

n't make people change their minds

ns about food happen one
ist says

ways to reject facts they disagree with, and dismissing the expertise of people who are advocating a different point of view.

"We look for experts who side with us and our decision-making apparatus is fine-tuned for that with decision-making based on emotional response and personal experience," she added. "So when we get data, not much changes except that we look for the data that supports what we already think."

Science is seen through the prism of politics, according to Haspel, who cited the example of the United States, where what people believe about the risk of climate change is very closely linked to their political affiliation.

Science can be used to come to completely opposite conclusions on the same issue, and all more education does is give you confidence that your decision-making apparatus has led you to the right conclusion, she added.

"As people get more scientifically literate, they think climate change poses a greater risk if they're liberal and a smaller risk if they're conservative," she said. "We can't educate our way out of this; educating people seems to make it worse, so where does that leave us?"

The U.S. – and to some degree also in Canada – farmers and ranchers are overwhelmingly conservative or republican, and activists and journalists are more

liberal or democrat, so how can information about farming bridge that ideological gap?

The term industrial agriculture is an example of this. To the industry, it means more mechanized, standardized and less labour-intensive, but to consumers, it represents much of what they perceive to be wrong about modern food production.

"If you think an agriculture that uses mechanization and chemicals is better, you have to belly up and accept the word "industrial". If you try to use a different word, it just looks like you're trying to change the conversation," she said.

The key to better communication about agriculture, believes Haspel, lies with finding common ground and that happens one conversation and one person at a time, not en masse. This means:

Try to let yourself be convinced. Everyone knows there are things they are wrong about, so try to enter every conversation with the idea that this could be the thing you're wrong about.

Reconsider bias. Everyone has it and it plays an important role in how we make decisions.

Find the smartest person who disagrees with you and listen. Ask a lot of questions. For a better discussion, find the strongest argument and take time to understand it; the persuadable one in this interaction



Washington Post columnist and east coast oyster farmer Tamar Haspel: "Minds are changed one personal interaction at a time and making connections makes both of you more susceptible to listening on issues."

should be you and not the other person.

Vet your sources. Manage your media. Don't dismiss everything activists say or all industry research but take it with a grain of salt. Include people who disagree with you in your social media feed and listen when they talk.

Reach across the aisle. Try and

be kind, and talk to people who disagree with you in a way that is more than confrontational.

"I don't believe facts are persuasive. Minds are changed one personal interaction at a time and making connections makes both of you more susceptible to listening on issues," she said. "Facts don't persuade people, but if we play our cards right, people persuade people."

eed growers name new secretary-manager