

Staples: Ranchers are stewards of the environment

Todd Staples, TEXAS AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER

Published: 5:25 p.m. Wednesday, April 21, 2010

With so much recent attention given to climate change and "going green," now is a great time to applaud the environmental responsibility of Texas farmers and ranchers and hopefully dispel a few myths along the way.

As some people around the world make a point to do something out of the ordinary in celebration of Earth Day today — like plant a tree or bike to work — Texas farmers and ranchers will do what they do everyday to protect the sacred natural resources that provide us with the world's safest, most abundant and most affordable food and fiber supply.

Texas farmers and ranchers are the quiet heroes when it comes to protecting the environment. They work tirelessly every day from sun-up to sundown to sustain their operations across the seasons and generations. Some agriculture producers tell me they are surprised about the sudden interest in protecting the environment because taking care of the land has always been a requirement of their lives and their work.

Sadly, the work they do is often taken for granted or simply seen as a part of the ordinary way in which livestock and crops are raised. The truth is, our farmers and ranchers are creating and implementing innovative practices that enable us to raise more crops using less water. They also are minimizing runoff to protect our state's natural waterways and using methods of production that allow for higher yields to meet consumer demand while decreasing the impact on the environment.

In fact, Texas farmers and ranchers are providing habitat for wildlife and preventing the erosion of rich soils across 130 million acres of agricultural land.

To be perfectly frank, you don't hear much fanfare about the sustainable practices used on farms and ranches because environmental stewardship is a given for agricultural producers.

The bottom line is, Texas farmers and ranchers don't need slogans or reminders to "go green." As the original stewards of the land and our precious environmental resources, they've known for generations that every day is Earth Day.

Find this article at:

<http://www.statesman.com/opinion/staples-ranchers-are-stewards-of-the-environment-596149.html>