

Air pollution means more rules

Cotton executive urges farmers to work for solution

By Amee M. Thompson, Visalia Times-Delta, February 13, 2003

TULARE -- Air quality in the San Joaquin Valley is improving, experts say, but not fast enough, leaving farmers to face more regulations.

"Let me make one thing clear, while we are not the primary source [of air pollution], we are a part of it," said Roger Isom, vice president of the California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association.

"And that means we have to be part of the solution."

Isom spoke at an air quality issues and regulations seminar at the World Ag Expo Wednesday.

He has been active in working on air-quality problems in the agriculture industry.

Farmers must become involved in forming air-quality regulations, Isom said.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is coming up with regulations to decrease PM10 levels.

PM10 is particulate matter that is less than 10 microns -- thinner than a strand of hair. PM10 can get into people's lungs and cause health problems.

"Right now they are leaving it up to us," Isom said. "The air district is saying, 'Tell us what you can do to get your emissions down.'"

In the coming months, potential regulations will be the subject of workshops, and Isom said it is important for farmers to participate.

Farmers can also replace old engines by taking advantage of incentive programs set up by the state and federal governments, water down roads and use an integrated pest-management program to cut back on pesticides, Isom said.

"And document it, so that when it comes up, you can prove what you have done," he said.

Even with Isom's advice, the whole process is still frustrating for farmers.

"It is going to affect us; we just don't know how," said Stuart Weil, a Madera fish farmer.

"We don't know how to invest, if we should build up or if we should scale down, which will be more economical," he said.

Weil said leaving the state sometimes seems like a good idea.

[Letters on point, submitted by readers of The Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday February 12, 2003, 06:41:11 PM](#)

SUV debate continues to rev up

Folks missed punchline

Being a frequent reader of this section, I don't know how I missed the letter that inspired all of the vitriolic responses defending SUVs.

One published letter was particularly amusing, suggesting that non-SUV owners are merely jealous, or simply not able to afford one. He must be very powerful indeed to have three in his driveway.

And his vehicles actually clean the air. Golly!

Another response alleges, disparagingly, that everything else on the road is a "rice burner."

Perhaps he has never seen a Toyota Landcruiser, 4-Runner, Nissan Pathfinder, etc.

These folks bring to mind the guy who laughs loudly and heartily at a joke, but never really gets the punchline.

The punchline is: We have filthy air in this valley from a variety of causes. We should all be trying to do our part to help, not cruising around looking for a fight. I'll do my share (in my Bratwurst burner) by staying out of their way. Go hug a tree, they like the attention.

J. BUTTERFIELD WORLEY, Bakersfield

Schoolyard squabbling

I have read with a certain amount of amusement the letters regarding the pros and cons of SUVs. I can't help but compare these letters to the arguing of small children. The opinions from both

sides resort to name-calling, claims of being jealous and the bullying comment one writer made to "get out of his way if you did not like his SUV." I almost see this writer sticking his tongue out and saying, "Nah, nah, nah."

I do believe there needs to be discussion about the use of SUVs, albeit on a more mature level. I have myself wondered why one person felt it necessary to drive alone in a vehicle built for nine. Our country, as a whole, needs to re-think our rather self-indulgent way of living if it is harming all of us and the future of our (real) children.

However, let's not make SUVs take the entire blame. More people need to get out and walk once in a while, or spend more quality time at home to help conserve energy and clean up the air at the same time.

In this critical time in our country, we need to show unity amongst ourselves and show our unified spirit to our real enemies outside our country. We do not need to bicker and insult one another about the vehicles we choose to drive.

One writer said his wife drove an SUV because she felt safe. We should all be able to feel safe on the road. If we all just slow down and show simple courtesy on the road, this will displace the need to drive a large SUV just to feel safe.

It seems the SUV is a symbol of issues this country needs to face. Maybe discussing this issue more constructively will help us all in a much more important way.

JEANNE HAMILTON, Bakersfield

Gas-guzzling legislators

Nice vehicles most of our state representatives have selected. Apparently the environment (air pollution) and energy conservation (gas guzzlers) was not considered in making their decision.

LAURA BROCKMEYER, Bakersfield

Jesus would have walked

I gotta tell you, I loved Dianne Hardisty's column on her SUV. I don't drive an SUV and think we ought to be concerned how we add to the pollution issue, but I also get tickled by anyone who wants to ask what Jesus would have driven. She handled it terrifically. I still believe He would have walked, though.

RICHARD CRANE, Bakersfield

Acknowledge own faults

I especially enjoyed the column by Dianne Hardisty, "Why drag Jesus into this?" Not only was it humorous, but it made a good point!

Isn't it interesting how we always find it easy to point out what we consider faults in others, while never acknowledging our own?

Why don't all the people who protest the uses of SUVs form a line to share a ride to work, instead of driving as they usually do -- alone? I'm sure that would cut down on our use of oil/gasoline.

Why don't all the people who never take the time to recycle anything, do so? For example, reuse a paper bag or a gift box. I'm always amazed at what I see thrown into the garbage bin!

I'm sure we could save on the petroleum that is used to produce those and many other items.

And think of what it would do to improve our environment!

Aren't we all the most spoiled of nations and don't we take a lot for granted? When will we learn to keep our nose out of other people's business and start doing what's right ourselves? I'm sure that the creator -- of all people -- sadly shakes His head when he hears what we claim he thinks!

LINDA DeSTEFANI, Bakersfield

Driving a privilege, not right

There is a tempest in the teapot. I am jealous of everyone who owns a SUV. Morons believe owning a vehicle funds terrorists. Fireplaces are not a major pollutant. The air is much worse in the summer.

That's all fine with me, but I actually agreed with an earlier writer that since he can afford SUVs, he can drive them!

Since he thinks his wealth and powerful SUV should make me get out of his way, Satan has a special place in hell for him right next to the child molesters and rapists who force themselves on their victims.

I employ my privilege, not right, to use my vehicle on public roads. All I need to keep me and family safe while on the road is to be attentive while driving; in other words using my brain, not my brawn, a tactic with which many drivers are unfamiliar.

Most Americans have "rights" -- life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, stupidity, arrogance, machismo, egocentricity, speech, reproduce, smoke, drink, self-mutilation, welfare, guns, porno, pollute, hunt.

Just because we have the right doesn't mean that everyone should exercise each and every right.

People like the earlier letter writer will learn that always he will find someone or something is always smarter, faster and stronger than he is. So please permit me a word of advice: What goes around always comes back. A little humility can help. Try some.

People like the earlier letter writer are the reason we have to legislate common sense.

BLAIN FRANZEN, Bakersfield

[Fresno Bee Editorial, February 13, 2003:](#)

Another in a series of Thursday editorials on our filthy air. Today: When will ag interests have to face the same rules as the rest of us?

No free ride

Ag industry's exemptions from air pollution rules must end.

There is an effort under way in Sacramento right now to change the rules on agricultural sources of pollution -- or not change them, if the status quo prevails.

The outcome will be a revealing lesson in how the health of people living in the Valley stacks up against powerful economic interests, and it will further measure the extent to which our elected representatives are actually prepared to lead.

On the ag side, lobbyists are preparing a bill that would permit local air districts to regulate -- for the first time -- the emissions from diesel engines that are used to power irrigation pumps and other equipment. But other sources of ag pollution would remain unregulated. Those include dust and particulate matter thrown into the air by plowing, discing and using unpaved roads in rural areas, and organic pollution, mostly from livestock.

Agriculture has enjoyed an exemption from the rules everyone else must follow for more than a half-century. Perhaps that made a sort of sense many years ago, when the air quality problem was less evident and pervasive. But times have changed, and agriculture -- along with everyone else in the Valley -- is going to have to make some major changes in the way it conducts its business.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District says that ag sources already produce a significant portion of the Valley's smog-causing pollution in the summer. And in less than two years, district officials predict, livestock waste will replace motor vehicles as the No. 1 source of the reactive organic gases that make up smog.

Among other things, the bill that emerges from this convoluted political process will tell us much about who calls the shots in state government. Valley legislators may be asked to vote against the wishes of well-funded and powerful constituents -- and friends, in many cases -- in the ag community. Some are understandably reluctant to do so, and may vote, in the end, to preserve an increasingly unhealthy status quo. But if that turns out to be the case, the growing constituency for cleaner air may have the last say.

It won't be easy for farmers and growers to give up a luxury they've enjoyed for so long. It won't be cheap, either. But it will happen. The only question is how. Will agriculture join the rest of the

Valley community in this effort, enduring a fair portion of the pain for the sake of cleaner air? Or will outsiders force a solution on agriculture -- and the rest of us -- that we may like even less?

Setting aside these indefensible exemptions for ag pollution won't be any easier for the Legislature and the governor. But it will be the right thing to do.