



Conversation about Amazon's Big Food Move: A Rancher's Perspective

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

If you haven't heard about Amazon's purchase of Whole Foods in the last few months, you might be asleep at the proverbial food truck wheel. Tracking the evolution of this merger has been compelling and certainly worthy of agriculture's notice. So, I decided to interview a rancher.

My rancher, Stefanie Smallhouse, has some intriguing insights on the new deal. Arizona Farm Bureau's President, Smallhouse has spent a good chunk of her professional career involved in natural resources management after earning her Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife and Rangeland Science from New Mexico State University. She began her career as a wildlife biologist working for the Bureau of Land Management in Southern Utah. In this position, she participated in local research projects, reviewed land use applications and carried out habitat and species surveys. In 1999, she married Andrew Smallhouse, a fifth-generation Southern Arizona rancher, and shifted her work to the private sector while learning the business of the family farming and ranching operation. While she has tested her skills and husband's patience at operating farm equipment and gathering cattle in the Lower San Pedro River Valley, she passionately advocates for the sustainability and profitability of farming and ranching as an industry in Arizona.

Arizona Agriculture: Regarding Amazon's latest entry into the retail food business by purchasing Whole Foods, what's your take as a rancher?

Smallhouse: First, I'm just a grower who provides a specialty product and Amazon obviously knows an opportunity when they see it. Amazon is known for making anything available on the internet a commodity, excuse the play on words, and anytime a healthy protein such as beef can be made more available to the consumer, I'm for it. We'll have to wait and see how excited the customer base of Whole Foods is about buying the same products online and having it dropped from a drone in their yard. If you have ever been in a Whole Foods, you know it's not just grocery shopping, it's a sensory experience.

They are the cyber Walmart. Walmart can demand lower prices from wholesalers because of the massive amounts they order. However, we do not produce widgets, we produce food with limited resources. Organics are more expensive because of inputs, process, certifications and more. We [Carlink Ranch] sell beef to Whole Foods because of our certifications for animal welfare. If we don't get a premium, then we will not do the certifications and not provide the same beef. I can see how they might be able to bring down the cost as Costco has, but eventually the organic argument will face the reality of imminent short supply due to grower limitations. Of course, there is always vertical farming.

Arizona Agriculture: Chris McCabe, a former Amazon performance evaluation and policy enforcement investigator, recently said, "Amazon's using the same playbook they always have when competing with booksellers and other retailers. They take out their revenue stream by killing them slowly

on price." While we might guess the impact on local grocery stores, is there a residual impact for farmers and ranchers even though you're further up the food supply chain?

Smallhouse: Agriculture is extremely sensitive to supply and demand on a global scale which means it is very important to diversify what you grow. There are many growers providing traditional crops while at the same time growing niche products like organic, ancient grains and specialty proteins. It seems as if Amazon is trying to bring these niche products to the masses knowing the masses are not willing to pay niche prices. In the short-term, I believe it will increase demand for these products which is good for growers. In the long term, I think it will be challenging for the entire supply chain to maintain- to include farmers and ranchers.

Arizona Agriculture: Can Amazon get truly cheaper organic product in its Whole Foods grocery Stores?

Smallhouse: For the most part, farmers and ranchers are price takers. When we grow specialty products we can have more impact



Photo Courtesy of Joe Boots Parker

Growing a family first, business second, the Smallhouse family doesn't take for granted any changes taking place in the market and certainly in their core agriculture industry, beef.

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Membership Matters: We Have an App for That

By Peggy Jo Goodfellow, Arizona Farm Bureau Marketing Manager




FB Benefits smartphone app helps members take advantage of special discounts.

As a Farm Bureau member, you have access to many valuable benefits. This article is first in a series of articles about the FB benefit app that was designed to give you quick and easy access to all your member benefits. These include special offers by dozens of retailers, automotive, dining, pet care, beauty, local entertainment attractions and special access to home, auto, farm/ranch, and life insurance tailored to fit all stages of life.

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Drive Like your Car is Brand New

By Peggy Jo Goodfellow, Arizona Farm Bureau Marketing Manager

Statistics show that one of every six traffic fatalities are related to driver distraction. Another half million injuries result from distraction-related crashes.

A common source of distraction is trying to multitask while driving. Farm Bureau Financial Services agents caution drivers not to use a cell phone while driving. Drivers making a phone call are four times as likely to cause an accident than drivers not making a call.

Here are seven tips that make it simple to become a safer, more attentive driver on your way to and from work.

1) Put the phone away. It can be tempting to multitask by using your cell phone to finish the workday or follow up on family matters. But research shows that driving while using a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37 percent. If you need to make a call or send a text, stop in a safe location and complete your conversation before resuming your commute.

2) Eating and driving don't mix. When you're on the go, your commute might seem like a convenient time to enjoy a bite of breakfast or an afternoon snack, but that convenience should be secondary to your safety. Keeping both hands free to drive makes it easier to



respond to unexpected situations.

3) Take care in school zones. As you drop off children at daycare on your way to work or pick up your precious cargo after school activities, keep a watchful eye on both pedestrians and bicyclists. Beyond following posted speed limits and stopping for school buses ...watch for children who might dart out between cars in congested traffic.

4) Drive like your car is brand new. Consider adopting the same level of awareness you had when first driving a new car. Continuously checking your mirrors, watching your blind spots and scanning the roadway ahead are ways to keep your eyes moving and your mind alert.

5) Make adjustments while you're in “park.” Remember the basic rule from driver's education class? Adjusting your mirrors, tunes and temperature controls before you switch into drive mode is just as important today. Remember that “Drive” means drive.

6) Don't drive while under the influence. Enough said.

7) When the weather is bad...take extra care. Even if your commute is just a short distance, allow extra time to get to your destination. ■

Source: Farm Bureau Financial Services

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on the price either directly or indirectly depending upon the product and the market. As these products are provided by more growers and available in more places, they naturally become more affordable to the consumer through competition at the retail level. However, the price to produce them does not necessarily become more economical for the grower unless operations merge. Folks who shop at Whole Foods don't generally like the idea of agricultural mergers at any level. Amazon may be the cyber Walmart but farmers and ranchers do not produce widgets, we produce food with limited resources.

The cost of production for many specialty products is higher than that for traditional crops and therefore demands a higher price, otherwise growers would not put in the effort. In a beef industry example, to participate in the Global Animal Partnership(GAP) program with our beef, we must meet certain standards and obtain certifications which also have fees associated with them. This makes our beef marketable to Whole Foods. There are not a lot of growers who qualify for this program which forces the price up throughout the supply chain. If Amazon were to make our GAP 4 certified rib-eye less expensive to the masses, then either they lose or we do. Our production costs are not likely to decrease and we have the freedom to walk away from the certification process if it doesn't pencil out. A program like GAP only works with certain operations. It was not difficult to meet the animal care standards because that is the way we

have always operated, but the record keeping, certification and audit process is intense and costly.

These food products are not necessities for people and the traditional product provides the same nutritional value. If Amazon is successful in broadening the customer base by lowering the price, that does not mean we as growers will be able to meet the demand at the same rate. Even if growers could increase production, you are eventually faced with the law of finite resources amidst compliance with label restrictions.

So, to answer your question, in the short term yes because Costco is already doing it, but in the long term I would think something must give which will change the product.

Arizona Agriculture: Often disruptive businesses can help fix kinks or weaknesses in supply chains. Can some of these moves by Amazon be kink fixers?

Smallhouse: There are already a handful of entrepreneurs with major financial backing growing meat in petri dishes. Disruption can force change and sometimes that change is permanent and sometimes it's a trend. With the speed of technology, we see paradigm shifts much faster now. Who knows, maybe someday we will get a premium for our beef just because it comes from an actual animal. I think Amazon's acquisition will force the Krogers-of-the-world to rethink convenience but you're either a Ford Escort or a Lamborghini. You can't be all things to all people.

Arizona Agriculture: Is there an opportunity here to tell consumers more of our agriculture story based on the attention Amazon is getting from their moves? If so, how?

Smallhouse: Amazon's entrance into the grocery business via Whole Foods tells me they have an interest in the whole food system from the bottom to the top. It will no doubt be a learning experience for them as to sourcing mass amounts of distinct food products. Along the way, it will provide an opportunity for us to educate the consumer about the differences between traditional- and specialty-food production systems in how they are grown, what consumer they satisfy, and production limitations. ■

Editor's note: Stay tuned. I still plan to have the produce farmer perspective on this Amazon story.

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Arizona Farm Bureau

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Arizona Agriculture's CHOICES

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By Peggy Jo Goodfellow, Arizona Farm Bureau Marketing Manager

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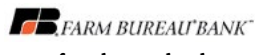
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Every Penny Counts

By **Katie Aikins**, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Education

As part of the Farm to Football Penny Drive, 63 classrooms from across the State collected coins to help combat hunger in their local communities. Over \$4,000 was collected by the kindergarten through 12th grade students. All money will be donated to the school's local area food bank in an effort to help those in need.

Hickman's Family Farms, Ag in the Classroom (AITC), and Big Red of the Arizona Cardinals gathered at Thew Elementary in Tempe to count the coins collected by each class. Thanks to MidFirst

Bank and their coin counting van, students could contribute coins for the cause as they arrived for school. A mini Farm to Football football and high fives from Funky and Big Red brought lots of smiles to the kiddos.

Mrs. Page's 5th Grade class from Zuni Hills Elementary raised \$261.09 earning their school a visit from AITC, Hickman's Family Farms, Arizona Cardinals Outside Linebacker Markus Golden, and the Arizona Cardinals Organization for a fun day on the field. A big thank you to everyone who participated in this year's penny drive.

For more information on the Farm to Football Program visit azfb.org.

A special THANK YOU to all the schools that participated in this year's coin drive!

- Buckeye Elementary, Buckeye
- Country Meadows Elementary, Peoria
- Duncan Elementary School, Duncan
- Gateway Polytechnic Academy, Queen Creek
- Liberty Elementary School, Buckeye
- Patagonia Montessori, Patagonia
- Payson Elementary School, Payson
- Peralta Trail Elementary, Apache Junction
- Queen Creek Elementary School, Queen Creek
- Roosevelt Elementary School, Yuma
- Saguaro Elementary School, Casa Grande
- Snowflake High School, Snowflake
- St Thomas Aquinas Catholic School, Phoenix
- Thew Elementary, Tempe
- Trinity Lutheran School, Litchfield Park
- Zuni Hills Elementary, Sun City
- MidFirst Bank Matching Funds ■



New Year *Continued from page 5*

- AmeriGas: \$.05 off per gallon of propane
- Ford vehicles- \$500 rebate on new Ford cars and trucks
- Lincoln vehicles- \$750 rebate on new Lincoln vehicles
- Sears Commercial- on-line savings
- ClearValue Hearing Healthcare benefit- Up to 55% discount
- Choice Hotels: 20% discount
- Grainger: 10% discount on catalog items. Free shipping for online orders
- Wyndham Hotel Group: 20% discount
- Motel6: 10% discount
- Sea World tickets: save up to 20% on adult and child admission
- Harkins Theatre tickets: save up to \$3 per ticket
- Universal Studio: discount tickets
- Knott's Berry Farm: discount tickets
- Verde Canyon Railroad: 10% discount
- Jiffy Lube: 15% discount
- LEGOLAND: Save \$34 on adult and \$29 on child tickets
- LEGOLAND Discovery Center: 30% discount
- San Diego Zoo & Safari Park: discount tickets
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- Sealife Arizona Aquarium: discount tickets
- Advanced Auto Service & Tire Center: 10% off at 14 locations
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Beef and Broccoli Casserole



- 1 Pound Ground Beef
- 1/2 Cup Onion, chopped
- 1 Cup Rice, cooked
- 1 Cup Broccoli, chopped
- 1 Can cream of mushroom soup
- 2 Cups Grated American cheese
- Salt and Pepper to taste

Directions:

Sauté beef and onions. Cook broccoli just until fork tender. Mix together broccoli, rice and soup. In a 2 or 3 quart casserole spread beer-onion mix. Top with grated cheese. Spread with broccoli-rice mixture. Top with more cheese. Bake at 350 degrees until bubbly and cheese is melted. ■

*Presented by:
Nancy Brierly, Safford, AZ*

New Year *Continued from page 6*

- Avis and Budget: up to 25% discount
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Periodicals

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Arizona Agriculture's
CHOICES

