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BROADCASTERS LETTER

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Friday, February 10, 2012

(February 9)

USDA TO HOST FIRST U.S.-CHINA AGRICULTURAL SYMPOSIUM

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that government and industry leaders from the United States and China will gather in Des Moines, Iowa, on Thursday, February 16, for the first U.S.-China Agricultural Symposium. Vilsack traveled to China for the second time as Agriculture Secretary in November to continue to strengthen bilateral trade relations and support the American brand of agriculture throughout the Asia Pacific region. During the visit, Vilsack and Chinese officials developed the U.S.-China Agriculture Symposium as a key forum to expand their discussions into 2012 and beyond.

"I'm honored to welcome China's Vice President Xi Jinping and Minister of Agriculture Han Changfu to the United States, where we may continue our in-depth dialogue on issues of mutual concern," said Vilsack. "Thanks to the productivity of American farmers, ranchers and producers, consumers in China recognize the United States as a reliable supplier of high-quality food and agricultural products. Strengthening our partnership with China's growing market is integral to the strength of the U.S. economy in the decades ahead."

In 2011, China moved into the top spot as the number one market for U.S. agricultural goods, purchasing \$20 billion in U.S. agricultural exports. The value of U.S. farm exports to China supported more than 160,000 American jobs in 2011, on and off the farm across a variety of sectors.

Chinese officials will also visit Washington, D.C., and California as part of their trip. The symposium will focus on current and future cooperation between the two nations in areas including food safety, food security and sustainable agriculture. The event will take place at the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates in Des Moines.

"China and the United States have an opportunity and responsibility to work together to help increase the availability and use of sustainably produced food for a rapidly growing world population," added Vilsack.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

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

For Radio Story: [U.S. Visit Of Chinese Vice President Will Highlight Agriculture](#)

NEW USDA REPORTS CONFIRM A REALLY GOOD GLOBAL PRODUCTION YEAR

The word, "record" is popping up many times in the Agriculture Department's new report on global crop production.

For More Story Info: [New USDA Reports Confirm a Really Good Global Production Year](#)

VETERANS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT DEPLOYS 20 NEW MOBILE VET CENTERS

The Department of Veteran Affairs is adding new Mobile Vet Centers to its fleet to expand rural veterans' access to V.A. care. Michael Fisher, Veteran Affairs Outreach Specialist, talks about how mobile vet centers work, connecting rural veterans, and their families to resources and services.

For Radio Story: [Veterans Affairs Department Deploys 20 New Mobile Vet Centers](#)
[ACTUALITY: The Veteran Center Program](#)

LET'S MOVE HAS MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS SINCE STARTING LAST YEAR

Today marked the kickoff of a major three-day national tour beginning in Des Moines, Iowa and making its way to Little Rock, Arkansas, and Dallas-Fort Worth. Susan Carter has the details.

For Radio Story: [Let's Move Has Made Significant Progress Since Starting Last Year](#)

(February 8)

USDA AND PARTNERS TO PROVIDE NEW GENETIC RESOURCES TO SUPPORT GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS), partnering with [Bioversity International](#) and the [Global Crop Diversity Trust](#), has launched the Germplasm Resources Information Network-Global ([GRIN-Global](#)), a powerful but easy-to-use, Internet-based information management system for the world's plant genebanks. Genebanks support agricultural productivity and global food security goals by ensuring access to plant genetic resources in the face of daunting challenges such as crop diseases and pests, an expanding human population, environmental deterioration, and changing climates. Gene banks also safeguard genetic resources and biodiversity that help provide farmers with access to new, more productive varieties of crops and animals.

USDA Chief Scientist and Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics Dr. Catherine Woteki announced the launch of GRIN-Global. "Innovation in agriculture is central to global development and this Administration has recognized and remains committed to the important role of science and technological innovation in confronting the challenges of the 21st century," Woteki said. "For agricultural genebanks, researchers and producers worldwide, GRIN-Global provides a powerful information tool to safeguard and utilize invaluable crop diversity. It also expands and streamlines access to USDA's [Germplasm Resources Information Network](#), a database of more than 540,000 different samples of plants available from the [National Plant Germplasm System](#)."

Supported by a grant from the Global Crop Diversity Trust, USDA/ARS's technical prowess in genebank information management systems, and Bioversity's expertise and strong links with genebanks worldwide, GRIN-Global was released to information management specialists in December 2011. Today, information in the genebank is being used in some of the "green revolution" centers established by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and in national genebank systems in the developing world.

Bioversity International is the world's largest international research organization dedicated solely to the conservation and use of agricultural biodiversity. For additional information on GRIN-Global, please visit http://www.grin-global.org/index.php/Main_Page.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

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

For Radio Story: [Plant Database Partnership Shares Information Globally Agreement to Extend Extension Globally](#)

[ACTUALITY: On A Global Initiative Called "Plantwise"](#)

THE SHIFT IN FARM SIZE AND FARM PAYMENTS

A new study verifies that more and more farm payments are going to more and more very big, high income farms. Kirk White of USDA's Economic Research Service explains the shift taking place in the size of farms and the size of farm payments to larger farms.

For Radio Story: [The Shift In Farm Size and Farm Payments](#)

[ACTUALITY: On Farm Size And Farm Payment Correlation](#)

CELEBRATING AND COMMEMORATING THE ENVIRONMENT WITH A NEW TREE

Wednesday, February 8th marked the Jewish New Year for Trees and USDA participated in a tree planting in front of the Department's headquarters in Washington, DC.

For Blog Story: [USDA Commemorates the "New Year of the Trees"](#)

For Radio Story: [Celebrating and Commemorating the Environment with a New Tree](#)

(January 7)

FINALLY SOME ACTUAL WINTER WEATHER ON THE WAY FOR SOME OF US

Finally a large part of the U.S. may get some real winter weather over the next week. Brad Rippey, USDA meteorologist says that pasture and rangelands in Texas are still in bad shape, even with some recent moisture. Rippey adds there's no real improvement in the prospective water supply situation for California and other parts of the West.

For Radio Story: [Finally Some Actual Winter Weather on the Way for Some of Us](#)

[ACTUALITY: Despite Rains And Snow, Texas Pastures Still Poor](#)

[ACTUALITY: No Real Improvement In California Water Prospects](#)

FARMING TECHNIQUE IMPROVES SOIL, WATER, WILDLIFE AND BOTTOM LINE

There's been resurgence in a farming technique that has widespread benefits to farmers and the land. More and more farmers are increasingly discovering the benefits of cover crops to land stewardship and commodity crop production. Ryan Stockwell, agriculture program manager for the national wildlife federation explains how cover crops provide benefits to farmers. Stockwell says cover crops promote healthy land, water, wildlife and sustained profitability.

For Radio Story: [Farming Technique Improves Soil, Water, Wildlife And Bottom Line
Farmers Are Increasingly Using Cover Crop Techniques](#)

[ACTUALITY: How Cover Crops Work](#)

[ACTUALITY: Cover Crops Help Farmers And Communities](#)

(January 6)

USDA ANNOUNCES LATEST ACTIONS TO COMBAT FRAUD AND ENHANCE SNAP PROGRAM INTEGRITY

Strengthened measures help fight fraud in the nation's most critical nutrition assistance program. Here are the results of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service's first quarter results for fiscal year 2012 in the effort to identify and eliminate fraudulent retailers from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). From October 1 through December 31, 2011, USDA staff took final actions to (1) sanction, through fines or temporary disqualifications, more than 225 stores found violating program rules and (2) permanently disqualify over 350 stores for trafficking in SNAP benefits (i.e. exchanging SNAP benefits for cash).

While fraud is a relatively limited problem in SNAP – the violating stores represent less than ½ of one percent of more than 230,000 food stores authorized to redeem benefits – no level of fraud is tolerated. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service conducts ongoing surveillance and investigation, to find bad actors and remove them from the program. In fiscal year 2011, FNS reviewed over 15,000 stores, and permanently disqualified over 1,200 for program violations.

USDA is building upon strategies recently announced to further strengthen anti-fraud efforts in the retailer application process. To help reduce the number of disqualified stores that return to the program by falsifying information in their applications, USDA is announcing new measures to strengthen the program:

Increasing documentation required for high-risk stores applying to redeem SNAP benefits to better verify their identity and assure their business integrity. High-risk stores are those located at the site of a previous disqualification.

Verifying high-risk stores to confirm application information. High-risk stores are those located at the site of a previous disqualification. Store owners found to have falsified information with the intent to hide ownership or past violations will be charged, disqualified and may be liable for a \$10,000 fine or imprisonment for as long as 5 years or both.

Continuing to notify state departments and federal agency partners about violators to better protect our public programs. This includes information on program recipients with suspicious transactions at stores known to be trafficking for further investigation by States.

In addition, USDA will soon publish a proposed rule strengthening sanctions and penalties for retailers who commit fraud in SNAP. USDA's new Fighting SNAP Fraud website (www.fns.usda.gov/fightingsnapfraud) will also help raise awareness of the issues and provide a direct portal to report suspicious activities.

"Fraud is not a static concept – we know that where there is a will to commit malfeasance, bad actors will try to find a way," said Under Secretary for Food and Nutrition Services Kevin Concannon. "That's why

USDA is constantly striving to stay ahead of the curve. The comparison I frequently make is in the area of cyber security. The need for continuously updating information security measures is frequently noted in the private sector, because hackers and other bad actors are always looking for ways to exploit systems."

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

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

For Radio Story: [More Actions Coming To Combat Fraud In The Snap Program](#)

FARM SAFETY NET NEEDS MORE THAN JUST CROP INSURANCE

Lawmakers are talking about making crop insurance the centerpiece of the new farm bill, but USDA officials say other safety net programs should not be eliminated.

For Radio Story: [Farm Safety Net Needs More Than Just Crop Insurance](#)

VETERINARIANS AND RURAL RESIDENTS BENEFIT FROM LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM

Through awards in the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program, USDA is helping to overcome two major challenges in rural veterinarian medicine. For the second year the National Institute of Food and Agriculture has given awards to American veterinarians to help them repay a portion of their veterinary school loans. Agriculture Department Veterinary Science program leader Gary Sherman explains how areas lacking sufficient veterinary resources are selected.

For Radio Story: [Veterinarians/Rural Residents Benefit From Loan Repayment Program](#)

[ACTUALITY: Selecting States Needing Food Safety Veterinarians](#)

[USDA Helps Veterinarians with Education Loans](#)

For more agriculture news visit [USDA.gov](#) and click Newsroom on the toolbar



American chocolate promotion that the Agricultural Trade Office in Taipei, Taiwan is organizing for Valentine's Day

Secretary's Column

Catholic School in Harlem Turns MyPlate into a School Musical (**CFBNP**)

Links to the Past: USDA Releases Historic Census of Agriculture Reports (**NASS – 150th**)

Streamlining the Road to Agriculture's Future (**ARS – Blueprint**)

Keeping Wilderness Wild (**FS**)

Planting Seeds to Help the Specialty Crop Industry Grow (**AMS**)

The (Plant) Doctor is in (**REE**)

2012 Ag Outlook Forum: Agricultural Financial Markets and Investment (**OCE**)
Boosting State Efforts through Matching Grants (**AMS**)
Science Tuesday (**REE**)

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

(Feature Line-Up Subject To Change Prior to Update On February 14)

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 07.12 – One of the most well known tools used by backyard gardeners and landscapers alike - USDA's Plant Hardiness Zone Map - was updated recently. Rod Bain looks at the changes, and what they mean, in this edition of "Agriculture USA".

CONSUMER TIME CD # 07.12 – How Much Time Do Americans Spend On Food? Eradication Of The Mexican Fruit Fly. Experts Pushing For More Families To Have Meals Together. Citizen Scientists Help Track Invasive Plant Species. Humility And Helpfulness Have A Connection.

AG UPDATE CD # 07.12 – Steady As She Goes For The Ethanol Industry, USDA Ten Year Forecast Is Out. Studying Shifts In Farm Size And Farm Payment, Ag Groups Focus On Consumers And Dialogue, Mexican Fruit Fly Eradication Successful.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – February 14 – Crop Weather Report (WAOB). February 15 – Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry Outlooks (ERS – WOAB). February 16 – US Export Sales (FAS). February 20 – NO NEWSLINE (President's Day Holiday)

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.

[USDA Radio and TV Programming](#)

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

New Plant Zone Hardiness Map Shows Temperature Shifts

USDA's Agricultural Research Service has released a new plant hardiness zone map; the first one in 22years

A new TV feature is available on the USDA FTP site. The new TV feature can also be seen on USDA's YouTube channel and seen and downloaded as a video podcast.

FTP Download instructions:

The host: <ftp://ocbmtcmedia.download.akamai.com>

User name: usdanews

Password: Newscontent1

Filename for **TV Feature**: PHZM feature

The new file is in QuickTime Movie (H.264), MPEG 4, MPEG2 and HDV

YouTube: [USDA YouTube: New Plant Zone Hardiness Map Shows Temperature Shifts](#)
Video Podcast: [USDA Video Podcast: New Plant Zone Hardiness Map Shows Temperature Shifts](#)
RSS Feed: [USDA RSS Feed: New Plant Zone Hardiness Map Shows Temperature Shifts](#)

Please email bob.ellison@usda.gov if you have problems or suggestions
Also, use this free ftp client if you have problems
<http://filezilla-project.org/download.php?type+client>

OFF MIKE



KRVN/RURAL RADIO NETWORK CELEBRATES 61 YEARS OF SERVICE – **Ken Rahjes** (KRVN/Rural Radio Network - Lexington, Nebraska <http://krvn.com/>) recently broadcast live from the Buffalo Bill Farm and Ranch Expo (Feb. 1-2) in North Platte, Nebraska. **Rahjes** also emceed the awards ceremony at the Mid-America Alfalfa Expo in Kearney on February 7th. **Mike LePorte** had the pleasure of covering the annual Cattle Industry Conference and Trade Show in Nashville, Tennessee. Two Nebraskan's walked away with leadership posts at the end of the meeting. **J.D. Alexander, Pilger** is the new President of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and **Craig Uden** is now the Chairman of the Federation of State Beef Councils.

Recently, member stations of the Nebraska Rural Radio Association (KRVN AM/FM, KTIC AM/FM and KNEB AM/FM) have begun streaming live 24/7 so listeners have another means of being up to date on weather, markets and ag news and information.

Thanks in part to **Leslie Smith** then network had another successful KNEB Farm and Ranch Expo and **Smith** also was honored as media person of the year by the Nebraska Agri-Business association.



AD FARM LAUNCHES A NEW PILOT PROJECT – The Company's (www.adfarmonline.com) global headquarters campus of Novus International, Inc. is one of the first pilot projects to be certified by the Sustainable Sites Initiative™ (SITES™) for its sustainable site design, construction, and maintenance. The Novus campus, led by landscape architects SWT Design, was awarded a 3-star rating by SITES, making it the highest rated landscape project in the world.



TEXAS 4-H 'INVESTS' IN YOUNG TEXAS SAVES INITIATIVE CLUBS – Texas AgriLife Extension Service joined with state and federal financial policy, consumer credit and banking organization partners to bring the Young Texas Saves initiative to youth statewide.

“Young Texas Saves is a community-based effort to empower youth to increase saving and become more financially capable,” said AgriLife Extension program specialist Angela McCorkle. “Through Young Texas

Saves, young people are challenged to take the first step in reaching their financial goals by making a savings commitment.”

The young participants learn financial literacy and financial management aimed at helping young people develop good savings habits to serve them for a lifetime. The program has statewide activities through Young Texas Saves which will help support the national Young America Saves initiative, which includes Young America Saves Week, February 19-26.

The Young America Saves website is <http://www.americasaves.org/youth>.

**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



United States Department of Agriculture
Office of Communications
Room 402-A
Washington, DC 20250-1300

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