



Letter No. 3650
Friday, January 27, 2012
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BROADCASTERS LETTER

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(January 27)

RECORD CROP INSURANCE PREMIUMS AND PAYOUTS FOR 2011 CROPS

Insurance companies are still busy paying farmers for losses in 2011 and those payouts will be a record. Bill Murphy, Administrator of the USDA's Risk Management Agency, saying farmer insurance claims are coming from all over the country, but the Southern Plains is taking a big chunk of indemnity payments from last year.

For Radio Story: [Record Crop Insurance Premiums and Payouts For 2011 Crops](#)
[ACTUALITY: Crop Insurance Claims Came From A Wide Area Of The U.S.](#)

WINNERS NAMED IN THE USDA 2012 AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK FORUM STUDENT DIVERSITY PROGRAM

The winners are will attend USDA's 2012 Agricultural Outlook Forum. The finalists include students from Land-Grant, Hispanic-serving institutions, and American Association of State Colleges of Agriculture and Renewable Resources institutions who are the recipients of corporate and USDA sponsorship aimed at promoting the education of the next generation of agriculturalists. The 24 university juniors and seniors majoring in agricultural-related studies were selected based on their essays, "Agriculture as a Career," and recommendations from their deans. Click [here](#) on the link for a list of the winners.

"USDA's Outlook Forum will celebrate USDA's 150th anniversary, giving these students the opportunity to hear former Secretaries of Agriculture describe their vision for the future of agriculture," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "USDA welcomes the next generation to participate in the Forum so they might see opportunities to excel to even greater heights in their careers."

The Forum titled, "Moving Agriculture Forward," is USDA's largest annual event and will be held Feb. 23 and 24 at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. Registration for the 2-day event after Jan. 23 is \$425. Plenary speeches will be webcast after 6:00 p.m. EST on Feb. 23. Program details and registration information are available at: www.usda.gov/oce/forum. Writers, reporters, and editors may call Press Room Coordinator Priscilla Smith at 202-694-5022 or Forum Coordinator Brenda Chapin at 202-720-5447 for more details.

Contact: Brenda Chapin 202-720-5447 bchapin@oce.usda.gov
For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

(January 26)

USDA PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR A NEW ADVANCED BIOFUEL PRODUCTION FACILITY IN OREGON

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that USDA has approved a conditional commitment in the amount of \$232.5 million to ZeaChem Boardman Biorefinery, LLC (ZBB) through the Biorefinery Assistance Program. ZBB will operate a 25 million gallon per year biorefinery, which will be constructed on an industrial site in Boardman, Oregon, along the Columbia River.

"In his State of the Union address, President Obama outlined his vision for a new era for American energy—an economy fueled by homegrown and alternative energy sources that will be designed and produced by American workers," said Vilsack. "This project and others like it will help to establish a domestic advanced biofuels industry that will create jobs here at home and open new markets in the Pacific Northwest and across America."

Projected to be operational by late 2014, the biorefinery will create 65 jobs while supporting another 38 jobs with the parent company. Under the conditional commitment, ZBB must meet specified conditions before the 60 percent loan guarantee can be completed. Located in the northeast part of the state, the biorefinery will use high-yield cellulosic fermentation technology to produce advanced biofuels (cellulosic ethanol and other biofuels). An existing 250,000-gallon per year cellulosic integrated demonstration plant at the site is currently generating operational data that will provide information needed for the commercial scale project, which will be located on an adjacent site. An estimated 51 percent or more of the biorefinery's output will be advanced biofuel, and the remainder will be high-value biobased chemicals, such as acetic acid and ethyl acetate.

The feedstock will consist of approximately 30 percent agricultural residue, such as wheat straw and corn stover, and 70 percent woody biomass from a local hybrid poplar farm. This poplar biomass carries a Forest Sustainability Council (FSC) certification, giving this cellulosic ethanol project particular merit as a model of environmentally-responsible, sustainable feedstock dependence.

The total project cost for the 25 million gallon per year biorefinery is estimated to be \$390.5 million. The development of this advanced biofuel production technology serves as an example of Federal interagency partnerships through program support for research and development from the Department of Energy (DOE) Sun Grant Initiative; USDA's National Institute of Food & Agriculture; Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Programs; and the USDA Farm Service Agency's Biomass Crop Assistance Program.

The announcement is the second guaranteed loan under the Biorefinery Assistance Program (Sec. 9003 of the 2008 Farm Bill) to be made by USDA this month.

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

For Radio Story: [Cellulosic Ethanol Refinery Receives Historic USDA Loan Backing Fuel And Job Creation Behind USDA Loan Guarantee](#)

WILL RUSSIA IMPOSE GRAIN EXPORT RESTRICTIONS THIS YEAR?

Rumors continue to fly about possible Russian grain export restrictions, but what are the chances of that happening? Jerry Norton, USDA grains analyst, saying Russia is exporting grain at a rapid pace, but exports will not likely get to levels that would trigger export restrictions.

For Radio Story: [Will Russia Impose Grain Export Restrictions This Year?](#)
ACTUALITY: [Russia's Rapid Export Pace Will Slow -- Export Ban Unlikely](#)

A FINAL NATIONAL FOREST PLANNING RULE IS ONE STEP CLOSER TO REALITY

The federal rules that guide this country's National Forests in creating their own forest use plans have not been updated in 30 years, but that may be about to change. Under Secretary of Agriculture Harris Sherman saying there is much work still needing to be done to implement a final forest planning rule. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack saying the final forest planning rule will be a product of a lot of collaborative input.

For Radio Story: [A Final National Forest Planning Rule Is One Step Closer To Reality](#)
[ACTUALITY: More Steps Needed To Implement Forest Planning Rule](#)
[ACTUALITY: New Forest Planning Rule A Product Of Public Input](#)

(January 25)

USDA UNVEILS HISTORIC IMPROVEMENTS TO MEALS SERVED IN AMERICA'S SCHOOLS

First Lady Michelle Obama and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack unveiled new [standards for school meals](#) that will result in healthier meals for kids across the nation. The new meal requirements will raise standards for the first time in more than 15 years and improve the health and nutrition of nearly 32 million kids that participate in school meal programs every school day. The healthier meal requirements are a key component of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, which was championed by the First Lady as part of her *Let's Move!* campaign and signed into law by President Obama.

The final standards make the same kinds of practical changes that many parents are already encouraging at home, including:

- Ensuring students are offered both fruits and vegetables every day of the week;
- Substantially increasing offerings of whole grain-rich foods;
- Offering only fat-free or low-fat milk varieties;
- Limiting calories based on the age of children being served to ensure proper portion size; and
- Increasing the focus on reducing the amounts of saturated fat, trans fats and sodium.

A sample lunch menu with a before and after comparison is available to view and download in [PDF](#) and [JPG](#) formats.

USDA built the new rule around recommendations from a panel of experts convened by the Institute of Medicine — a gold standard for evidence-based health analysis. The standards were also updated with key changes from the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans — the Federal government's benchmark for nutrition — and aimed to foster the kind of healthy changes at school that many parents are already trying to encourage at home, such as making sure that kids are offered both fruits and vegetables each day, more whole grains, and portion sizes and calorie counts designed to maintain a healthy weight.

The new standards are expected to cost \$3.2 billion over the next five years -- less than half of the estimated cost of the proposed rule and are just one of five major components of the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act, now implemented or under development, that will work together to reform school nutrition. The final nutrition standards released today also provide more time for schools to implement key changes, which will be largely phased in over a three-year period, starting in School Year 2012-2013. For example, schools will be permitted to focus on changes in the lunches in the first year, with most changes in breakfast phased in during future years.

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

For Radio Story: [USDA Makes Changes To Improve School Meal Quality](#)
[New School Meal Standards Give Students More Healthy Choices](#)

[The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act Becomes Final ACTUALITY: Making Healthy School Foods & Meals Tastier](#)

USDA UNVEILS NEW PLANT HARDINESS ZONE MAP

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released the new version of its Plant Hardiness Zone Map (PHZM), updating a useful tool for gardeners and researchers for the first time since 1990 with greater accuracy and detail. For the first time, the new map offers a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based interactive format and is specifically designed to be Internet-friendly. The map website also incorporates a "find your zone by ZIP code" function. Static images of national, regional and state maps have also been included to ensure the map is readily accessible to those who lack broadband Internet access.

"This is the most sophisticated Plant Hardiness Zone Map yet for the United States," said Dr. Catherine Woteki, USDA Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics. "The increases in accuracy and detail that this map represents will be extremely useful for gardeners and researchers." Plant hardiness zone designations represent the average annual extreme minimum temperatures at a given location during a particular time period. They do not reflect the coldest it has ever been or ever will be at a specific location, but simply the average lowest winter temperature for the location over a specified time. Low temperature during the winter is a crucial factor in the survival of plants at specific locations.

Compared to the 1990 version, zone boundaries in this edition of the map have shifted in many areas. The new map is generally one 5-degree Fahrenheit half-zone warmer than the previous map throughout much of the United States. This is mostly a result of using temperature data from a longer and more recent time period; the new map uses data measured at weather stations during the 30-year period 1976-2005. In contrast, the 1990 map was based on temperature data from only a 13-year period of 1974-1986.

The new map—jointly developed by the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Oregon State University's (OSU) PRISM Climate Group—is available online at www.planthardiness.ars.usda.gov. ARS is the chief intramural scientific research agency of USDA.

Contact: Kim Kaplan (301) 504-1637

For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

For Radio Story: [Plant Hardiness Zone Map And New Opportunities For Gardeners What Are The Impacts Of Changing The Plant Hardiness Zone Map?](#)

[Update in USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map](#)

[What Has Changed In USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map?](#)

[ACTUALITY: What Is The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map All About?](#)

USDA IMPROVES PROCESS TO RESOLVE DISCRIMINATION CLAIMS OF HISPANIC AND WOMEN FARMERS

The efforts are aimed at bringing finality to the longstanding claims of discrimination in USDA program delivery. As part of continued efforts to close the chapter on allegations that discrimination occurred at USDA in past decades, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced improvements to a process announced in February 2011 to resolve the claims of Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who assert that they were discriminated against when seeking USDA farm loans.

"The Obama Administration has made it a priority to resolve all claims of past discrimination at USDA, and we are committed to closing this sad chapter in USDA's history," said Vilsack. "Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege past discrimination are encouraged to participate in an improved claims process in which they have the opportunity to recover up to \$250,000 in damages."

The updated claims process being announced today increases the maximum cash recovery to \$250,000, instead of \$50,000. The process offers a streamlined alternative to litigation for each Hispanic

or woman farmer and rancher who can prove that USDA denied their loan or loan servicing for discriminatory reasons for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000. As announced in February 2011, the voluntary claims process will make available at least \$1.33 billion for cash awards and tax relief payments, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief, to eligible Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers. There are no filing fees or other costs to claimants to participate in the program. Participation is voluntary, and the program does not preclude individuals who opt not to participate from pursuing their cases in court.

This updated process comes as part of USDA's efforts to ensure that all its customers have equal access to its programs, and follows the Obama Administration's settlement of longstanding litigation brought by African American farmers and Native American farmers. Over the past months, USDA has worked to reach out to potential Hispanic and female claimants through a call center for farmers and ranchers, a website, public service announcements, and in-person meetings around the country. Individuals interested in participating in the claims process may register to receive a claims package, or may obtain more information, by visiting www.farmerclaims.gov. Individuals can also register to receive a claims package by calling the Farmer and Rancher Call Center at 1-888-508-4429. USDA cannot provide legal advice to potential claimants. Persons seeking legal advice may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider.

Audio and video public service announcements in English and Spanish from Secretary Vilsack and downloadable print and web banner ads on the Hispanic and women farmer claims process are available at: http://www.usda.gov/PSAs_Print_and_WebBanner_Ads.xml.

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623
For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

EXPECT MORE REORGANIZATION MOVES AT USDA THIS YEAR

Beyond the recent major announcements, will we see the Agriculture Department making more moves this year to save money and improve service?

For Radio Story: [Expect More Reorganization Moves At USDA This Year](#)

(January 24)

IN STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS, PRESIDENT OBAMA AMPLIFIES EXPORTS, RESEARCH AND ENERGY

President Obama in his State of the Union address talked about several topics that are connected to agriculture, but he did not get into specific agricultural subjects.

For Radio Story: [Obama Talks About Exports, Research And Energy In His Address Vilsack On State Of The Union's Ag Connection](#)
[ACTUALITY: Farmers Are Providing Success Blueprint For The Nation](#)

STORMS HAVE NOT DONE MUCH TO IMPROVE WESTERN WATER PROSPECTS

After recent major storms in the West, have water supply prospects improved very much? USDA Meteorologist Brad Rippey explains.

For Radio Story: [Storms Have Not Done Much To Improve Western Water Prospects](#)

IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH, WINTER WHEAT FACES MORE PROBLEMS

Things did not start well when this crop of winter wheat was planted, and things are not improving.

For Radio Story: [More Problems For Winter Wheat In The North And South](#)

(January 23)

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN AWARDED GRANT FOR E. COLI RESEARCH TO HELP REDUCE PUBLIC HEALTH RISKS

The \$25 million research grant to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) will be used to help reduce the occurrence and public health risks from Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) along the entire beef production pathway. "Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* are a serious threat to our food supply and public health, causing more than 265,000 infections each year," said Chavonda Jacobs-Young, acting NIFA director. As non-O157 STEC bacteria have emerged and evolved, so too must our regulatory policies to protect the public health and ensure the safety of our food supply. This research will help us to understand how these pathogens travel throughout the beef production process and how outbreaks occur, enabling us to find ways to prevent illness and improve the safety of our nation's food supply."

Dr. James Keen at UNL, along with a multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary team of researchers, educators and extension specialists, will use the \$25 million grant to improve risk management and assessment of eight strains of STEC in beef. This work will include the O104 strain that caused the recent outbreak in Germany. The project will focus on identifying hazards and assessing exposures that lead to STEC infections in cattle and on developing strategies to detect, characterize and control these pathogens along the beef chain. This knowledge will then be used to find practical and effective STEC risk mitigation strategies. The five main objectives of the project include, *Detection, Biology, Interventions, Risk analysis and assessment and Risk management and communication.*

Most STEC outbreaks are caused by ingestion of contaminated food and contact with fecal material from cattle and other ruminant animals. Most of what is known about STEC comes from outbreak investigations and studies of *E. coli* O157. The non-O157 STEC strains are not nearly as well understood, partly because outbreaks due to them are rarely identified. This project will help improve our understanding of these strains in addition to O157 strains.

Contact: Jennifer Martin (202) 720-8188

For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

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Organic 101: Allowed and Prohibited Substances (**AMS**)
USDA 2012 Agricultural Outlook Forum: Making Locally Grown Food More Available (**Deputy Secretary**)
Healthy Meals and Healthy Kids (**FNS**)
Small Business Owners Urged to Attend DC Event to Learn How to do Business with USDA (**Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization**)
The State of Rural America (**OC**)
Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative a Great Success on the Great Plains (**NRCS**)
Science Tuesday: Clemson University Research Revolutionizes Environmental Monitoring (**REE**)
Helping Feed the Hungry for National Day of Service (**FNS**)

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 04.12 – A potential trade agreement among some Pacific Rim nations could be very significant.

CONSUMER TIME CD # 04.12 – How Much Do We Spend on Food? So, You Want to Garden for the First Time. Experts Say Breastfeeding Has Great Advantages.

AG UPDATE CD # 04.12 – More about the Trans Pacific Partnership. USDA Looking for Project Ideas for Water Quality Markets. New Conservation Agreement with Minnesota. A Push for Biofuels for Aviation. Cattle Report Gives Hint at Beef Industry Future. Signup Underway for some USDA Farm Payment Programs.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – Radio Newsline...Mon. Jan. 31, Crop/weather update. Tues. Feb. 7, Crop/weather update. Thurs. Feb. 9, U.S. Crop Production, World Ag. Supply /Demand. Fri. Feb. 10, Rice Outlook, Soybean Outlook, Cotton Outlook.

These are USDA reports we know about in advance. The USDA Radio Newsline carries many stories every day that are not listed in this lineup.

USDA Radio Newsline, 202-720-6776, 5:00pm ET

Or go to www.usda.gov, click on Newsroom at top of the page, scroll down on right side of page until you see Radio and TV. Then click on Daily Radio News Service or Weekly Radio Feature Service. For questions about USDA Radio's Features, fax name, station, and address to 202-690-2165.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

The Silver Lining - 25 Years of the Conservation Reserve Program

A look at the history of the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program and how the program has played a major role in helping improve the lands, soil and water quality throughout the years.

YouTube: [USDA on YouTube: The Silver Lining - 25 Years of the Conservation Reserve Program - Short Version](#)

YouTube: [USDA on YouTube: The Silver Lining - 25 Years of the Conservation Reserve Program - Long Version](#)

Please email bob.ellison@usda.gov if you have problems or suggestions.

OFF MIKE

A NEW FACE AT THE NORTHWEST AG INFORMATION NETWORK – In mid-December **KayDee Gilkey** (Northwest Ag Information Network – Spokane, Washington www.aginfo.net) became the Network Communications Specialist with the **Northwest Ag Information Network**. **Gilkey's** new role is a dream that has come to fruition, which is becoming an agricultural radio reporter and serving a network of radio stations throughout Idaho, Washington and Oregon, where she provides two stories a day. **Gilkey** is no stranger to farming and agriculture. Prior to entering the world of radio farm broadcasting, she was the Assistant Vice President for Communications and Public Relations for Northwest Farm Credit Services. Her career with Farm Credit spans nearly 16 years. A graduate of Washington State University with a degree in Agricultural Communications, **Gilkey** is also a graduate of the Washington Ag-Forestry Leadership Program, Class 16.



She replaces **Bob Hoff** who retired at the end of 2011. **Hoff** had been the Northwest Ag Information Network almost since it was founded in the early 1990's, and before that was an Ag Director for a Spokane TV Station. We wish **Gilkey and Hoff** the best in their latest endeavors.



RFD-TV HONORS ROY ROGERS "KING OF THE COWBOYS" – The honor will be a part of the Trigger and Bullet *Happy Trails Tour* when it stops in Tennessee as part of a 48-state voyage. Cattle Industry Convention and NCBA trade show attendees are invited to view the duo during the traveling exhibition February 1-3, 2012, at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville. In addition to the NCBA Trigger and Bullet photo opportunity, tours are being offered to see the RFD-TV production studios and RFD-TV's <http://www.rfdtv.com> live broadcast of the NCBA trade show live, with **Kevin Ochsner** hosting, on Wednesday, February 1 at 7:00 p.m. EST.



THE NATIONAL FFA ORGANIZATION SEEKS STUDENT TRAVELERS – Students are being sought for the International Collegiate Agricultural Leadership Program (I-CAL) which is headed to Southeast Asia this May. FFA will take 12 students on this once of a lifetime journey to study global agriculture and international marketing. Students will learn about current international trade and cultural issues and gain awareness of how international markets for agricultural products operate. Once completing the program, students will give educational presentations to local groups and organizations about their experiences.

The deadline for applications is February 15, 2012 at 5 p.m. EST. For program and application information go to www.ffa.org/collegiate.

**Broadcasters if you have any humanitarian or community service events
you'd like to share please forward to susan.carter@oc.usda.gov.**

**We love to hear about what you're doing and
share it with others in the farm broadcaster family.**

From all of us to all of you ... thank you for what you do



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