

GOOD MORNING - 12/18/17 Farm Direction - VanTrump Report

1 message

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Mon, Dec 18, 2017 at 7:15 AM



"Process and protocol is all about balance. Too little and you lack direction and consistency, too much and you strangle creativity and action. Just the right amount, however, can be a real competitive advantage." - Howard Schultz

MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2017

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Morning Summary: U.S. stocks are coming off another winning week with all three major indexes posting new record highs. The Dow has posted 69 record high closes this year, the most since 1995. The Dow is now up +25% for the year, the S&P 500 is up +20% and the Nasdaq up +30%. A major catalyst behind the recent stock market gains has been hopes that tax reform will soon be passed. It looks like an almost certain guarantee now, following news late last week that Republicans had secured two critical holdout votes. The bill is expected to pass through both chambers of Congress early this week and be signed into law by President Trump no later than Friday. Another issue Congress will be tackling is the spending bill. In order to prevent a government shutdown on Friday, lawmakers must either pass a full omnibus plan to fund the government through 2018 or pass another short-term funding bill that will keep the lights on into January. Economic data out this week will heavily revolve around the U.S. housing market, starting with the Housing Market Index numbers out today. That's followed by Housing Starts on Tuesday; Existing Home Sales on Wednesday; FHFA House Price Index on Thursday; and New Home Sales on Friday. Oil markets might see some added volatility this week with the Forties pipeline in the North Sea still shutdown. This has led to a declaration of "force majeure" and it is unclear when tanker loading will resume. Keep in mind the Forties pipeline delivers the majority of the crude that underpins the benchmark Brent crude contract. Insiders say if the outage goes on for a few more weeks it could put additional upward pressure on Brent prices. The 450,000 barrel-per-day pipeline could be shut for weeks, leading to shutdowns at North Sea oil fields. This incident is exactly the type of event that can catch the oil market by surprise, leading to sharp and sudden price increases even if all seems well elsewhere in the world. Let's also keep in mind, Venezuela's output fell by -41,000 barrels-per-day in November from a month earlier, after suffering a decline of -26,000 barrels-per-day in October. Production in Venezuela is now at a 30-year low and is heading south. This is the last full week of trading before the Christmas and New Year's holidays, which both fall on Mondays. I suspect many traders and money-managers will use this week to square up some positions ahead of their extended holiday break.

Big Weekend At the Box-office For Star Wars: *"The Last Jedi" earned an estimated \$220 million over the weekend, making it the second best domestic opening weekend ever at the box-office. In first place it's "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" who hit the theaters in 2015, bringing in an estimated \$247.9 million during its opening weekend. Source: Business Insider*

Beauty of Biofuel: *The ethanol we currently use now replaces 661,000 barrels of imported oil every day. That amounts to one less oil tanker coming in and out of our ports every week – and one less chance of an oil spill fouling our coastlines and waterways. The 10% ethanol currently in our nation's gasoline decreases emissions equivalent up to removing 7 million cars from the road.*

Interesting Retail Numbers: *Stores are closing at an unprecedented pace. Retailers are going bankrupt. Malls are slowly being abandoned. But don't misunderstand what's happening. Physical stores are struggling -- an understatement -- but consumers are spending like crazy. Confidence is the highest in 17 years. Unemployment is low, and shoppers have more cash to buy stuff. Consumers have recovered from the Great Recession, and then some. The*

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Today In History

1620, Colonial America - British ship Mayflower docked at modern-day Plymouth, Massachusetts, and its passengers prepared to begin their new

problem for retailers isn't people's willingness to spend. It's where they're spending. Below are some interesting facts about today's retail. (Source: Money)

- **Brick & Mortar Still Strong But Losing Ground** - Around 88% of all purchases in the U.S. still take place in physical locations. This holiday season alone, people are projected to spend \$420 billion in brick-and-mortar stores, according to Deloitte.
- **Online Purchases Starting To Surge** - This holiday season, consumers spent a record amount of money online -- \$5 billion on Black Friday alone. That's 17% more than last year, according to data from Adobe Digital Insights.
- **Traditional Retailers Losing Market Share** - Sears, which operated nearly 3,800 stores as recently as a decade ago, is down to 1,104. Macy's closed 68 stores this year, and JCPenney announced it would close 128.
- **Amazon Could Gobble Up More Businesses** - Macy's and JCPenney combined are worth less than \$9 billion, compared with Amazon's more than \$560 billion. Amazon is projected to make up half the online marketplace by 2021, according to Wall Street firm Needham.

Quick Bitcoin Fact As It Pushes To \$20,000: Approximately 5% of Americans — roughly 16.3 million people — are buying and selling bitcoin frequently. Given bitcoin only hit mainstream mania this year, many say we're far from peak adoption. This number is still small compared to the number of Americans who have traditional investments. Fifty four percent of Americans — a record low — invest in the stock market (including through individual stocks, mutual funds, 401(k)s and pensions). Unsurprisingly, the affluent are more likely to dabble in bitcoin regularly. Fifteen percent of adults who earn over \$100,000 annually said they are buying, receiving or sending bitcoin somewhat or very frequently. (Source: Yahoo Finance)

Bitcoin Now Trading On Worlds Largest Futures Exchange: Bitcoin trading is now officially underway on the CME exchange under the symbol "BTC". From what I understand, prices surged last night off the open to \$20,650 per coin. Contract specifications show each unit on the CME is based on 5 Bitcoin's. I believe the initial margin requirement at CME is around 43%, while at CBOE, it is closer to 44%, reflecting bitcoin's volatility. The margin for an S&P 500 futures contract, by contrast, is about 5%. Additionally, FCMs may require a margin level beyond CME Clearing's minimum requirement. The maximum order size will initially be 100 contracts. The CME will not list options initially, but will reassess once the futures market develops and as customer demand evolves. To mitigate some of the risk involved with Bitcoin's volatility, the CME Group has placed price limits on Bitcoin Futures. Bitcoin futures will be subject to price fluctuation limits of seven percent, 13 percent, and 20 percent. When the price of a contract fluctuates +/- 7% to the prior settlement price--the price that Bitcoin was valued at when the market closed the previous trading day-- a two minute monitoring period will begin where contracts will continue to trade, however, within the +/- 7% boundary. If at the end of that two minute monitoring period, the price is still at the limit down or limit up, a two minute halt on trading will begin. During the two-minute halt traders will be able to create market orders, however, they will not be fulfilled until the two minute halt period is over. Afterwards, the price limit will expand to 13 percent without a halt period and will be hard capped at 20 percent without a halt period. However, If the price fluctuates to 20 percent, trading for the rest of the day must occur within the +/- 20% limit. To Learn More Click [HERE](#)



settlement, Plymouth Colony. The famous Mayflower story began in 1606, when a group of reform-minded Puritans in Nottinghamshire, England,

founded their own church, separate from the state-sanctioned Church of England. Accused of treason, they were forced to leave the country and settle in the more tolerant Netherlands. After 12 years of struggling to adapt and make a decent living, the group sought financial backing from some London merchants to set up a colony in America. On September 6, 1620, 102 passengers--dubbed Pilgrims by William Bradford, a passenger who would become the first governor of Plymouth Colony--crowded on the Mayflower to begin the long, hard journey to a new life in the New World. On November 11, 1620, the Mayflower anchored at what is now Provincetown Harbor, Cape Cod. Before going ashore, 41 male passengers--heads of families, single men and three male servants--signed the famous Mayflower Compact, agreeing to submit to a government chosen by common consent and to obey all laws made for the good of the colony. Over the next month, several small scouting groups were sent ashore to collect firewood and scout out a good place to build a settlement. Around December 10, one of these groups found a harbor they liked on the western side of Cape Cod Bay. They returned to the Mayflower to tell the other passengers, but bad weather prevented them from docking until December 18. After exploring the region, the settlers chose a cleared area previously occupied by members of a local Native American tribe, the Wampanoag. The tribe had abandoned the village several years earlier, after an outbreak of European disease. That winter of 1620-1621 was brutal, as the Pilgrims struggled to build their settlement, find food and ward off sickness. By spring, 50 of the original 102 Mayflower passengers were dead. The remaining settlers made contact with returning members of the Wampanoag tribe and in March they signed a peace treaty with a tribal chief, Massasoit. Aided by the Wampanoag, especially the English-speaking Squanto, the Pilgrims were able to plant crops--especially corn and beans--that were vital to their survival. The Mayflower and its crew left Plymouth to return to England on April 5, 1621.



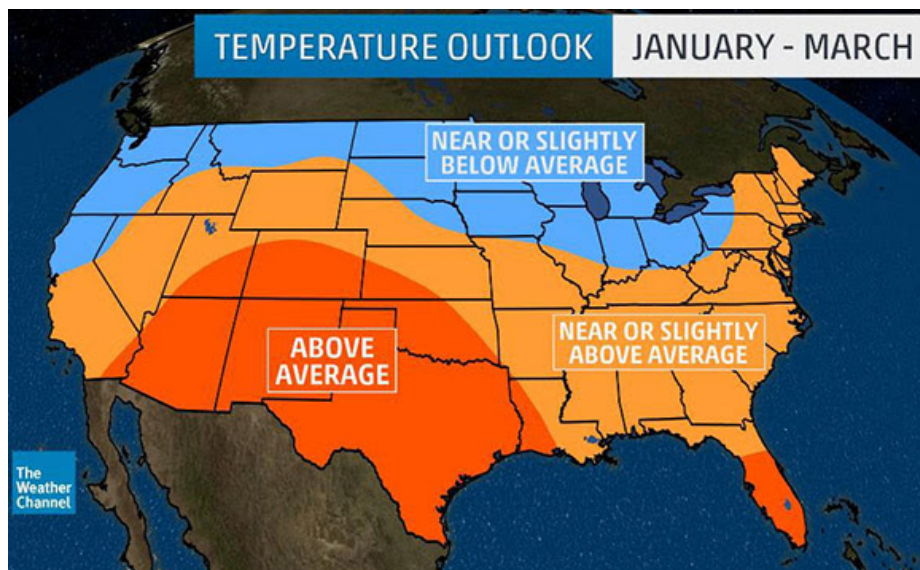
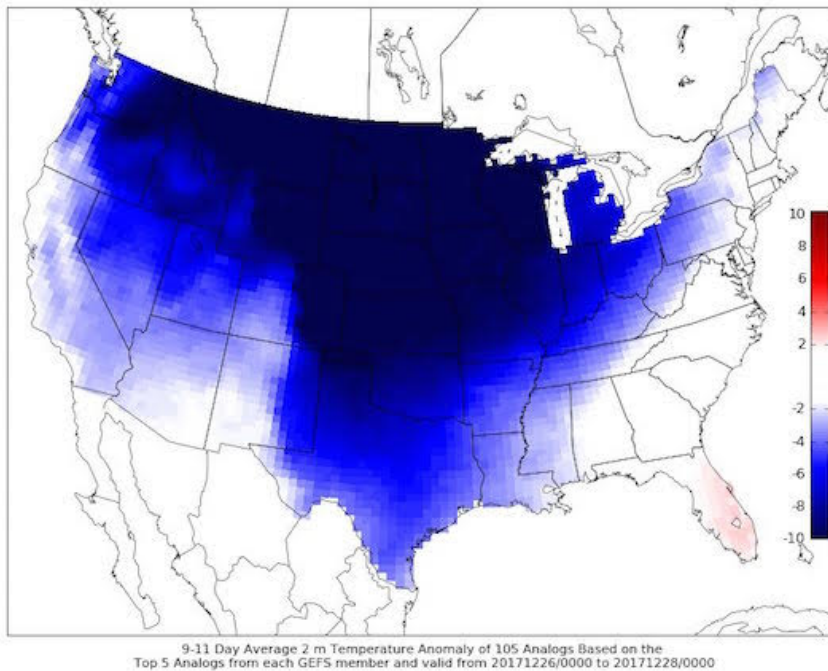
1865, Civil War - The U.S. House of Representatives passes the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery in America. The

amendment read, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude...shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." When the Civil War began, President Abraham Lincoln's professed goal was the restoration of the Union. But early in the war, the Union began keeping escaped slaves rather than returning them to their owners, so slavery essentially ended wherever the Union

Weather forecasts continue to line-up with a typical La Nina winter pattern. The southern tier of the U.S. and areas along the East Coast are expected to experience temperatures generally warmer than average for the remainder of this winter and into early spring according to the latest outlook from The Weather Company. Meanwhile,

locations from the Pacific Northwest into the Great Lakes region will likely see colder than average conditions for the first three months of 2018. Temperatures will likely be the highest above average during the January through March period from the Southwest into the southern Plains and Southeast. Near average to colder than average conditions are expected from the Northwest into the northern Plains, Midwest and Great Lakes region. La Nina conditions are expected to last through the winter and into the early spring. The latest outlook from NOAA indicated a greater than 80% chance of La Nina through the winter. It's important to remember that La Nina conditions are only one element that influences the atmosphere and that there are several indicators that point to the southern tier of the U.S. leaning toward warmer than average conditions and the northern tier leaning toward colder.

Extremely Cold Temps Coming By Christmas: *Most folks West of the Mississippi are going to experience an extreme cool down in the coming days. Most forecasters are calling for extreme Arctic cold arriving via Polar Express just in time for Christmas...*



Corn prices are coming off another week of new lows as South American weather appears more cooperative than many bulls had been forecasting. The USDAs projected corn price was left unchanged this month, with a tightened range of \$2.85 to \$3.55 per bushel and a midpoint of around \$3.20 per bushel. That's tough for many of us to swallow, but we have to remind ourselves we are swimming in close to 2.5 billion bushels of U.S. corn supply. We have to also keep in mind that global corn production was recently raised a touch higher, primarily on a small bump in Chinese and EU production, which was mainly on gains in Romania. There's still a ton of weather

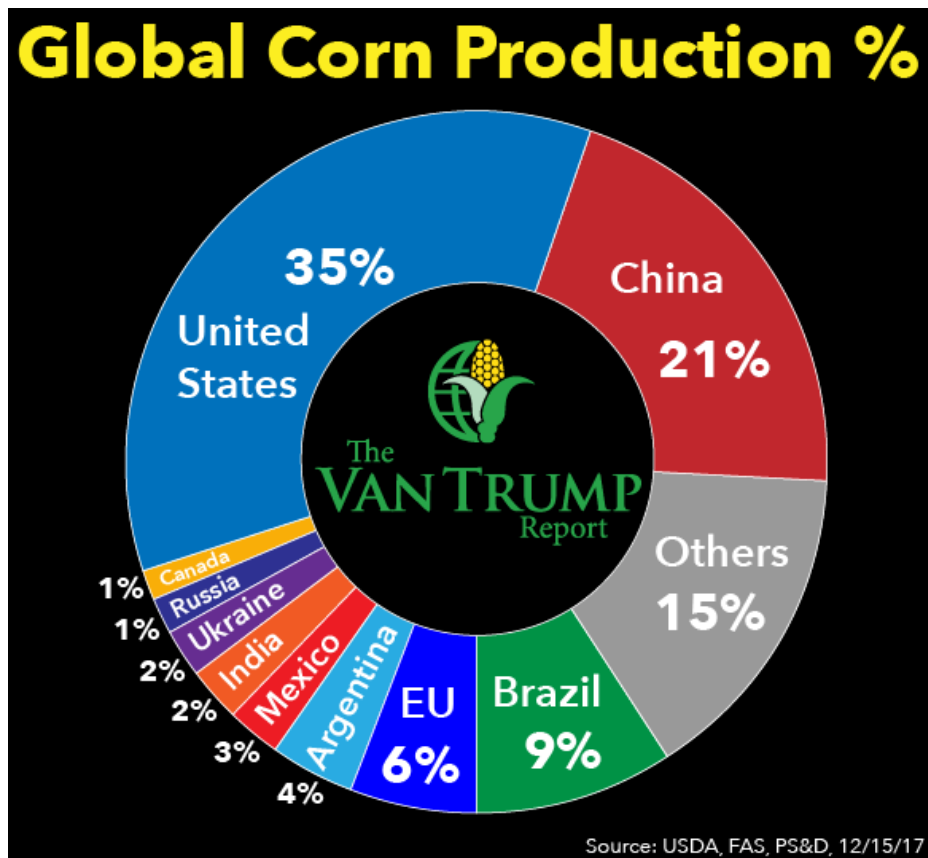
army was victorious. In September 1862, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all slaves in areas that were still in rebellion against the Union. This measure opened the issue of what to do about slavery in border states that had not seceded or in areas that had been captured by the Union before the proclamation. In 1864, an amendment abolishing slavery passed the U.S. Senate but died in the House as Democrats rallied in the name of states' rights. The election of 1864 brought Lincoln back to the White House along with significant Republican majorities in both houses, so it appeared the amendment was headed for passage when the new Congress convened in March 1865. Lincoln preferred that the amendment receive bipartisan support--some Democrats indicated support for the measure, but many still resisted. The amendment passed 119 to 56, seven votes above the necessary two-thirds majority. Several Democrats abstained, but the 13th Amendment was sent to the states for ratification, which came in December 1865. With the passage of the amendment, the institution that had indelibly shaped American history was eradicated.



1950, Cold War - U.S. President Harry S. Truman publicly announces his decision to support the development of the hydrogen bomb, a weapon

theorized to be hundreds of times more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Japan during World War II. Five months earlier, the United States had lost its nuclear supremacy when the Soviet Union successfully detonated an atomic bomb at their test site in Kazakhstan. Then, several weeks after that, British and U.S. intelligence came to the staggering conclusion that German-born Klaus Fuchs, a top-ranking scientist in the U.S. nuclear program, was a spy for the Soviet Union. These two events, and the fact that the Soviets now knew everything that the Americans did about how to build a hydrogen bomb, led Truman to approve massive funding for the superpower race to complete the world's first "superbomb," as he described it in his public announcement on January 31. On November 1, 1952, the United States successfully detonated "Mike," the world's first hydrogen bomb, on the Elugelab Atoll in the Pacific Marshall Islands. The 10.4-megaton thermonuclear device, built upon the Teller-Ulam principles of staged radiation implosion, instantly vaporized an entire island and left behind a crater more than a mile wide. The incredible explosive force of Mike was also apparent from the sheer magnitude of its mushroom cloud--within 90 seconds the mushroom cloud climbed to 57,000 feet and entered the stratosphere. One minute later, it reached 108,000 feet, eventually stabilizing at a ceiling of 120,000 feet. Half an hour after the test, the mushroom stretched 60 miles across, with the base of the head joining the stem at 45,000 feet. Three years later, on November 22,

uncertainty surrounding the South American crop, which continues to be heavily debated. I continue to believe Brazil's second-crop corn will ultimately be the big "wild-card" and headlines surrounding such are still several weeks out on the horizon. Hence the bulls find themselves in a bit of a news vacuum, or a space devoid of worthy headlines to push us higher. When the market deems itself to be heavily oversupplied, I've learned it takes substantial headlines and horsepower to knock it off its current trajectory and propel it back the opposite direction. I've sounded like a broken record the past few months, talking about lower-highs and lower-lows, but here we sit. Demand is good, but to this point supply has been better. Sorry, but I'm in no hurry to do anything as we continue to orbit around the \$3.50 area. Staying patient...



Soybean prices are a touch stronger this morning, but have tumbled almost -50 cents from the recent highs posted back on December 5th. Improved moisture in some parts of South America and a more burdensome balance sheet recently released by the USDA has caused some bulls to backpedal. The domestic balance sheet was bumped higher from 425 to 445 million bushels. Exports were lowered by -25 million and seed raised higher by +5 million. Net-net a 20 million bushel reduction in domestic demand. If this is realized, the year-end carryout would be the largest since the 2006/07 record. When the USDA reports December 1 soybean stocks next month, many bears speculate they could be the largest ever for the season's first quarter, by a fairly wide margin. While U.S. exports took a small step back, the USDA has raised both Argentina and Brazil's exports by +500,000 metric tons each. There were no changes made to South American production, where Brazil's crop is close to fully planted and Argentina is making better progress in that direction. As we look ahead, many bears are thinking the USDA will need to make a more substantial cut to U.S. exports, perhaps another -50 to -75 million bushel reduction. Keep in mind, Chinese crush margins are also creating some concerns about nearby demand. There's also more talk circulating about U.S. acres heading higher in 2018. From a technical perspective, the bulls are hoping longer-term psychological support can hold above \$9.50 per bushel. I continue to monitor La Niña weather headlines and Chinese demand.

1955, the Soviet Union detonated its first hydrogen bomb on the same principle of radiation implosion. Both superpowers were now in possession of the "hell bomb," as it was known by many Americans, and the world lived under the threat of thermonuclear war for the first time in history.

Upcoming Events

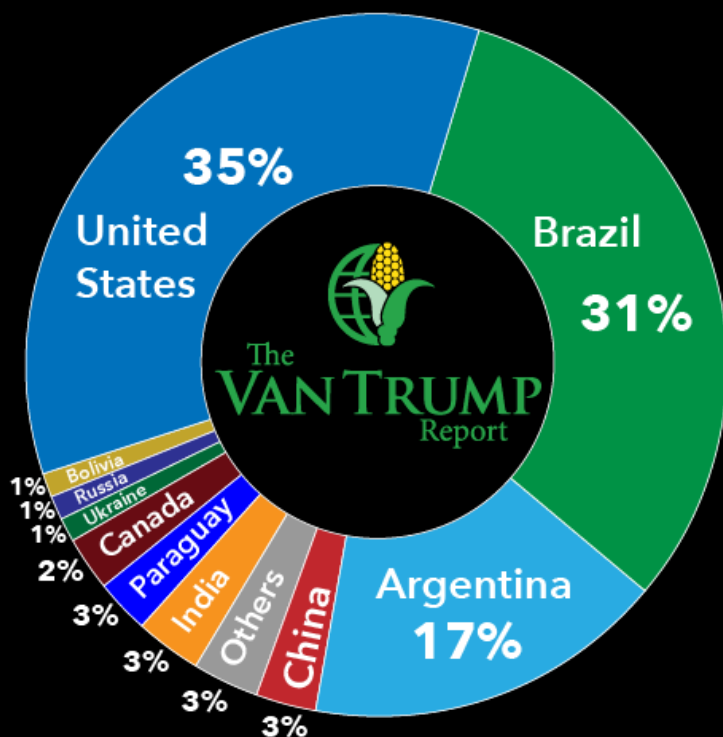
- Fri. 12/22** - Cattle on Feed, Cold Storage & Quarterly Hogs and Pigs
- Mon. 12/25** - Christmas - Markets Closed
- Mon. 1/1** - New Year's Day - Markets Closed
- Wed. 1/3** - Minutes From 12/13 FOMC Meeting Released
- Fri. 1/12** - USDA Crop Production Annual Summary, Supply and Demand
- Tues. 1/23** - Cold Storage
- Fri. 1/26** - Cattle on Feed
- Tues.-Wed. 1/30-1/31** - FOMC Meeting
- Thurs. 2/8** - USDA Supply and Demand
- Fri. 2/16** - Farms and Land in Farms
- Thurs. 2/22** - Cold Storage (month & annual)
- Fri. 2/23** - Cattle on Feed

Kevin's Song of the Week



About the Report

Global Soybean Production %



Source: USDA, FAS, PS&D, 12/15/17

Wheat is up a bit this morning on more severe and extreme weather forecast here at home in the coming days. Unfortunately, we still continue to slosh around near the bottom of the barrel. The USDA's recent move to push 2017/18 global wheat production to a new record high has done very little create a tailwind for price. Bigger production estimates for both Canada and the European Union only intensify the competition facing U.S. exporters during the latter part of the marketing year. With already burdensome global supply and world wheat production now forecast at 755.2 million, exceeding last year's record by 1.6 million tons, it's tough for the trade to get bullish based on traditional fundamentals. Looking ahead, the USDA will be releasing its final wheat estimates for the 2017/18 marketing year and its first official projections of winter wheat by class for 2018. There's a lot of talk that we could see just 45 million U.S. wheat acres planted. If that plays itself out, all-wheat planted area would sink to a new record low, surpassing the previous low achieved in 2017. Bulls are also saying, not only do we have record low acres in the ground, but many suspect over 50% of the crop is heading into dormancy rated below "Good-to-Excellent". Meaning U.S. production could ultimately be much lower than the trade is currently forecasting, especially if the current drought conditions continue to expand. Keep in mind, many important areas of U.S. winter wheat production are undergoing abnormally dry to severe drought conditions. I suspect there won't be much in the headlines until the next USDA report, which is scheduled for January 12th. As both a producer and spec, I still think the trade could be singing a different song by mid-February to mid-March. As a producer I'm in absolutely no hurry to price any additional bushels at these levels. As a spec, I remain stubbornly bullish for what appears to be all the wrong reasons.

NEXT level THINKING



My goal at "The Van Trump Report" is to help readers better identify the moving parts and dynamics associated with the financial markets, geopolitical events, economics, media and culture that is currently influencing and shaping the direction of the agricultural markets. I like to believe I "Challenge the Traditional" and encourage our readers to think outside the box.

I use story telling techniques that are written in an easy to read format to help convey my current thoughts about business, markets, technology, weather, sports and life. I also like to include links, filter the noise, and pass along in-depth research and information that I believe could challenge your current thought process and help you make more informed decisions. In addition I include valuable lessons I have learned from other traders, executives and investors, along with an occasional inspirational piece about life, family and faith.

What I do not do in "The Van Trump Report" is give specific financial advice or tell individuals how to invest or how to specifically hedge. Remember, this information is being read by hedge fund managers, bankers, CEO's, and Ag leaders around the globe, therefore it's NOT tailored to fit your specific individual needs. For specific investment or hedging advice please seek the help of a licensed representative that can better understand your particular situation, individual needs and overall risk tolerance. This information should ONLY be used for educational and entertainment purposes.

My family and I would like to thank you again for your support!

Kevin Van Trump

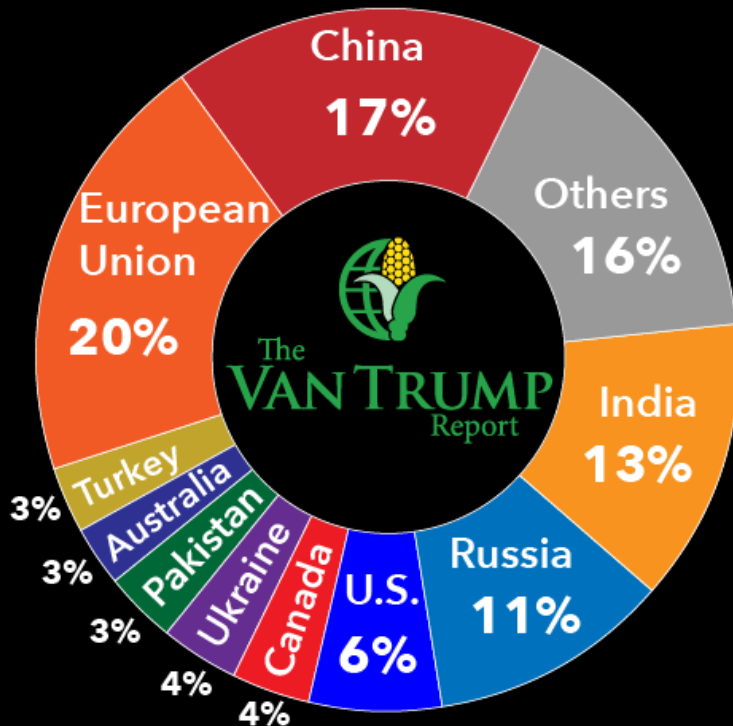
What Others Are Saying

"I am a recent subscriber to Kevin's newsletter, but I'm a long-time reader of many other high-profile marketing services. I am particularly impressed with the thorough manner in which Kevin evaluates every economic aspect, both nationally and internationally, that influences commodity prices. His analysis and conclusions are highly thought out and conveyed in layman's terms so that the reader can comprehend the numerous and often complex interrelationships that impact the markets. Kevin is a real attribute to the agricultural sector."

A.M., FDIC

"As a national federal farm policy administrator and commodity producer, I find it critical to keep updated with what is going on in the real world of agriculture and with the domestic and global markets. Of all the services I've been privy to or have subscribed to over the past 20 years I've found in the past several months of engaging in your "Farm Direction" services to be the best perception and analysis of what is really

Global Wheat Production %



Source: USDA, FAS, PS&D, 12/15/17

happening in today's world. Not only here in the United States, but across the globe as well. US farmers need this type of help and information to assist them in their daily efforts. I commend you for a job well done. Please let me know if I can ever be of any help or assistance to you in the future..."

L.T., Assistant Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs USDA

My Own Personal Truisms

"Not To Trade, is often considered a good trading decision..."

"First Rule of HOLES: When you are in one stop digging..."

"Every looser in Vegas, always walks away from the table thinking he could have done better, the winners on the other hand leave while on top..."

"Bulls make money, Bears make money, but pigs get slaughtered..."

"The markets ability to remain irrational can often times last much longer than your ability to remain solvent..."

I'm more of a long-term player, therefore you will not see me give many short-term suggestions or trade ideas. One of my most important rules is that I always follow my long-term direction. Therefore, as long as I am "bullish" a market I will only play that particular market in one of three ways.

- Option #1 - Conservatively long.
- Option #2 - Aggressively long.
- Option #3 - Sitting on the sideline.

I never initiate a "short" position in a market that I am "bullish" longer-term, nor do I initiate a "long" position in a market I am "bearish" longer-term.

Connecting the Dots

> Lanworth Keeps Argentine Crop Estimates Relatively High: Recent dryness has reduced Argentina corn and soybean yield potential, but considering the earliness of the season and now the potential for upcoming rainfall, estimates remain relatively high at 42 and 57 million tons, respectively. In Brazil, soybean production is stable following favorable weather. Elsewhere, high prices and adequate initial soil moisture in China set initial wheat production 2 million tons higher than last season. In Europe, wheat and rapeseed production is set to rebound from the past seasons following favorable prices and assuming average weather going forward. (Source: Reuters)

> EU Wheat, Barley Exports Trimmed: Strategie Grains lowered its monthly forecast for EU soft wheat exports this season as it factored in stiff competition on world markets and very slow shipments from Germany and Poland. The analyst firm projected 2017/18 soft wheat exports from the European Union at 22.3 million tonnes, down from 22.9 estimated last month and 24.1 exported in 2016/17. (Source: Reuters)

> Farmers Leery Of Joining Lawsuit Against USDA Over GIPSA: Farmers have been upset for several months about a USDA decision related to GIPSA rules. But many are also wary about possible retaliation from the large corporations they work for. As a result, many declined to join a lawsuit filed on Thursday by Democracy Forward and the Organization for Competitive Markets. The team members who filed the petition said in an interview with Politico that they approached roughly 30 farmers to join in, but many were scared for their livelihoods. The suit argues that the USDA's withdrawal of Obama-era rules for GIPSA - the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration - was unlawful. The Trump administration in October withdrew the rule that would have lowered the bar for producers of poultry and other livestock to sue the meatpacking or processing companies with which they have contracts. Meatpackers and trade groups like the National Chicken Council and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association applauded the decision, saying that the rules would have invited frivolous and costly litigation. (Source: Politico)

> Brazil Beef Export Volumes Seen Growing +10% Next Year: Brazilian beef exporters see shipments growing 10 percent in 2018 after rising an estimated 9 percent this year despite corruption and food safety scandals that temporarily closed off major

markets. Trade group Abiec last week said Brazil, the world's largest beef exporter, would likely sell 1.68 million tonnes of beef abroad next year, up from 1.53 million tonnes in 2017. Revenue is expected to rise about 11 percent to \$6.9 billion in 2018, after a 13 percent rise this year to \$6.2 billion. (Source: Reuters)

> Two More Big Names Leave GMA: The exodus from the Grocery Manufacturers Association continues: Tyson Foods and Unilever are not renewing their membership. At least six major food companies have now broken with the association as it struggles to navigate deep disagreements within the industry over how to respond to rapidly changing consumer tastes. Others who have parted ways with GMA include several food giants that own extensive consumer brands like Campbell Soup Co., Nestlé, Dean Foods and Mars. (Source: Politico)

> Missouri Issues First Round Of Fines On Dicamba Investigations: The Missouri Department of Agriculture announced the first wave of civil penalties issued to applicators, all from Dunklin County, as a result of investigations of complaints during the 2016 growing season. Civil penalties, ranging from \$1,500 to \$62,250, were issued for pesticide misuse (off-label use and drift). In 2016, Department staff conducted and completed 121 complainant investigations. Those complainants named approximately 60 applicators, who were investigated as a result of complaints. In addition, the Department investigated nearly 100 non-Dicamba related incidents. (Source: MO Department Of Ag)

> Kazakhstan Cuts Export Forecast: Kazakhstan's ag ministry has trimmed their estimate for 2017-18 grain exports to 8.0 million metric tons from a previous estimate 9.0 million and compared to exports of 8.3 million last season. The ministry cites Russian competition for the cut.

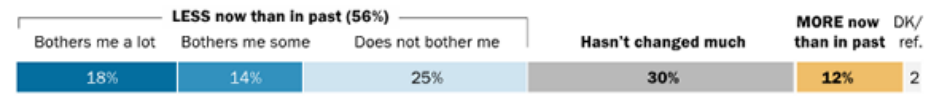
> Tesla Blamed For Slide IN U.S. Home Solar Sales: After years of double-digit growth, home solar installations in the United States are poised to fall for the first time this year, according to a report released by GTM Research. The reason? An analysis of installation data suggests that most of the slowdown is traceable to a single company: Tesla Inc (TSLA.O), which acquired sister company SolarCity about a year ago. For years, SolarCity, with early backing from Tesla CEO Elon Musk, was the biggest player in residential solar and the driving force behind that market's supercharged growth. But under Tesla's ownership, the company has largely stopped its aggressive marketing campaigns and ambitious expansion. As a result, Tesla's rooftop solar installations have fallen sharply each quarter this year compared to last. In the third quarter, installations were off by 42 percent over the previous year. Overall, the residential solar market is expected to fall 13 percent this year, according to GTM's quarterly solar market report. That compares with a 19 percent rise last year and four straight years before that of increases above 50 percent. (Source: Reuters)

> Americans Say Religious Aspects of Christmas Are Declining in Public Life: As long-simmering debates continue over how American society should commemorate the Christmas holiday, a new Pew Research Center survey finds that most U.S. adults believe the religious aspects of Christmas are emphasized less now than in the past – even as relatively few Americans are bothered by this trend. In addition, a declining majority says religious displays such as nativity scenes should be allowed on government property. And compared with five years ago, a growing share of Americans say it does not matter to them how they are greeted in stores and businesses during the holiday season – whether with "Merry Christmas" or a less-religious greeting like "happy holidays." To be sure, while the public's commemoration of Christmas may have less of a religious component now than in the past, the share of Americans who say they celebrate Christmas in some way has hardly budged at all. Nine-in-ten U.S. adults say they celebrate the holiday, which is nearly identical to the share who said this in 2013. (Source: Pew Research)



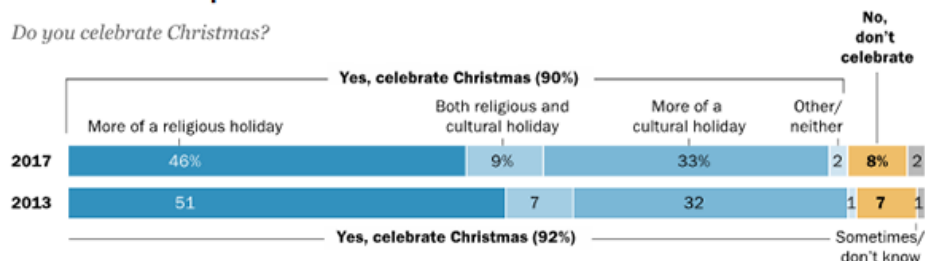
Most say religious parts of Christmas are now emphasized less, but relatively few are bothered by it

In American society in general, religious aspects of Christmas are emphasized ...



Half of Americans plan to attend church on Christmas

Do you celebrate Christmas?



Plan to attend religious services on Christmas Eve/Christmas Day?



Plan to gather with family, friends on Christmas Eve/Christmas Day?



Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.
Source: Survey conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 4, 2017, among U.S. adults.
"Americans Say Religious Aspects of Christmas Are Declining in Public Life"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Southwest Wisconsin - It's been amazing to watch the yields continually increase year after year. We were producing 180bpa corn ten years ago. This year we topped 230bpa on our dryland acres. We've had great increases the last five seasons. The beans did not keep up with their recent trendline busting yields but it would have been hard for us to top last years yields. Looking forward it would be nice if the seed guys could help us growers out a bit by putting some coin back in our pocket and not the shareholders. We are doing some vrt fertilizing and keeping our eye on if we can gain ROI on any new tech next year.

Northwest Missouri - It was a challenging season for my first year on my own. I came home after being away when my father passed recently. With help from the family we got through it with a few learning curves. We had good weather for the most part and the corn turned in at 170-180bpa which is about right and the beans did well at 80bpa. We do some wheat but not enough to mention. My brother and I also do a bit of custom work and that kept us plenty busy. We did make some good sales this year on the corn and we will stick with the same rotation going forward.

Northern Kansas - We have a winter wheat stand that is marginal at best. Since we got the wheat in the ground we have had very little moisture. It will probably end up being a cover crop and that is it. We will end up having the same rotation for the most part next year. I think we will have a few more corn acres just because of how the pivots work out. Our yields were off a little last year with dryland beans making 40bpa and the irrigated fields making a whole farm average of 64bpa. We did have some fields making 70bpa and 80bpa, which help but we need to be more consistent with these type yields to make beans pencil better. This summer we had some plants abort some pods which knocked the yields down a little. The irrigated corn had decent yields

but we need to push the envelope on yields north of 250bpa across all acres to make the needed returns.



Interesting Look At What We Think Are Healthy Habits: *We all have them — habits we think are healthy because we heard them somewhere on the news or from a health-conscious friend. And no matter how much we hate them, we just keep doing them because we think they're good for us. Check out some of the most deeply entrenched habits many of us have and see if they really matter. Read more [HERE](#).*

Bitcoin Points Way to 'Massive Change' for Commodity Businesses: *Blockchain is upending the world's financial markets with the rise of bitcoin, and now the digital-ledger system is poised to do the same next year for raw materials like food and energy. Companies including BP Plc, ABN Amro Group NV and Mercuria Energy Group Ltd. said last month they will adapt blockchain to streamline physical energy transactions. In October, four banks joined a venture started by UBS Group AG and International Business Machines Corp. to use the technology in a platform for the global goods trade. Natixis SA and Trafigura Group Ltd. announced in March they will employ the system to finance buying and selling oil. Read more [HERE](#).*

Holiday Travel Rush: What To Expect If You're Flying: *You'll have lots of company at the airport if you're flying for Christmas or New Year's. Airlines are preparing for a record 51 million passengers for the holiday season, a 3.5% increase from the previous peak of 49.3 million last year. To accommodate the rush, U.S. airlines say they're offering 91,000 more seats per day to meet the demand for flights from Dec. 15 through Jan. 4. The busiest travel days, with about 2.7 million passengers each, will be Thursday Dec. 21, Friday Dec. 22 and Tuesday Dec. 26, according to the trade group Airlines for America. Check out this guide [HERE](#).*

Jeff Bezos Shows What Your Blue Origin Ride Into Space Will Be Like: *The Amazon CEO posted a video of Blue Origin's Crew Capsule 2.0 on its first successful test flight. The capsule is similar to the one that paying riders may eventually take into space. It features large windows that are 2.4 feet wide and 3.6 feet tall to give riders an unobstructed view of their surroundings. Bezos also showed off the first use of his company's landing pad robot. Check out more details and a couple of videos [HERE](#).*

The U.S. States With the Most Million Dollar Homes: *Whether it's a mansion in the suburbs or a penthouse in the city center, the price tag of any prime piece of real estate is usually measured in the millions. Where in the United States can the most multi-million dollar homes be found – and which specific cities have the highest growth rates for high-end property listings? The rate of million dollar homes per state ranges from 0.5% (Indiana) to 17.3% (D.C.), but the median is only 1.1%. That means that the vast amount of states are closer to the zero end of the spectrum. In fact, only six jurisdictions exceed the 4% mark. Leading the pack is Washington D.C. with 17.3% of all homes exceeding the \$1 million benchmark. This puts the nation's capital ahead of California (13.6%), Hawaii (13.5%), and New York (7.0%). The map below from Realtor.com breaks down the cities that have the biggest increases in million dollar homes over the last three years. See details for all fifty states [HERE](#).*



Your Future Meals May Be Printed

We have all seen the cool videos where 3D printers are producing tools or cars and even concrete houses, but consider the fact you may one day plate your next meal from the same source. The 3D printer simply gets filled with edible ink and away you go. Keep in mind it is already happening at an industrial level as well as being researched by NASA and the U.S. military. As I understand it, their goals are to control what's in the food they provide for their teams. Ideally, it should allow us to overcome food allergies or specific needs relating to nutrition. For example, if you suffering with low blood sugar, your printer can add vitamin B to your snack and get you leveled out. There are companies like Barilla, the Italian producer of pastas, who are already playing around with 3D printers in order to create beautiful pasta designs. Also, many bakeries and commercial kitchens are using the technology in order to print intricate sugar structures, challenging chocolate work or simply tedious shaping for baking. The commercial and retail applications for restaurants could be huge as you will get your food exactly with ingredients tailored to your specific needs. I'm told there are at least four restaurants in service today, serving 3D printed food. Click [HERE](#) to learn where you can enjoy that experience. Keep in mind there are some who feel 3D printing could potentially contribute to the feeding of the future populations as they could use hydrocolloids, or substances that form gels with water, that would be used to replace the base ingredients of familiar dishes with plentiful renewables like algae, duckweed, and grass. As for home use, I would imagine there will be more to consider before diving in. For instance, it will be some time before the technology becomes mainstream as we are still early in the game and the cost of most 3D food printers is still prohibitive, running around \$4,500 for a chocolate printer. Then there is the social side of things, can we be responsible enough not to abuse the technology and simply overindulge on our favorite snacks? On top of that, I can't even imagine our family no longer enjoying all the time we spend together in the kitchen as we prepare meals together. I would suspect there are many of you who feel the same way. But keep in mind, how many of us saw the shift in society coming from the use of cell phones and how we communicate. That leaves me believing a disrupting technology in our food preparation is just as possible. Click [HERE](#) to see a video from 'Food Inc' - the worlds first 3D printed restaurant. (Source: saifood.ca, youtube)



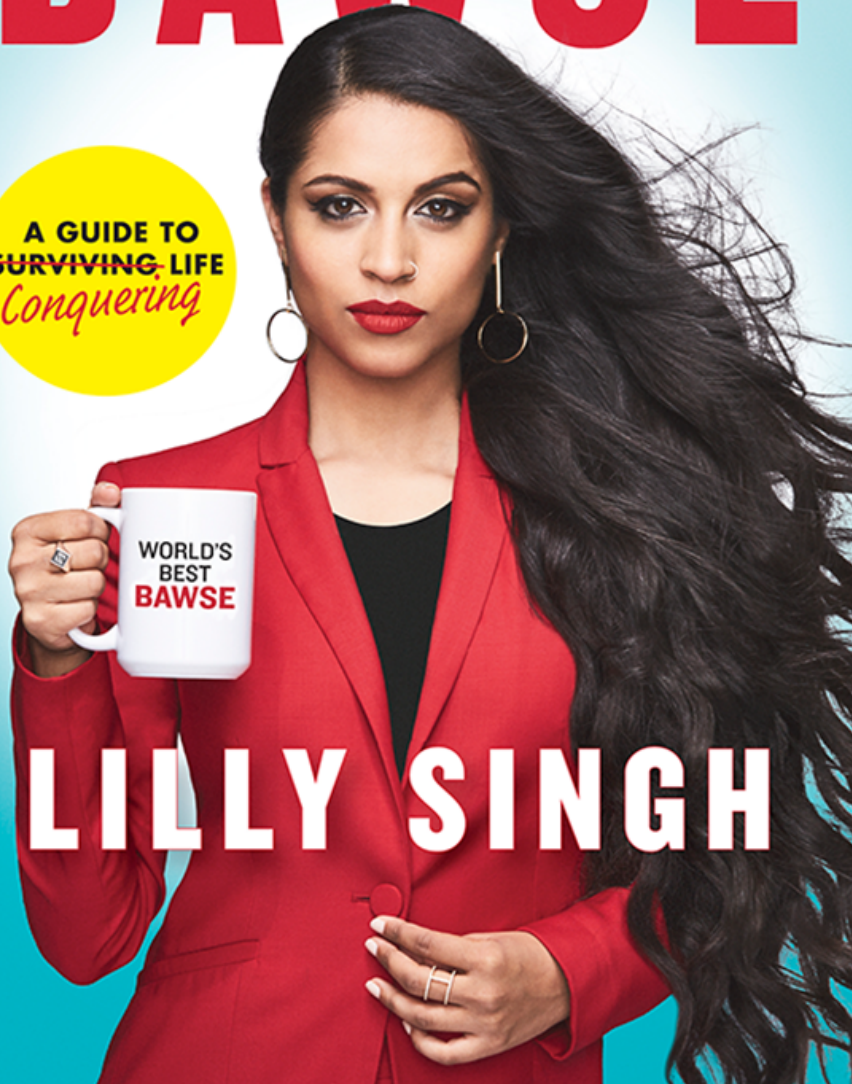
The World's Biggest YouTube Stars Earned \$127 Million In 2017

YouTube celebrities really upped the bar this year as far as the impressive income some are pulling in. Combined, the world's 10 highest-paid YouTube stars earned \$127 million between June 1, 2016 and June 1, 2017. That is an increase of 80% from the year before! According to Forbes, earnings have skyrocketed mostly due to an increase in views, which is what generates ad dollars for these online superstars. Forbes compiles the list every year based on data from YouTube, Social Blade and Captiv8, as well as interviews with agents, managers, publicists, producers and lawyers. Nearly half of the top-10 earners this year are gamers. Yes, fans literally just watch them play games. Six of this years top 10 are new to the list. (Sources: Forbes, Wikipedia)

10. Lilly Singh, \$10 million: *This Canadian YouTube personality is better known by her IISuperwomanII. She is known as a Feminist Youtuber with a comedic bent. As of December 2017, she had +12.7 million subscribers who follow her and +2.3 billion views on her main YouTube channel.*

HOW TO BE A BAWSE

A GUIDE TO
~~SURVIVING~~ LIFE
Conquering



LILLY SINGH

9/8 (Tie) Ryan ToysReview, \$11 million: *This 6-year-old has made his fortune opening and playing with toys. No joke. He's been in the toy review "biz" since he was 3 and kids across the world are hooked. In January of 2016, he hit 1 million subscribers. A year later, he had more than 5 million. Now, he's at more than 10 million subscribers. In June, TubeFilter ranked "Ryan ToysReview" as the most viewed YouTube channel in the U.S. for the 40th week in a row.*



9/8 (Tie) Smosh, \$11 million: Comedy channel Smosh was created by Anthony Padilla and Ian Hecox. They began to post videos on YouTube in the autumn of 2005 and became one of the most popular channels on the site. As of August 2017, the Smosh channel has over 6 billion video views and 22 million subscribers, making it the 15th most subscribed channel on YouTube.

7. Jake Paul, \$11.5 million: Paul began his career in September 2013 posting videos on Vine. By the time Vine shut down, Jake Paul had 5.3 million followers and 2 billion plays on the app. He is known for playing the role of Dirk on the Disney Channel series *Bizaardvark*. In early 2017, Paul launched Team 10 with \$1 million in financing to create influencer marketing management and creative agency around teen entertainment.

6. Felix Kjellberg (PewDiePie), \$12 million: The main focus of PewDiePie's videos is his commentary and reactions to various games as he plays through them. By early 2017, he had uploaded almost 3,500 videos to his channel and has more than 56 million subscribers.

5/4 (Tie) Logan Paul, \$12.5 million: This is Jake Paul's older brother and also got his start on the now defunct video service Vine. Paul posts a daily vlog on YouTube which includes him performing challenges, while his other YouTube channel, *TheOfficialLoganPaul*, is where he posts short films.

5/4 (Tie) Mark Fischback (Markiplier), \$12.5 million: Markiplier has been known for his sensationalized video game commentary, involving yelling, screaming, cursing, and even crying during his *Let's Play* videos. Throughout 2016, Fischbach moved some of his focus to comedy sketches. In 2017, he embarked on his first improv tour, known as the "You're Welcome Tour". As of November 2017, his channel has over 8 billion total video views and 18 million subscribers and is currently one of the Top 25 most-subscribed channels on YouTube.

3. Dude Perfect, \$14 million: Dude Perfect is an American sports entertainment group on YouTube which consists of twins Coby and Cory Cotton, Garrett Hilbert, Cody Jones, and Tyler Toney, who are all former high school basketball players and college roommates at Texas A&M University. They have broken several Guinness World Records themselves, and have over 4.2 billion total views and 24 million subscribers as of December 2017, making them the 13th most subscribed channel and second most subscribed sports channel in YouTube.



2. Evan Fong (VanossGaming), \$15.5 million: Fong produces content on YouTube centered on playing popular video games with other YouTube collaborators. As of August 2017, Fong's channel has over 7 billion video views and 21 million subscribers. The majority of VanossGaming videos take the format of a "funny moments" montage or compilation, featuring various clips from a particular game session, usually featuring other video game commentators.

1. Daniel Middleton (DanTDM), \$16.5 million: In 2012, Middleton created The Diamond Minecart, a gaming channel focused primarily on Minecraft and whose audience consists of mostly children ages 5–10. As of 2016, he has allocated part of his channel to playing other video games, such as Roblox and Tomodachi Life. His channel has over 10.7 billion views and 16 million subscribers, and has been listed among the top YouTube channels in the United Kingdom.



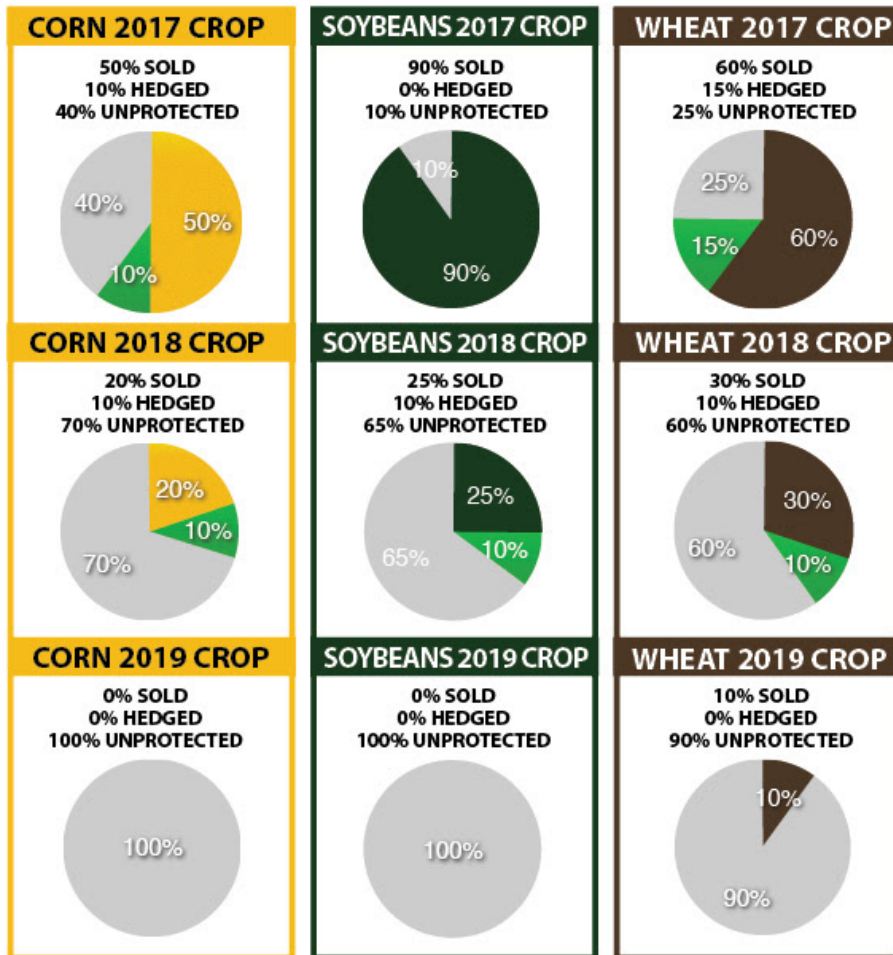
How It All Began...

It was on this day in 1620 that the "Mayflower" docked at what we now call Plymouth, Massachusetts. A few years back, I took the family to see the spot where it all happened. I thought it was very cool. If you haven't personally made the trip, I would certainly recommend the visit. Plymouth holds a place of great prominence in American history and is often referred to as "America's Hometown." It is the oldest municipality in New England and one of the oldest in the United States. The town has served as the location of several prominent events, probably the most notable being the First Thanksgiving feast celebrated in 1621. Plymouth is located just about 40 miles south of Boston in a beautiful region of Massachusetts known as the South Shore. From what I have learned about history, in September 1620, during the reign of King James, around 100 English men and women—many of them members of the English Separatist Church—set sail for the New World aboard the Mayflower, a three-masted merchant ship. Those who weren't from the church were said to be dissatisfied with economic opportunities at

home and decided to immigrate to Virginia, where they had heard an English colony had been founded by a few men with the Virginia Company of London a few years back at Jamestown. Interestingly, the Mayflower group was financially backed by investors called the London Adventurers, who were promised a sizable share of the colony's profits once they settled. In an extremely difficult voyage across the Atlantic, the Mayflower encountered rough seas and storms and was blown more than 500 miles off course. Keep in mind, the voyage was delayed by a few weeks in England which put the Mayflower directly into the large western gales that begin to make the North Atlantic a dangerous place for sailing starting in mid-September. As you can imagine, the trip quickly became much more than most had bargained for as huge waves were constantly crashing against the ship's topside deck. In fact there were several times the crew believed they were not going to make it. The trip ended up taking 66-days, which was twice as long as originally thought and prevented the ship from reaching its initial destination—a region near the Hudson River—instead they ended up near the shores of Cape Cod, anchoring at the site of Provincetown on November 21. They sent an exploratory party ashore, and on December 18 actually docked the ship at Plymouth Rock, on the western side of Cape Cod Bay. The explorer John Smith had named the area Plymouth, and the settlers decided the name was appropriate and very coincidental, especially considering the Mayflower had set sail from the port of Plymouth in England. For the next few months, many of the settlers stayed on the Mayflower while ferrying back and forth to shore to build their new settlement. Unfortunately the harsh winter conditions took their toll and killed almost half of the members. One passenger named Susanna White, gave birth that winter to a baby boy while aboard the Mayflower. He is officially thought to be the first English child born in America. In March, those members of the Mayflower who were still alive, began moving ashore permanently to a location they called Plymouth. Again, they ran into more problems as Native Americans who inhabited the land became uneasy. Plymouth soon secured treaties with most local Indian tribes, and the economy steadily grew. In the fall of 1621, the Pilgrims famously shared a harvest feast with the Pokanokets tribe, the meal is now considered the basis for the Thanksgiving holiday. With peace secured, the colonists in Plymouth were able to concentrate on building a viable settlement for themselves rather than spend their time and resources guarding themselves against attack. The locals taught them how to plant corn, which became an important crop, as well as where to fish and hunt beaver. Within five-years Plymouth would become a robust economy and self-sufficient with agriculture, fishing and trading its backbone. By the mid 1640s, Plymouth's population numbered 3,000 people. I continually look back in amazement at how difficult the journey must have been for our founding fathers. Below are a few pics from the town and couple the family and I took on our trip. Hope one day you have a chance to visit. It's crazy to think it all happened almost 400 years ago... (Source: History)



CASH SALES & HEDGING TOTALS



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