

# Uncertainty

Published on Dec 30, 2020 by Mark Van Den Berg, ARA



This word can describe how 2020 played out. From a rural appraisal standpoint, Peoples Company and our clients faced this word head on. Many of the farmers we work with faced the uncertainty of where they would sell their crops with the plummeting demand of the restaurant industry. In spring 2020, the dumping of produce in Florida due to restaurants closing during the COVID-19 pandemic made national news. Uncertainty in guest worker programs led to concerns about having enough laborers to harvest produce across the United States. Uncertainty in how a heated election would affect agricultural markets both now and in the future. Uncertainty if the continued strong demand for cropland and low interest rates, which carried land values through the past few years of low commodity prices, would continue. We saw it in clients early in the pandemic as to how to proceed in a world of uncertainty.

As rural appraisers, we moved from spring to summer with an unusual strength in the midst of uncertainty. Clients who were uncertain how to proceed through our current situation began to adapt and found ways to work through an appraisal process that was safe and at the same time comprehensive. This included waiving interior inspections of residences and having the property owner provide interior pictures. Doors opened to provide a pathway for guest worker programs with COVID-19 testing and safety procedures. Producers found alternative markets to sell their produce, which included the USDA Food Box Program and a focus on local farm markets. Some uncertainty still remains as to how the election results will affect agricultural markets and policy; however, we have navigated through the transition before. Years of low commodity prices gave way to increased corn and soybean prices at harvest time.

Five years ago I participated in the [Dale Carnegie Leadership Training](#) program. The course taught me that only the prepared deserve to be confident. As rural appraisers, the best way to be prepared to face the uncertainty we faced this year is to stay current on what factors affect the market we work in. Personally, I subscribe to *The Packer*, *The Daily Scoop*, *Trust in Food*, and *AgWeb AM* daily emails, talk to landowners, and am active in the [American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers](#) to stay up to date on current market trends. Being knowledgeable about what is happening in our markets gives us credibility when we talk to property owners, lenders, investors, and it allows us to accurately assess the factors affecting the values of the properties we appraise.

Peoples Company also provides several resources to stay up to date on current market trends at [PeoplesCompany.com](http://PeoplesCompany.com).