



Watching the clock

By Holly Martin, July 18, 2011

My family is what I would consider a typical American family. My husband and I have two children, a dog and a cat. (We actually have more cats than that if you count the mousers in the barn.) The U.S. Census reports that in fact, the Martin family is pretty much an average American family.

Thanks to improved health care, we are all living longer and having children if we wish to do so. Each July, World Population Day is celebrated. This year, the day brings more significance. According to the United Nations, the world's population will hit 7 billion this year. In fact, the U. S. Census world population clock estimated the world population to be 6,948,702,619 as I wrote this column. Even though the growth rate is declining, the population continues to rise.

The U.S. Census predicts the world's population to be above 9 billion by the year 2050. That's a lot of mouths to feed--all on a declining land base.

But not even demographers can accurately forecast how many people will be added to world population over the coming century, noted Robert Engelman, a population expert and Worldwatch executive director.

We must be prepared.

"We'll have to learn how to moderate our consumption of materials and energy and to jumpstart new technologies that conserve them," Engelman said. According to Engelman, innovations in farming will be among the most important: With planning, agriculture can operate not only as a less-consumptive industry, but also one that works in harmony with the environment.

He's right. We know that farmers are raising more crops on fewer inputs with less impact on the environment than ever before. It's absolutely essential that as a world, we continue to invest in technologies that support that effort. We must be working toward new innovations that allow the agriculture industry to support our growing world.

It's exciting to see drought-tolerant corn varieties coming to the market. New research into biotech wheat show worlds of promise. New energy resources and technologies will allow farmers to contribute to the world energy crisis.

As an industry, let's stay committed. Whether they know it now or not, it will be our industry that meets the challenges of the growing population.

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