

The Best, Worst and the Ugly - Ag's 2013 Review

2013 had its share of the good, bad and ugly in agricultural media. As 2013 closes out, I realize some of agriculture's biggest issues were the result of marketing campaigns from large companies who threw agriculture under the bus. These marketing campaigns were deceitful, and at times, untrue. But it was not all gloom and doom. There was an ad that showed appreciation for the work and sacrifices farmers make to feed us. And in the end? The ad ended up paying dividends for the company.

This is the time of year where renowned advertising agencies rate ads for the past year. The results? Two agricultural-themed ads made their list. One ad was on "the best" list and the other was on "the worst" list. Let's start with "The Best."

"The Best" - Brad Jakeman, president of PepsiCo Inc.'s global beverages groups rated Chrysler Group LLC's Ram trucks commercial "[So God Made a Farmer](#)" the best. This Paul Harvey voiceover commercial was aired during the Super Bowl and took the social media world by storm. It was the best "feel good" commercial and took many farmers by surprise. Social media feeds blew up immediately after the commercial and bloggers went into a frenzy talking about "[What it Means to be a Farmer](#)." The video has been viewed more than 22 million times and Ram trucks gained nearly a percentage point in market share between January and October, 2013.

"The Worst" - [Jeff Goodby](#), co-founder of Omnicom Group Inc's Goodby, Silverstein ad Partners rated the Chipotle Mexican Grill as the worst digital ad. This [animated video](#) pokes fun at the processed-food industry by showing a scarecrow getting a job at a food factory, where he encounters chickens being pumped full of neon liquid. The scarecrow eventually returns to the farm and makes his own food using fresh vegetables. According to Mr. Goodby, the film uses vegetarian imagery to sell meat, but what really happened was people came away thinking they shouldn't eat meat at all. As a farmer, I saw the video laden with untruths, which only resulted in food fears. They may have poked fun at the processed-food industry, but it hurt all farmers. Here is an [audio clip from Ray Bowman and Dr. Nevil Speer](#), who talk about the video. This video has been viewed 11.7 million times, about half the views of the Ram truck video.

The lesson for companies and ad agencies? **Positive marketing campaigns do pay.**

Here is another "The Worst" marketing campaign that should have made the list:

"The Worst" - Along with Chipotle Mexican Grill, Panera Breads also tried to use fear in their marketing campaign. Panera Breads campaign using the EZChicken, where they depict farmers as being lazy if they use antibiotics to treat their sick animals. Not only was that untrue, and as with Chipotle, it created undue food fear. After a lot of social media pressure through blogs, Facebook and tweets, Panera Breads did agree to pull the EZChicken part of the campaign. Here is my response to the Panera Bread campaign, [Farmers are not Lazy!](#) as well as [Dairy Carrie's response to Panera Bread](#).

And even though the next two items were not marketing campaigns, they did have an impact on agriculture through the media medium.

"The Worst" - Dr. Oz is a respected TV doctor personality and many people respect his medical advice on the show. Unfortunately, his show is not unbiased. Not only himself, but he also brings people on to his show with "so called" expertise, who have an agenda. He recently had a show on GMO's that was over the top. [Moms wearing gas masks spraying corn while talking about GMO's](#) and how harmful they are. Again, very one-sided, but his audience members did not know that. And that's too bad.

And "The Ugly" - Rolling Stone article on "Animal cruelty is the Price we Pay for Cheap Meat" was just plain ugly. The article was full of lies. When I decided to write a [rebuttal](#), I didn't know where to start because there was so much in the article that was wrong.

As we enter 2014, agriculture needs to remember that ***storms make tree roots stronger***. Do I think the storm is over?

Not by a long shot.

With only 2% of us that farm, farmers really do need to continue telling their story - what we do and why we do it. We all need to be truth tellers about what happens on our farms. And if you are not a farmer? Get to know a farmer. Here is a list of [farmer bloggers](#) from across the United States. They would love to talk with you!