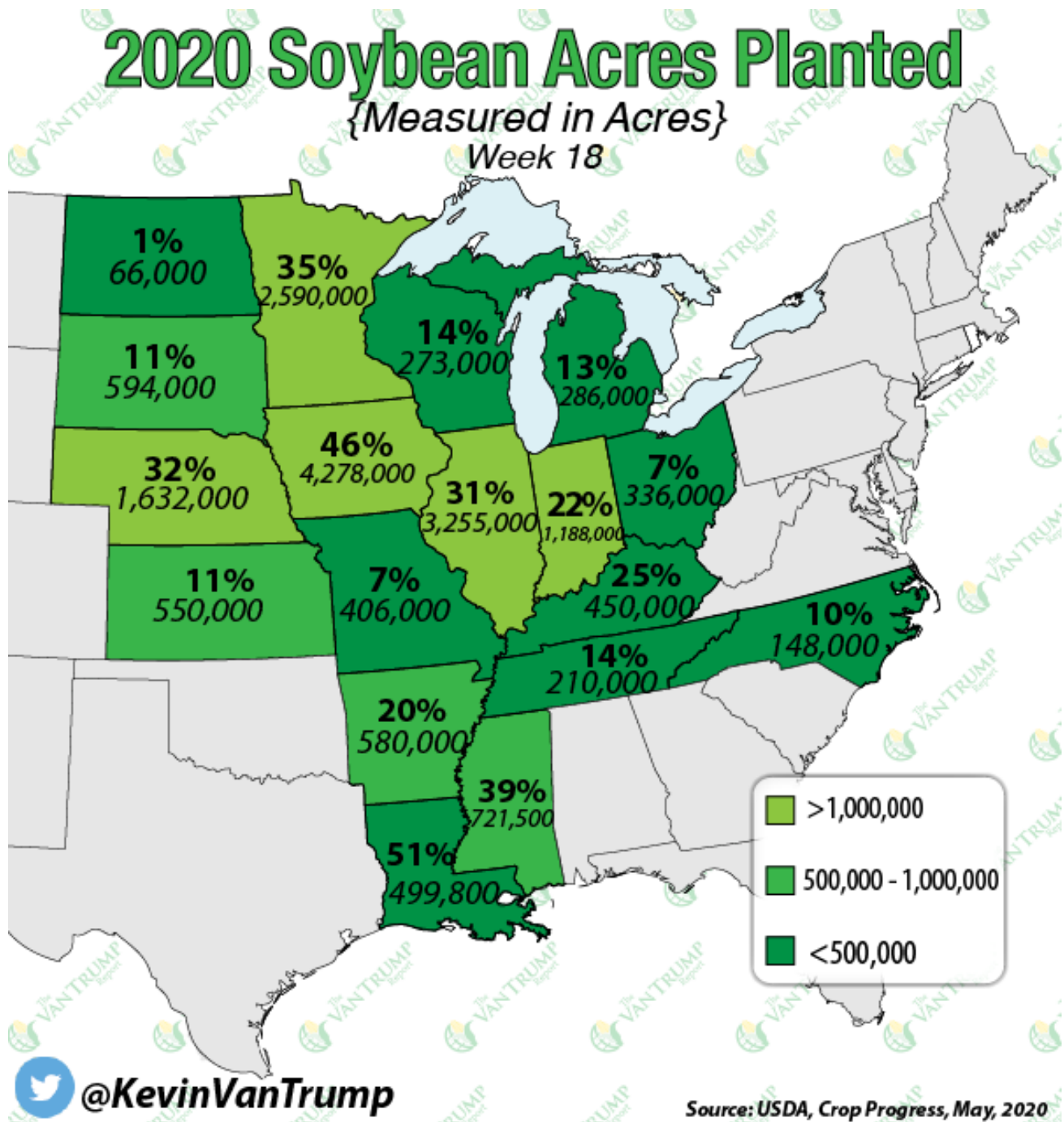
CORN continues to struggle as the bears understand "demand" will take time to rebuild and that weather remains mostly cooperative. Bulls are pointing to improved gasoline demand, meat processing plants mostly back online, some cold temperatures in a few key U.S. locations to the east, and still a few dry areas of concern in Brazil that could drag on second-crop yield. U.S. Energy Information Administration showed an increase in weekly ethanol production for the first time

since early-March as gasoline demand starts to pick back up. At the same time, ethanol stocks were trimmed by -725,000 barrels to 25.6 million, but unfortunately still remain almost +15% larger than last year. I've also heard way more talk of meat processing plants like JBS and Tyson getting back on their feet. From the data I am seeing, a lot more people at the plants have tested positive and are actually asymptomatic, meaning they had it but nothing really happened, which is great news. As both a producer and a spec, I would like to be bullish but it's extremely difficult with no major weather threat and overall demand being so beaten up. How low can we go? I wish had the answer, I keep hearing the \$2.80 number tossed around but who really knows. We need crude oil to keep climbing back higher, we need driving demand to keep improving, we need meat processing plants operating at full capacity, we need the Chinese to step up and make some larger purchases, and we need a wide-spread weather worry. It's ugly I know, but hopefully, the worst will soon be behind us... I suspect the USDA report next Tuesday could deliver another fresh blow to demand so continue to keep covered, I worry the storm has still not passed. Remember, this will be the report where most get to see the +3.0 billion bushel new crop ending stock estimate, some are thinking it could be much closer to +3.5 billion bushels, depending how aggressive the USDA wants to get with demand reductions.



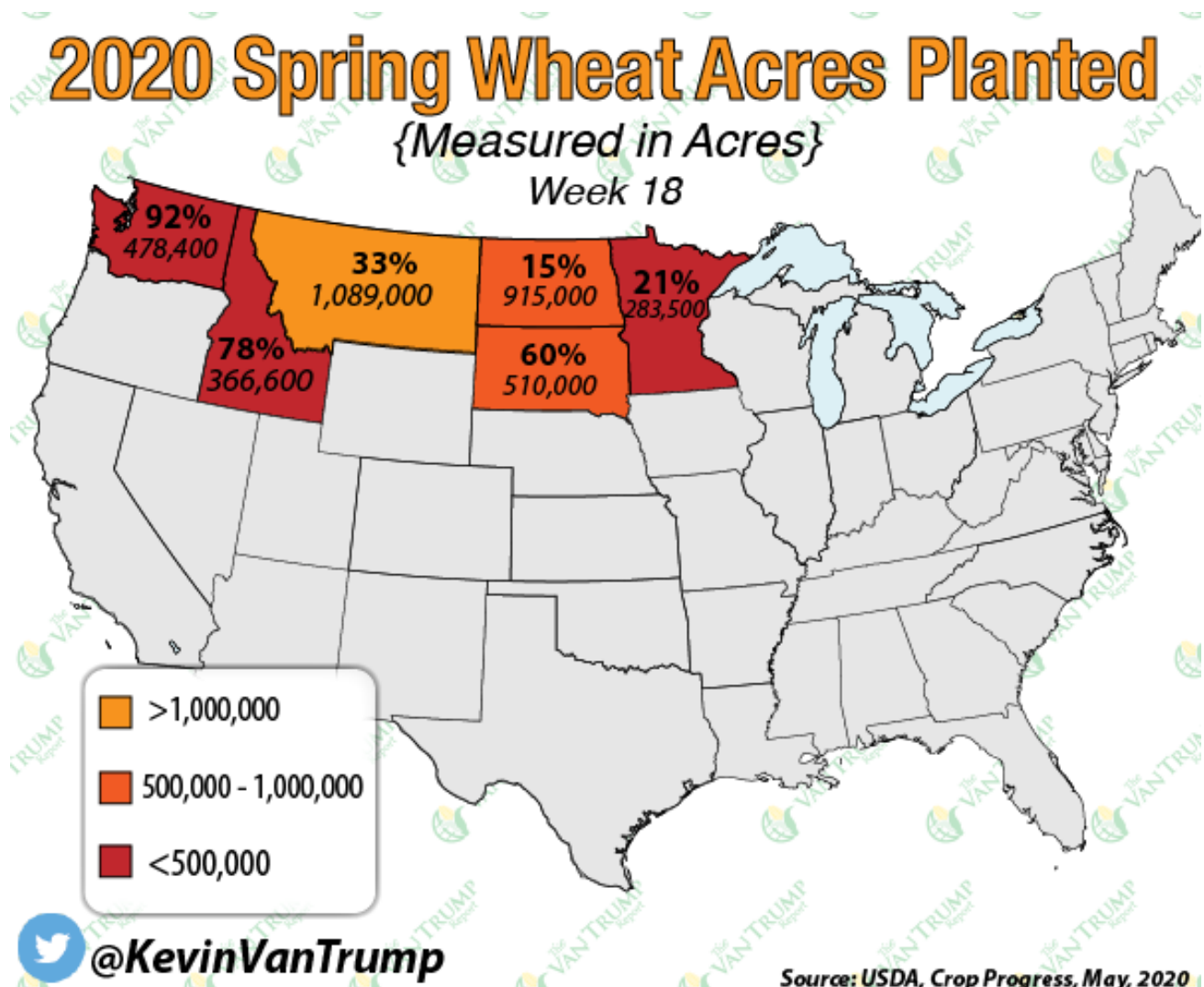
SOYBEAN bears continue to point towards the USDA lowering demand estimates, record South American exports, and U.S. acres moving higher. There's continued talk of reduced domestic crush and no real major story for U.S. exporters. I should also note, the coronavirus pandemic is starting to really rip through Brazil and creating major headwinds. Unfortunately, I was playing the problem to eventually create complications and hiccups in delivery and exports out of Brazil. While that might eventually play itself out, more nearby, the Brazilian currency continues to get hammered on political fallout and rising debt associated with the virus, which by default creates stiffer headwinds for U.S. exports. In other words, I've been positioning and playing the virus to be a tailwind but in fact, it's caused larger macro concerns about Brazil and prompted more exodus of larger investors and more pressure on the Brazilian currency. The more heavily devalued the Brazilian currency vs. the U.S. dollar the bigger advantage goes to Brazilian exporters. I was right conceptually but massively wrong on the scoreboard. As a spec, I'm still holding a small bullish position but deeply concerned that a bigger fallout in Brazil could add more nearby pressure from the macro funds. Yes, I can argue eventually

it becomes a tailwind, but I worry the nearby pressure could be more than I want to take. I will be monitoring the politics in Argentina and Brazil very closely the next few weeks. Of course, Chinese and U.S. relations are also of great importance and need to be closely monitored. We need Chinese buying in a big way!



WHEAT traders struggle to find much new in the way of headlines. Bears are pointing to arguably improved global and domestic weather as well as ongoing macro headwinds associated with a strong U.S. dollar and weak global growth. Bulls are saying there are still some problem areas in Russia, Ukraine, and parts of the European Union. Here at home, the bulls point to scouts finding a weaker crop

in Oklahoma estimated at around 96.5 MMTs vs. 110.0 MMTs last year, with an average yield of around 33.2 bushels per acre vs. 40.0 last year. Unfortunately, improved world weather is prompting most inside the trade to now pencil in record global production. I worry that without a big uptick in demand it will be tough to build extended upside momentum. As a spec, I remain on the sideline thinking we need more frequent and widespread bullish headlines to keep prices moving higher. In periods of time where those headlines are lacking the bears gain control and price struggles. As a producer, if you need to reduce more risk nearby then you have to use any rallies as a selling opportunity. If you've been fairly aggressive with your pre-pricing and feel that time is on your side, like myself, then stay patient and wait. I'm hoping next weeks USDA report on Tuesday delivers a little more bullish optimism on the balance sheet.



A banner for the Farm Tank podcast. The top half has an orange background with the words "FARM TANK" in large white and orange letters. Below this, in black text on a white background, is "THE BEST PODCAST IN AG!". The bottom half of the banner features a green tractor with a spray applicator in a field at sunset. A yellow button with black text says "CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE". At the bottom left are Instagram and Facebook icons followed by "/FARMTANK". At the bottom right is the website "FARMTANK.COM".

FARM TANK

THE BEST PODCAST IN AG!

CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE

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A meme featuring a goat floating in blue water, wearing a red and black striped life preserver. The text "AgSwag" is written in a stylized font next to a small cartoon goat icon in the top right corner. At the bottom, large white text with a black outline reads "WHATEVER FLOATS YOUR GOAT" and "A Section for Creative Minds".

AgSwag 

WHATEVER FLOATS YOUR GOAT

A Section for Creative Minds

> Bunge Reports Loss, Cuts 2020 Outlook: *Bunge reported a first-quarter loss on Wednesday and lowered its full-year forecast as the coronavirus crisis*

hammered demand for fuel and upended global food supply chains. Bunge forecast a particularly challenging year for its edible oils unit as the pandemic diminishes demand from restaurant and food service customers. Demand for edible oils fell toward the end of the January-to-March period as the crisis shuttered restaurants and suspended travel, while crashing Brazilian ethanol prices and whipsawing currency markets dented Bunge's outlook for its sugar and bioenergy unit. Retail demand for oils from at-home chefs would only partly offset the hit, the company said. Slumping fuel consumption, including for soybean oil-based biodiesel and corn- and sugar-based ethanol, created further headwinds for Bunge as pandemic lockdowns continue to limit travel. Bunge's adjusted first-quarter net loss came to \$181 million, or \$1.34 a share, compared with year-earlier profit of \$59 million, or 36 cents a share. (Source: Reuters)

> Consumers Become More Aware of Farmers' Role in Food Supply: *The coronavirus pandemic is causing consumers to think more about where their food comes from, according to a recent survey by G&S Business Communications. Caryn Caratelli, managing director, says the survey showed that Americans are becoming more aware of farmers' role in the food supply chain. "Fifty-eight of Americans say that at the coronavirus crisis has made them realize that farmers' role in society is more critical now than what they thought it was a year ago," she says. "Forty-five percent want to hear from farmers and ranchers about how they're keeping our food supply safe." She tells Brownfield it provides farmers an opportunity to communicate with consumers. Survey respondents also indicated they believe that people and organizations across the food supply chain, including farmers, should "proactively communicate the actions they are taking to secure a safe and quality supply." Read more [HERE](#).*

> Ag Aid Update: *There's momentum in Congress to expand the borrowing authority of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation, the Depression-era agency that's funding part of the department's stimulus payments to farmers and ranchers. It's one of the primary funding options on the table as lawmakers consider more agricultural aid in their next coronavirus response package. A House bill introduced on Tuesday, backed by Reps. Austin Scott (R-Ga.), a senior House Ag member, and Sanford Bishop (D-Ga.), who chairs the House Appropriations panel that oversees USDA's budget, would lift the CCC's annual borrowing cap from \$30 billion to \$68 billion. The proposal would essentially give USDA a green light to send far more money to struggling producers who are rapidly losing money. Scott said his legislation would help mitigate long-term damage to the food supply chain and insulate annual farm bill programs that are also paid through the CCC. Congress in March considered hiking the agency's borrowing limit to \$50 billion. But if such a boost is back on the table, Democrats could again demand a 15% increase in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits in exchange. Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) is pressing USDA to include egg producers in its \$19 billion aid package and to consider directly buying and redistributing liquid*

egg products. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) this week introduced a bill that would dole out \$8 billion in block grants to the top specialty crop states so their food banks can connect with the excess supply of produce in their area. The money would be used to cover the cost of food as a way to help farmers with lost markets, as well as to cover the cost of logistics. (Source: Politico)

> Your Credit Card Company May Be Asking About Your Job Status: *A clampdown on credit is coming. A chorus of lenders, from Discover Financial Services to Capital One Financial Corp. to Synchrony Financial, have said they've begun to tighten up. The measures vary by company but can include tougher underwriting, handing out smaller loans, or reducing the number of credit line increases for customers. Some lenders are also doing more employment verification. About 25% of cardholders had their credit limits lowered or their accounts closed altogether in the past 30 days, according to a survey conducted by CompareCards in late April. This has been a boon for Equifax Inc., which maintains a real-time database of salary and employment information on 80 million U.S. workers. The company expects the service, which is called the Work Number, to post record growth this year because banks have clamored to use the database in the past few weeks. Read more from [Bloomberg](#).*

> Going Down a Rabbit Hole of Companies Impacted by This Crisis: *Ben Carlson of A Wealth of Common Sense points out something we've all pondered - considering the fragile state of the economy it's surprising the market isn't down more. According to Carlson, a big reason for that is that it's market cap weighted. The biggest companies drive the performance and those big companies are holding up relatively well through this crisis. Take a company like Amazon which has a market cap of nearly \$1.2 trillion. The stock is up more than 26% this year. The max drawdown from all-time highs for the stock was just 22% versus a fall of 35% for the overall market by mid-to-late March. Anecdotally, the performance of Bezo's behemoth makes sense from the perspective of my family's spending habits through the crisis. Once you start thinking of all the companies that have been impacted by this crisis, both positively and more likely negatively, it can be a painful exercise. Most of that pain is on the small business side of things but there is a wide divergence in public companies as well. Read more [HERE](#).*

> How to Sniff Out a Bad Coronavirus Study: *With researchers, journals, politicians, journalists, and anyone on social capable of espousing misleading or unverified scientific findings, it pays to be able to recognize the telltale signs of a study that might be poor. Check out seven potential warning flags [HERE](#).*

> Not Everyone Wants to Return to the Office: *A recent Gallup poll found a majority of American adults working from home would prefer to continue doing so "as much as possible" after the pandemic. The reasons vary but include people that consider themselves introverts, people worried about climate change and*

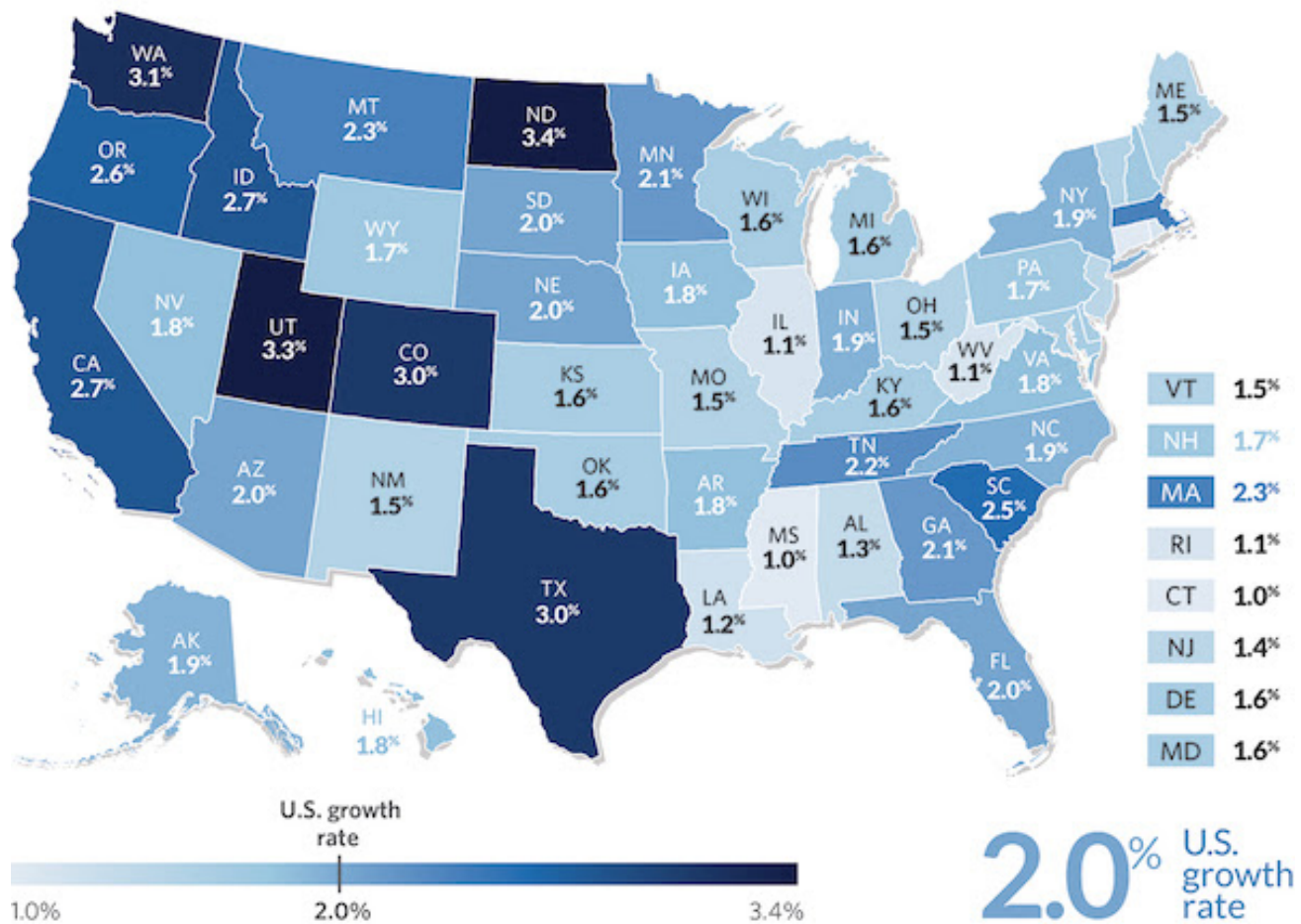
wanting to avoid commutes, and even parents that appreciate the extra time they get with their kids by eliminating commutes. A recent survey conducted by IBM found that 54% of workers would prefer to continue working remotely full time. Working from home does have critics though, and even before the pandemic, researchers were warning that problem solving and creativity suffer when workers are isolated from one another. Remote workers have also reported they have had to work even longer hours. So is there a way for remote work to be successful? Check out what the experts say [HERE](#).

> Tom Cruise and NASA Officially Shooting Movie in Space: NASA is working with Tom Cruise to film the first movie shot in space, according to NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine. The details of the project aren't clear, but Bridenstine says the film will take place aboard the International Space Station. News of a possible collaboration between Cruise and NASA was first reported by Deadline. The report said that Cruise was working with SpaceX to shoot the film, though neither NASA nor SpaceX has confirmed that speculation. This collaboration, as Bridenstine stressed, is an important one. It's meant to garner interest in STEM careers among young people. (Source: The Verge)

> Every State Posted Economic Gains Last Year: Widespread income growth across states in 2019 marked what appears to be the end of the longest economic expansion on record and a high-water mark before the coronavirus pandemic upended much of the economy. Every state experienced gains for the year in the combined personal income of its residents, a key economic indicator, although growth slowed in most states. Economic analysts are sounding alarms about a recession in 2020 and the fourth quarter of 2019, the latest for which there is 50-state data, was the last to escape severe disruptions set off by the pandemic. Since the Great Recession, every state has seen its total personal income bounce back, although at different paces. After adjusting for inflation, North Dakota led all states with a long-term growth rate equivalent to +3.4% a year since the fourth quarter of 2007, when the 18-month recession began. It was followed by Utah (+3.3%), Washington (+3.1%) and Colorado and Texas (both +3%). Those states also gained residents the fastest over the past decade, a trait associated with a strong labor force and economic expansion. Connecticut and Mississippi recorded the weakest recoveries since the recession, with growth rates equivalent to +1% a year. More details are available from [Pew Trusts](#).

States' Personal Income Recovers Unevenly From Recession

Annual growth rate for inflation-adjusted personal income, Q4 2007 to Q4 2019



Source: Pew's analysis based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

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Central Michigan - I've farmed a bunch of brookston soil which usually is my top-yielding ground. It is very finicky about being worked wet though. When we have worked it wet in the past it created a compaction layer the water had a tough time getting to the tile. I've found that planting wheat and then a deep-rooted cover crop helps a bunch. Our brookston soil is all tiled well but tile isn't a miracle worker, it just gets rid of the excess. That stuff is great dirt, especially in a dry year. We years can be very tricky. Hopefully, we see a little

bit of dryer weather soon.

Northwest Wisconsin - *Planting season has been great and even though we are a little dry, hopefully, any rain stays away for the rest of the week. We made a big decision to go all corn this year as it just pencils out and we can make it up with the bushels and some smart use of the board. Currently, we have nothing sold and I kick myself for missing out on opportunities at \$3.75, but at the time there was a lot of land still up in the air and I couldn't commit not knowing all my acres. It was interesting because I had folks who decided last minute they were getting back in the game and wanted to farm their land again. We are doing some custom spraying and that has really been a blessing to the bottom line the last couple of seasons. I'm not seeing much new up here outside of some more guys doing no-till into clover. I hope not everyone has the same idea or we may get to those 97 million acres!*

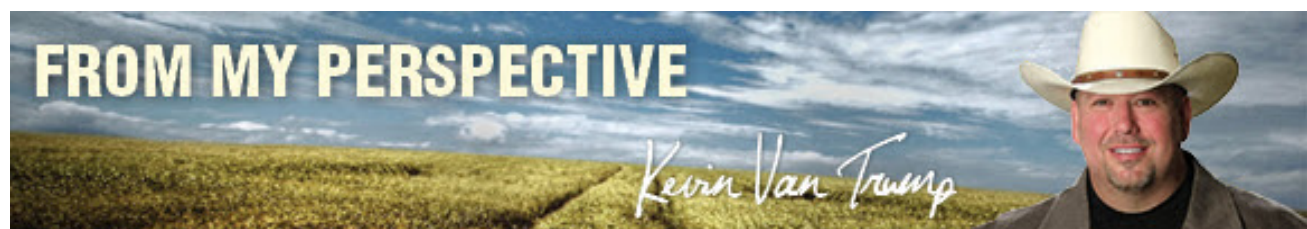
Central Nebraska - *The temperature has dropped enough that we might not get more than 10 GDU's in the next few weeks. We don't normally like letting our corn sit any longer than 16 days in the wet cold ground. I have noticed moral has dropped off in many areas on the outlook of the markets and planting crops this year. Seems like there has been more hopelessness than I can remember in the past 15 years. We are still hopeful for a rally but understand it won't be much if we even see it.*



neuro mining

As we age, it gets harder and harder to create new neural pathways in the brain. It's the reason kids find it so easy to learn new things, but as adults it often gets more difficult. Doing brain teasers and solving riddles can be an important part of keeping our brain healthy. The more connections we can form, the better our brain will be. I hope this helps provide a little daily fun and exercise. The answer to each riddle or puzzle will be located at the bottom of the report.

TODAY'S RIDDLE: What is both possible and impossible at the same time?



What's Up with these Giant Asian Hornets?

As if 2020 didn't have enough apocryphal stories brewing, we now have the giant Asian Hornets to add to the mix. I've been seeing this story circulating around Facebook and other media sites and thought it was worth exploring and sharing some insight on this nasty looking insect.

Having landed on American soil for the first time ever, researchers are still guessing at how they arrived and best bets are focused on a free ride in shipping containers. Spotted in Washington state, the insect dubbed the "murder hornet" is believed to primarily be a threat to beehives. When they do go after honeybees, they decapitate them using mandible shaped like spiked shark fins, but also, the giant hornets will fly away with the headless bodies to feed their young. At two inches long, they're the world's largest hornet and have a sting that kills approximately 50 people a year back home in Japan.

I would have never guessed, but back in Japan they are known for being a great delicacy. In fact, some of Japan's younger generations are said to be huge fans of the Asian Hoinets . I'm told the grubs are often preserved in jars, pan-fried or steamed with rice to make a savory dish called "hebo-gohan", while the larger adults are fried on skewers, stinger and all until they become light and crunchy. Over 30 restaurants in Tokyo alone have the hornet on the menu, and those that eat them say they're left with a warm and tingly sensation. Even more impressive might be that the hornets are also an ingredient in liquor. From what I understand, live specimens are drowned in shochu, a clear distilled beverage, and while in their death throes, the insects release their venom into the liquid, which is stored until it turns a dark shade of amber, giving the concoction an extra kick. One Japanese establishment sells homemade hornet liquor for about \$19 per shot, mostly to middle-aged men.

Apparently there's also a bit thrill in hunting down and finding the nests, which extremists in Japan do each year to win an award for finding the largest or coolest shaped. Hunters first have to find a hornet, which they do by luring them out with a streamer attached to a piece of fish, and when it grabs the morsel and takes off, the hunting party goes on a steeplechase through the woods to find the nest. This has actually become a tradition at the annual Kushihara Hebo Matsuri, a cuisine celebration each November in Gifu Prefecture.

In Asia, many bees have developed a defense mechanism against the giant Asian Hornet as they swarm a scout hornet in the hive, forming a ball around the invader. From there, the bees vibrate, causing the hornet to heat up allowing carbon dioxide to build up inside the ball and eventually suffocate the scout before he can return with others. At this point no one knows whether bees in North

America know how to deploy this technique since the hornet is a new threat, leaving researchers to wonder how it will play out. Perhaps we will need to send in the artificial bees like we did the artificial mosquitos during "zika virus".

As far as the sting... YouTube personality Coyote Peterson, a wildlife educator, known for intentionally allowing himself to be bitten and stung by the world's craziest bugs and insects, recently took on the challenge. You can watch the short video [HERE](#). Peterson now ranks the sting as more painful than that which the bull ant delivered and formerly claimed was the most painful insect bite ever. Bottom-line, I don't think you want to get stung by one of these bad boys.

If you should happen to be unlucky enough to encounter the beast, officials are asking the public to contact local extension offices and obviously not try to deal with them yourself. It is believed they are currently only in the Pacific Northwest, and experts it could take years for them to move across the country, that is unless somehow transported. With 2020 being what it is, many media sources are electing to run this story as yet another number being called on our Apocalyptic Bingo Card. I say it's just one hell of a big hornet that somehow made its way over to the U.S. Be on the look out!



chris p. bacon
@ffcpbacon



COVID19 pandemic, Ebola outbreaks, Joe Exotic in prison, and guess what?!?! The Giant Asian Hornet decided to begin establishing in Washington state.
[#hate2020](#)





THE SCHMIDT INSECT STING PAIN INDEX

The Schmidt Pain Index was developed by Dr. Justin Schmidt, an entomologist, as a method for comparing the pain of various different insect stings he experienced during his work. The scale runs from 1 to 4, with four being the most painful. Pain can be subjective, varying from person to person, and this scale is therefore not absolute.

Key Pain: 1 2 3 4 **Type:** BEE WASP HORNET ANT **SIZE** **APPROXIMATE DURATION**



Note: circles sizes relate to duration, but are for purposes of comparison only, and are not to scale. All durations are an average, and as with pain, are subject to variation.

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Sizing up the Asian giant hornet



Sphecus sp.
cicada killer



Spheg ichneumonius
great golden digger wasp



Vespa crabro
European hornet
(does not occur in WA)



Cimbex americana
elm sawfly



Vespa mandarinia
Asian giant hornet



Vespa pensylvanica
western yellowjacket



Polistes dominula
European paper wasp



Apis mellifera
western honey bee



Dolichovespula maculata
bald-faced hornet



Tremex columba
pigeon tremex



Bombus flavifrons
yellow head bumble bee

AGR PUB 809-846 (N/4/20)
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 Washington
State Department of
Agriculture
agr.wa.gov/hornets

What You Need to Know About COVID-19 Antibody Testing

Some friends of mine have started to get tested, we have not, but here are some

of the things I've heard and learned. A slew of antibody test kits have hit the market recently but there are indications that not all of them are equally as reliable. There is also still a lot scientists don't know about COVID-19 antibodies - in particular, do they provide immunity and if so, for how long? Below is a rundown of what is circulating and what researchers are still trying to answer.

What exactly is an antibody test? *When a person has been exposed to the coronavirus that causes COVID-10, their body produces proteins called antibodies to help fight it off. Antibody tests (also called serology tests) are designed to detect those proteins in a persons blood, which can be testing using a simple finger-prick. It takes anywhere from 5 to 10 days after exposure to the virus for the body to start making antibodies, a main reason why antibody tests are not used to diagnose whether a person currently has the disease.*

Which tests have FDA approval? *The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has come under fire recently for its quick approval of over 100 commercial antibody tests earlier this year, many of which have since proven ineffective. FDA warned this week about fraudulent test kits being marketed by "unscrupulous actors" and has directed companies to apply for emergency use authorization and submit data on their tests within 10 days or face removal from the market. Currently, only 12 companies have been cleared to sell antibody tests under emergency use authorization, including Abbott Laboratories, Cellex, and Roche Diagnostics. A full list of authorized companies as well as details about each one's test performance is available [HERE](#).*

What does the presence of antibodies mean? *The presence of antibodies means only that a person has been exposed to the virus. Even people that experienced no symptoms should have developed an immune response that left behind antibodies. Healthcare officials hope they might be able to develop treatments for seriously ill COVID-19 patients from part of the blood of recovered patients called convalescent plasma. These test results can aid in determining who may donate.*

Do antibodies provide immunity? *This is one of the most hotly debated subjects in healthcare and politics alike right now. No one knows with certainty if the presence of antibodies will prevent a person from contracting the virus a second or even more times. One positive sign is that researchers do not believe anyone has contracted the disease twice. There were reports early on that people had tested positive again after recovering but those studies are believed to have used faulty testing.*

Humans develop different levels of immunity to viruses after exposure.

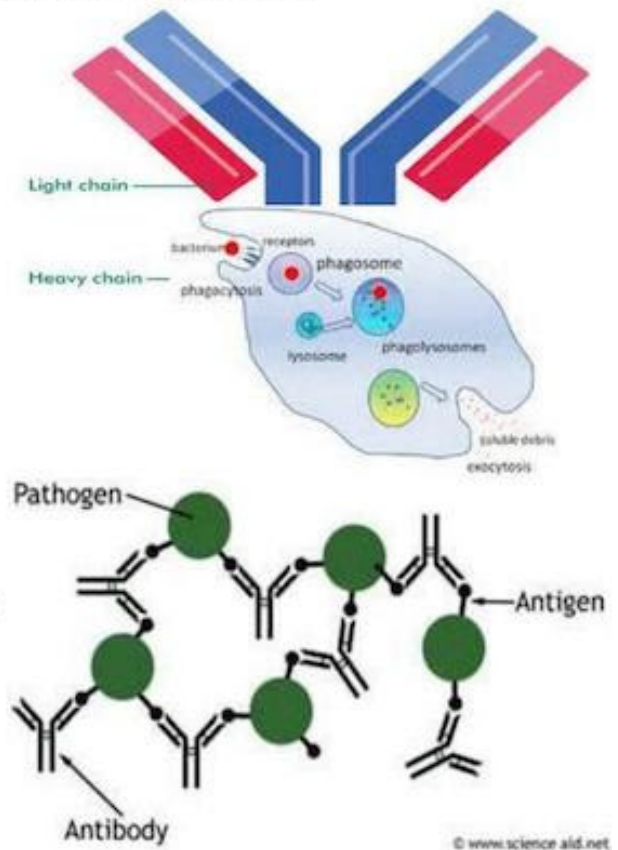
People who have had measles, for instance, develop immunity for life. Generally speaking, once you have antibodies for a specific pathogen, it's harder to get sick with that same disease again because those antibodies are able to "recognize" the pathogen and deactivate it when it enters the body. If your immune system is successful, you won't get sick, but it doesn't always work that way and people can get sick again. Some viruses work in even more mysterious ways. One example can be found in people that had chickenpox as children and develop a related condition called shingles later in life due to the chickenpox virus somehow becoming reactivated. Then there is influenza, aka the flu, which can be present in multiple different strains at any given time and which also mutates far too rapidly for our immune systems to keep up. Bottom line, no one knows what level of immunity, if any, coronavirus antibodies will provide or if such immunity will fade over time. Certainly, no one knows if the coronavirus will mutate and leave us defenseless every time it is in circulation.

What does research suggest so far? *Serological surveys have already been conducted in communities across the U.S., and their findings vary widely. Estimates of positive antibody prevalence range from almost 25% in New York City and 32% in Chelsea, Mass., to between 2.8% and 5.6% in Los Angeles County and 2.8% in Santa Clara County in California. Many of these studies have been criticized for various methodological reasons and it's not clear if any of them have been peer-reviewed yet. Furthermore, there are questions about the accuracy of the tests themselves, as many of them haven't been verified by third parties either. (Sources: FDA, NCBI, Scientific American, Wired)*



What Are Antibodies?

- **Antibodies:**
 - Produced by the immune system to kill **toxins, allergens, or pathogens**
 - **B-lymphocytes**
 - Bind to specific **antigens**
 - Made of protein
 - Can either **label** the bacteria cell so phagocytes can find the faster, **kill** it direct, or **immobilize** it





The Beatles' Last Album... And Two Of My Favorite Songs!

Just ahead of Mother's Day weekend and with my own Mom having passed some 20 years ago... I always find this song and story kind of fitting! I always loved hearing my daughter practice and play the song on guitar when she was little:) Good stuff!!! I hope it brings a similar soothing spirit to you as well.

It was in early May of 1970 that the Beatles released their twelfth and final album titled "Let it Be". Many people don't realize it but "The Fab Four" were together for only eight years, from 1962, when Ringo joined the band, to 1970. In fact, the release of this mega-hit came about one month after the bands historic breakup. The band had not toured or played together live in over two years.

The White Album recording session had ended in the Fall of 1968 with the "Let it Be and "Abbey Road" recording session starting up in early 1969. McCartney was wanting the group to get back to the basic rock-n-roll roots after going through a couple of years of psychedelic and more progressive type music. Rumors are the rehearsals and recording sessions for the album did not run smoothly. The Beatles were clearly not getting along, and Lennon and McCartney weren't working together like they had in the past.

McCartney assumed the role of the leader, while a detached Lennon was more interested in spending time and making music with his soon-to-be wife Yoko Ono, who was present in the studio with him at all times. All of these factors led to friction within the band. At one point, George Harrison actually walked out and quit the group during the recording, but was eventually coaxed back. Harrison had a couple of stipulations. One, that they change the recording venue, the other that the group dropped the plans of making a return to public performance.

Despite all of the problems and tensions within the group a couple of my favorite songs came out of the Beatles "Let it Be" album....

As for the song "Let it Be", McCartney wrote the lyrics saying he had had a dream where his mother, who had been dead at that point for about 10 years, came to him as if she could see that he was troubled. She sort of said to him, 'Let it be', clearly pointing to the fact everything was going to be OK. Don't worry. He woke up from the dream and wrote the famous words... I sometimes think of my own mother or grandmother saying the same words to me during difficult times. Click [HERE](#) to see Paul McCartney deliver a great performance.

*When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom... let it be
And in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me
Speaking words of wisdom... let it be*

One of my other favorite Beatles songs to come from this album was "The Long and Winding Road". I heard Paul McCartney once tell the story that he wrote the song at his farm in late-1968, and was expressing his anguish at the direction of his personal life, but found great inspiration in the calm and beauty of being back at his farm and remembering back on all the good times with the band and the family. McCartney later said both the song and the farm was a good vehicle and saved having to go to a psychiatrist:) On 13 June 1970, this song became the Beatles' twentieth and final number-one single on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in America. As we've gotten older, both Michelle and I find deep meaning in this song and appreciate the peacefulness of the long and winding country road to the farm and remembering back on all the great times. **Click [HERE](#)**

*The long and winding road
That leads to your door
Will never disappear
I've seen that road before
It always leads me here
Lead me to your door*

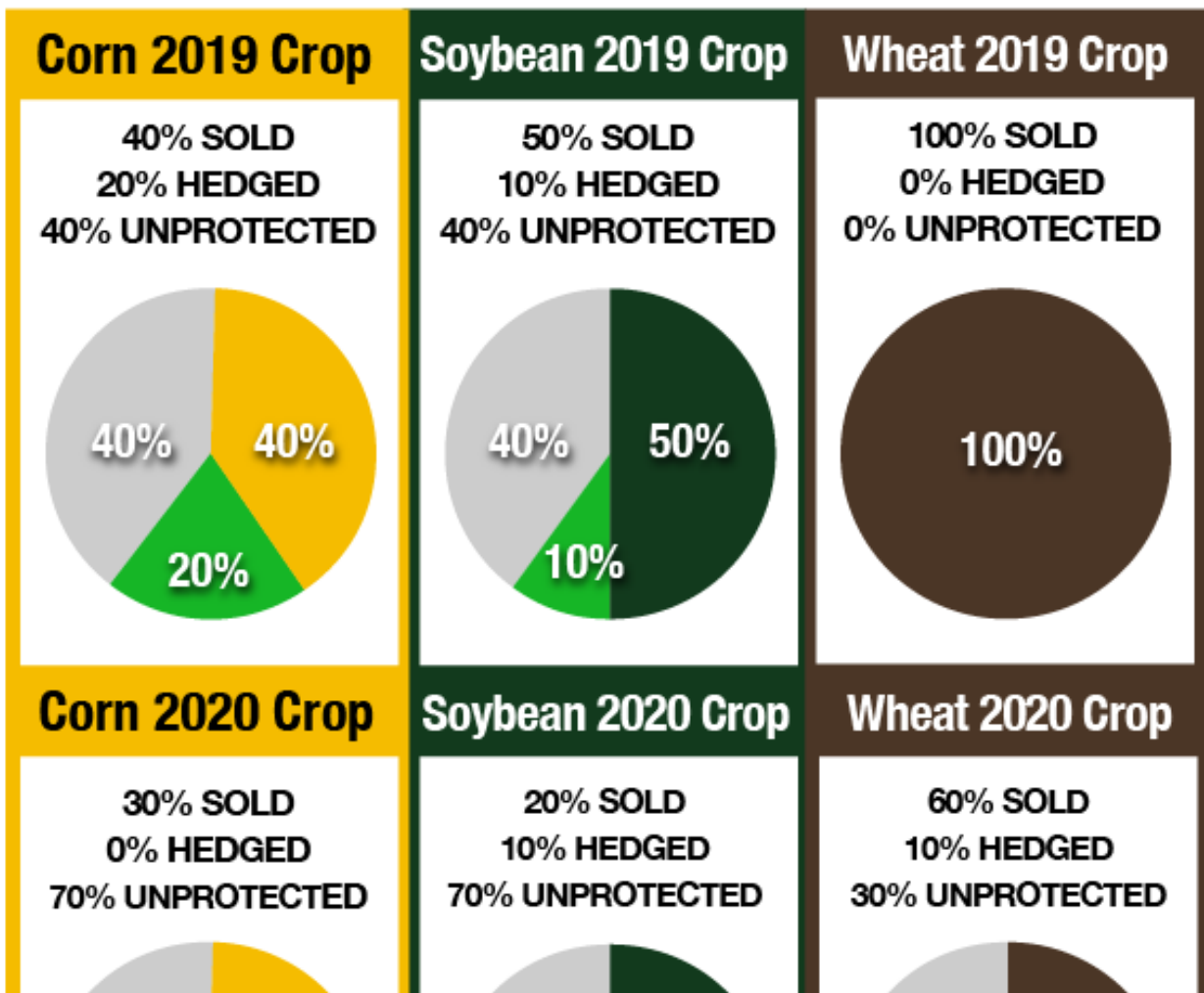


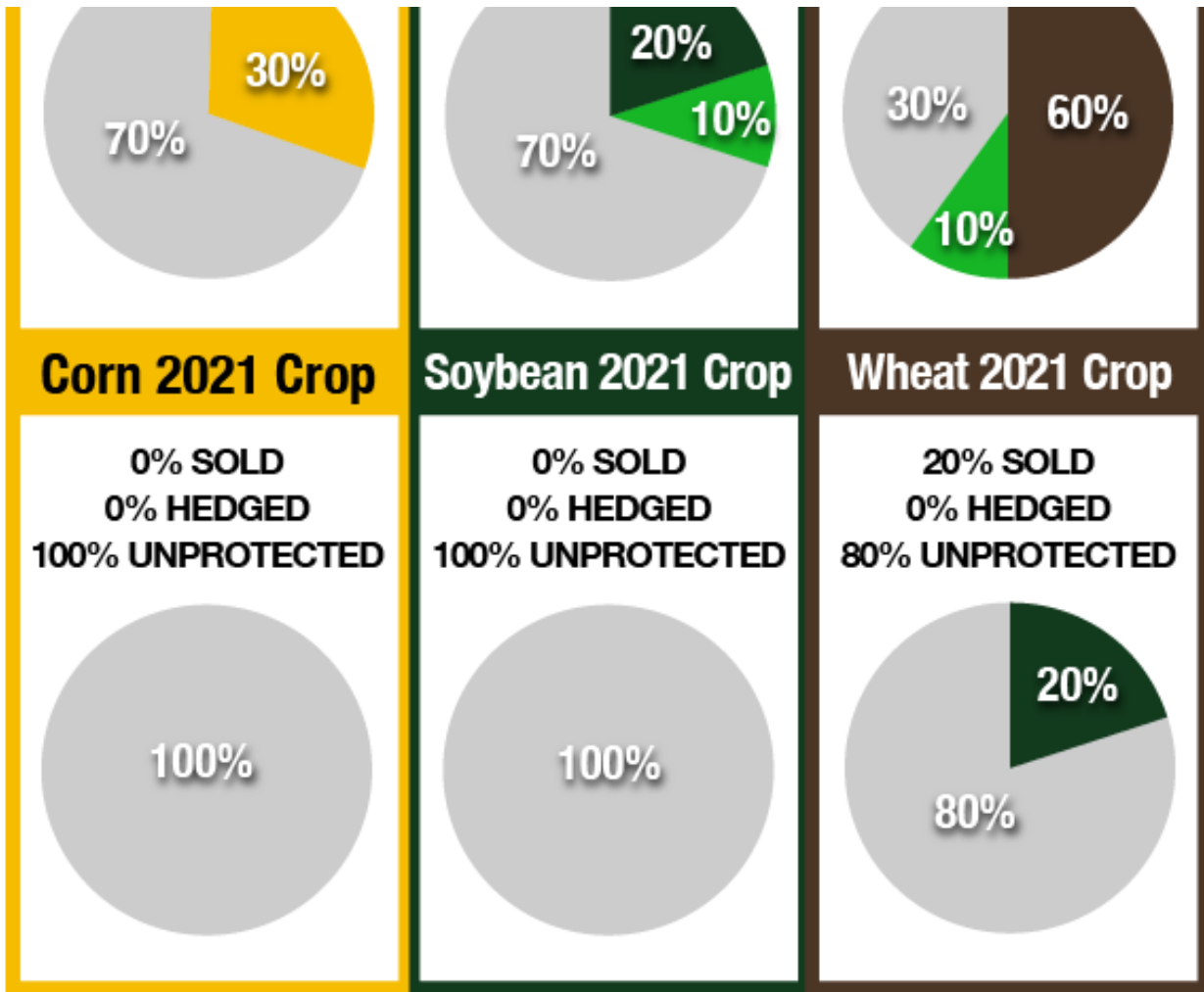


ANSWER to riddle: Impossibility.

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