

Here Comes the Sun
By Dal Grooms

You might have noticed it about a month ago. The eastern horizon was visible earlier in the day and maybe you could even see the sun set after finishing work. Spring was coming and that was good. We in the Northern Hemisphere were about to get back our friend, the sun.

Sure, he had peeked in on us during the winter, but he'd never stay long. Now, as we pass through this first week of spring, our optimism and the sun return in full force. Spring training has already begun. The annual rebirth that Mother Nature serves up is upon us. Heck, even fashion critics have noted, "Optimism is the new Black" this spring.

Nowhere is spring and optimism celebrated more than on the farms and ranches of our country. Warmer winters in the South may give agriculturalists there a leg-up on growing seasons, but when it comes to hours of daylight, now is the season that the real work begins all across the country.

The increasing daylight hours let farmers launch into chores: fixing fences destroyed by winter snows; pruning damaged fruit tree limbs; and tuning up seed drills and row planters. There are just a few weeks to get everything into tip-top shape before the real rush of spring begins.

Does that sound like work? You bet. But it's the kind of work farmers and ranchers tackle every day as they produce this nation's food, fiber and fuel. They do it with heart, with enthusiasm and with optimism.

How is it, you might wonder, that farmers can approach each growing season with such an upbeat attitude? Well, they have a few secrets and they aren't all based on day length.

First, they accept that they are in a cyclic business. It cycles with the seasons, the years and changing economic times. Most farmers and ranchers have been to the bottom and they've been to the top. It is a real rollercoaster ride.

Second, they are their own bosses. They enjoy the responsibility of making the choices that determine how they work each day. When something goes wrong, their shoulders are broad enough to say, "That one's on me." When something goes right, they're humble enough to credit a bit of luck.

Third, they understand risk management. You won't farm long if you haven't brought some redundancy into your production work, and know the market options for both your inputs and outputs.

Fourth, they have a long-range view. When they make a decision that will affect costs and income 10 years or even 15 years in the future, they understand the road may be rough getting there, but they are ready for the ride.

And, let's face it, they enjoy those extra hours of sunlight and know that we only have another six months to enjoy them this year.