



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Broadcasters Letter

Office of Communications

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Friday, June 1, 2012
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BROADCASTERS LETTER

#3668

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(June 1)

USDA KICKS OFF NATIONAL HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH CELEBRATION

Residents are reminded of opportunities to purchase or refinance homes in rural areas. "This is a great time to buy a home," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Interest rates are at or near record lows, and housing prices are more affordable than they've been in nearly a generation. The Obama Administration housing's policies are helping to strengthen rural communities and driving the nation's ongoing economic recovery forward."

National Homeownership Month is celebrated every year in June. Throughout the month, USDA will hold events to highlight the ways Rural Development programs provide affordable homeownership opportunities.

Rural Development has programs to help people refinance as well as buy homes. In February, Secretary Vilsack announced a 19-state pilot program for homeowners to get lower monthly mortgage payments. The refinance program is available to rural residents with mortgages issued or backed by USDA Rural Development. The program aims to save homeowners time and money and help ensure that hardworking, creditworthy borrowers protect their investment and remain in their homes.

USDA also provides loans and grant funds to help rural homeowners repair their homes and to assist affordable rural rental property owners repair their properties. The Secretary announced last month that USDA is accepting grant applications from qualified organizations for repairs, health, safety and accessibility improvements. The application deadline is June 25. For information on how to apply, please see page 27179 of the May 9, 2012 Federal Register or go to <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-05-09/html/2012-11036.htm>.

Contact: Weldon Freeman (202) 690-1384
Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

USDA EXPANDS CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM BY 20,000 ACRES

The purpose is to benefit the Chesapeake Bay Watershed in Mid-Atlantic States. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recently finalized changes to the provisions of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) that will increase the acreage ceiling making all Pennsylvania CREP practices eligible for sign-up in Chesapeake Bay watershed counties. The revisions are to help reduce sediment and nutrient loadings from farmland into the rivers and streams in Pennsylvania and provide downstream improvements for the waters of Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and beyond.

"These changes will provide greater flexibility for more Pennsylvania farmers and other land owners to establish conservation cover and increase land stewardship within the Chesapeake Bay watershed," said Michael Scuse, Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services. "USDA's Conservation Reserve Program continues to be one of our nation's most successful voluntary efforts to conserve land, improve our soil, water, air and wildlife habitat resources—and now our producers in Pennsylvania have even greater incentives and flexibility to enroll in the Chesapeake watershed program, bringing benefits to communities across the Mid-Atlantic."

The Pennsylvania CREP, first announced in April 2000 with a 100,000-acre goal, originally included 20 counties in the lower Susquehanna and Potomac River basins. The project was expanded in 2003 to add another 100,000 acres and increase the project area to include 23 northern tier counties. Now the Pennsylvania CREP will be expanded again to add 19,746 acres and is available to all 43 Pennsylvania counties in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

For more information about CREP, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/pa and look under Programs.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-3088
Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

4-H INCREASES ITS ROLE IN GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY EFFORTS

A rise in 4-H clubs around the world is playing a part in building sustainable food systems in developing nations.

Radio Story: [4-H Increases Role In Global Food Security Efforts](#)

(May 31)

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK ON NEWEST FORECAST FOR U.S. FARM EXPORTS

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack made the following statement regarding USDA's third-quarter forecast showing U.S. farm exports reaching the second-highest level on record at \$134.5 billion in fiscal year 2012:

"With the release of today's most recent export forecast, we can expect American agriculture to remain a bright spot in our nation's economy in the months to come, supporting more than 1 million American jobs in communities across our country. Since 2009, our farmers and ranchers are set to deliver three of the four highest levels of U.S. agricultural exports in our nation's history. In fiscal year 2012, the latest forecast sees \$134.5 billion in U.S. farm exports, the second highest level ever and \$3.5 billion greater than the previous forecast. The reason for this success is the productivity of our farmers and ranchers, as much as President Obama's leadership on trade.

Since 2009, USDA has aggressively worked to expand export opportunities and reduce barriers to trade, helping to push agricultural exports to historic levels year after year. Last year, the President insisted that we get the agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Panama done right, forging better deals for America's workers and businesses that led to strong bipartisan support in both houses of Congress. Today, the agreements with South Korea and Colombia are in effect, delivering greater returns for U.S. businesses. In 2010, the President committed to double U.S. exports in five years and, two years later, we are on pace to meet that goal.

In the latest forecast, the overall pace of exports is surging, led by a 5.1-million-tons increase in the volume of bulk exports over the February forecast. Consumer-oriented products in particular are soaring through the first six months of the fiscal year, up 15 percent over the first 6 months of 2011. While wheat and soybeans are expected to perform well, it is American-grown high-value products that are performing the best, with the forecast increasing again for horticultural products (particularly tree nuts) and livestock products. Moreover, exports to Canada and Mexico are both forecast up this quarter to new records, respectively, while exports to China are up \$1.5 billion due to demand for cotton, pork, dairy, poultry, and tree nuts.

"These figures indicate how demand for the American brand of agriculture continues to soar worldwide, supporting good jobs for Americans across a variety of industries such as transportation, renewable energy, manufacturing, food services, and on-farm employment. And as American agriculture continues to achieve a nearly unparalleled level of productivity, this success story will continue, helping to strengthen an American economy that's built to last."

The latest export forecast data is available at www.fas.usda.gov under the Quarterly Agricultural Export Forecast link.

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

Radio Story: [A New More Upbeat Export Forecast](#)

**NEW USDA REPORT HIGHLIGHTS ACCOMPLISHMENTS
SUPPORTING RURAL COMMUNITIES**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack released a [report](#) highlighting the ways in which infrastructure investments in rural communities help create jobs and boost economic development, and he announced additional investments that will create jobs and promote economic growth across the nation. "Quality hospitals, schools and libraries are the building blocks for a vibrant rural America," said Vilsack. "Today's announcement illustrates how the Obama Administration is

leveraging Rural Development's investments to ensure that rural communities can compete in the global economy."

Since the start of fiscal year 2009, [Rural Development's Community Facilities Program](#) has helped more than 37 million rural Americans address essential challenges in health care, education, public service and public safety by financing projects through loans, grants, or loan guarantees. To find out how the Community Facilities Program is making a difference in your state, [click here](#).

Vilsack also announced that 38 Community Facilities investments in 21 states are being awarded today to continue the Administration's commitment to help create jobs and improve the economy. For a complete list of awards announced today, please [click here](#).

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

Radio Story: [The Successes Of Community Facility Programs In Rural America](#)

[ACTUALITY: Community Facilities Funding In Rural Areas](#)

**USDA TARGETING SIX ADDITIONAL STRAINS OF
E. COLI IN RAW BEEF TRIM STARTING MONDAY**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has begun instituting a zero-tolerance policy for 6 additional strains of E. coli that are responsible for human illness. Effective June 4, FSIS will routinely test raw beef manufacturing trim, which is a major component of ground beef, for the 6 additional strains of E. coli. Trim found to be contaminated with these pathogens will not be allowed into commerce and will be subject to recall. Illnesses due to E. coli serogroups other than O157:H7, which caused a high-profile illness outbreak in 1993, outnumber those attributed to O157:H7. FSIS declared O157:H7 an adulterant in 1994.

"These strains of E. coli are an emerging threat to human health and the steps we are taking today are entirely focused on preventing Americans from suffering foodborne illnesses," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "We cannot ignore the evidence that these pathogens are a threat in our nation's food supply."

The additional strains that will be treated as adulterants beginning today are Shiga-toxin producing E. coli (STEC) serogroups O26, O45, O103, O111, O121 and O145. Like E. coli O157:H7, these serogroups can cause severe illness and even death, and young children and the elderly are at highest risk.

Contact: Congressional and Public Affairs Catherine Cochran (202) 690-0428

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

Radio Story: [More Strains Of E. Coli Targeted For Testing In Raw Meat](#)

AG SECRETARY VILSACK URGES CONTINUED GOVERNMENT INCENTIVES FOR BIOFUELS

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack says the fledgling biofuels industry still needs government support and incentives. Vilsack says efforts to cancel programs to provide biofuels to the military are not in the best interests of U.S. defense and of rural America.

Radio Story: [Vilsack Urges Continued Government Incentives For Biofuels](#)
[Vilsack Supports Military Use Of Biofuels, Despite Recent Vote](#)

A NEW BEEKEEPER SURVEY SHOWS DROP IN COLONY LOSSES LAST WINTER

A new survey has a bit of good news for the U.S. beekeeping industry. Dr. Jeff Pettis, Research Leader of USDA's Bee Lab in Beltsville, Maryland, gives the bee colony loss number from this past winter, derived from a beekeeper survey.

Radio Story: [Beekeeper Survey Shows Drop In Colony Losses Last Winter](#)
[ACTUALITY: The Basic Findings Of The New Usda Beekeeper Survey](#)

(May 30)

USDA'S MYPLATE CELEBRATES ITS FIRST ANNIVERSARY

In June 2011, First Lady Michelle Obama and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack unveiled MyPlate, the federal government's primary food group symbol, to serve as a reminder to help consumers make healthy food choices consistent with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. *MyPlate* is a new generation icon with the intent to prompt consumers to think about building a healthy plate at meal times and to seek more information to help them do that by going to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.

"A year ago First Lady Michelle Obama and I joined together to launch *MyPlate* and to encourage people to think about their food choices in order to lead healthier lifestyles," said Deputy Agriculture Secretary Kathleen Merrigan. "Today we celebrate the great strides we are making from our local schools to the dinner table as Americans embrace MyPlate and find practical ways to apply it to their daily lives."

Development of MyPlate came as a result of a 2010 report of the White House Childhood Obesity Task Force. The report challenged USDA to design a new generation symbol as a cue to inspire consumers to choose healthier foods at mealtimes – something simpler and more direct than the Food Pyramid.

The MyPlate icon shows a plate with the five food groups on a placemat that is suggestive of proportions; i.e., to make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Integral to its design is the incorporation of the ChooseMyPlate.gov website address where consumers can apply the recommendations of the 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* in a personal way. The ChooseMyPlate website provides the public, particularly school children, with the practical 'how-

tos' to put the Guidelines recommendations of getting more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy foods into action in their own lives.

During the month of June, CNPP will be celebrating the first anniversary of MyPlate with special blog postings on its website, daily Tweets on healthy eating, recipes, partner images, a resource for having healthy celebrations, and MyPlate Happy Birthday coloring pages for kids, among other user-friendly resources. In addition, the quarterly MyPlate message for May through June will be "Drink Water Instead of Sugary Drinks" to highlight that thirst quenching water can be "dressed up" with a squeeze of lemon, lime or orange as a great way to round out a healthy plate. MyPlate serves as reminder to help consumers make healthy food choices.

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

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

THE NEW MEXICO WILDFIRE COMPLEX IS NOW RECORD SETTING

More acres are expected to burn over the next few days in what has grown to be New Mexico's largest wildfire on record.

Radio Story: [New Mexico Wildfire Complex Now Record Setting](#)

THE START OF THE ATLANTIC HURRICANE SEASON HAS HAD SOME BENEFITS

Although days away from the official start, this year's hurricane season has produced much needed rains to parts to the Southern Atlantic states.

Radio Story: [A Beneficial Start To Atlantic Hurricane Season](#)

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE WETLAND RESERVE PROGRAM AND STORM PROTECTION

Natural Resources Conservation Service program could help protect Gulf Coast wetlands from tropical storm damage.

Radio Story: [Wetland Reserve Program And Storm Protection](#)

(May 29)

USDA POISED TO LAUNCH MAJOR FARMER SURVEYS

Thousands of farmers are soon going to be asked by USDA to respond to a round of farmer surveys which will deal with everything from crop acreage to livestock numbers. Bob Bass, director of the St. Louis, Missouri operations center for the USDA's National Agricultural

Statistics Service, says that accurate and timely farmer responses to the June USDA farmer surveys are very important.

Radio Story: [USDA About To Launch Major Farmer Survey](#)
[ACTUALITY: Officials Ask For Prompt Responses To June Ag. Survey](#)
[Each Farmer's Response To USDA Survey Critical To That Survey](#)
[ACTUALITY: USDA Has Four June Farmer Surveys](#)

**USDA IS IN THE PROCESS OF COLLECTING
COMMENTS ON ITS REPORT RELEASE TIMES**

The Agriculture Department is continuing to gather public comments and suggestions on how to adjust to changes in market trading hours.

Radio Story: [USDA Collecting Comments On Report Release Times](#)

(May 28)



For more agriculture news visit www.USDA.gov



The Latest USDA Blog Posts

Need Ag Data Options? We Have You Covered from Beans to Sheep (**AMS**)
Discover Fun Ways to Grow Healthy, Eat Healthy & Be Healthy (**People's Garden**)
Feeding More Marylanders by Stretching Federal Dollars (**FNS**)
Pacific NW Ski Area Association honors Forest Service scientists (**FS**)
USDA in Arizona Partners with DOE to Help Rural Students Tap into Federal Student Aid (**RD**)
Abandoned mine lands restored to improve watershed health in Ohio (**FS**)
USDA in Arizona Partners with DOE to Help Rural Students Tap into Federal Student Aid (**RD**)
Iowa Medical Center Receives USDA Support to Improve Health Care, Outpatient Services (**RD**)
USDA Revolving Loan Fund Creating Jobs, Boosting Businesses in Southwest Minnesota (**RD**)



Learn more about President Lincoln's agricultural legacy [here](#).

USDA Celebrates 150 Years

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

(Feature Line-Up Subject To Change Prior to Update On June 5, 2012)

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 23.12 – Are Americans losing the art of cooking and the skills of wise meal planning and food shopping? Some experts say yes. Gary Crawford takes a look at this on this edition of AGRICULTURE USA.

CONSUMER TIME CD # 23.12 – A Decline In Honey Bee Colony Losses Last Winter. Native Americans Strengthen Their Voice At USDA. Global Ag Investment And Its Role In Food Security. Lawn Care Myths, Mistakes, And Miscues – Part One. Your First Container Veggie Garden And Common Mistakes.

AG UPDATE CD # 23.12 – USDA's New Microloan Proposal. USDA's June Farmer Surveys Are Underway. Results For CRP 43 General Sign-Up. Measures For Accepting CRP Offers. Change In The Weather And In Crop Condition.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – June 5 – Crop Weather Report (WAOB); June 11 – Crop Progress Report (NASS). June 12 – Crop Production Reports (NASS) and World Agricultural Supply And Demand Estimates (ERS – WOAB).

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

Growing Tomato 'Abraham Lincoln' – Several Ways of Staking

Healthy tomato plants are pruned and supported correctly. Watch this video for different methods of staking, pruning and pest control.

More gardening resources at www.usda.gov

YouTube: [Growing Tomato 'Abraham Lincoln' - Several Ways of Staking](#)

Food Safety Questions Answered On The Go

Consumers can ask food safety questions any time of day, instantly from their smartphones thanks to a USDA created virtual food safety representative.

YouTube: [Food Safety Questions Answered On The Go](#)

Please email Bob.Ellison@OC.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



PRODUCERS IN THE SOUTHEAST DO RAIN DANCE – While scattered showers have been the case again this spring, many long for the day when good general showers once again fall across the cotton and peanut growing areas in Alabama, Georgia, and North Florida said **Randall Weiseman** (Southeast AgNet - Ocala, Florida [Southeast Ag Net](#)). “While Tropical Storm Beryl did dampen a few Memorial Day weekend cookouts, growers across the Southeast were really hoping to see good rains from it. And while it did help a few fields in Southeast Georgia and Northeast Florida, a lot of other growers were hoping it would spread their direction, but unfortunately it’s heading back East to eventually fizzle out over the water and thus the badly needed rainfall many had hoped for from this system is not going to happen. So growers in a lot of areas in the Southeast are still waiting for a good widespread rain.”

EXCELLENT CROP PROGRESS IN PARTS OF PENNSYLVANIA – Thanks to a change in the weather pattern, early warm temperatures arrived. **Dave Williams** (Pennsylvania Farm Country Radio – Wayne County, Pennsylvania [Pennsylvania Farm Country Radio](#)) said this has put crops ahead by two to three weeks and the first hay crop was harvested in May and is already in the barn. “Sweet corn is growing well standing 8-9 inches tall.” Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack also visited Penn State University which **Williams** proudly boasts is the second largest land grant college in the country.



IT'S FOUR MONTHS FOR RFD-TV'S RURAL TV – RFD TV News Director and NAFB President-Elect **Mark Oppold** (RFD-TV and Rural-TV – Nashville, Tennessee/Omaha, Nebraska [RFD TV](#) and [My RURAL TV](#)) reports that one of the many benefits of the new RURAL TV channel is the 5-hour news, weather and market. “We continue to partner with all the farm organizations, commodity groups, publications, and USDA, DTN and others, to provide continuous coverage of news and information important to rural America. But one of the personal benefits for me is regular visits with fellow farm broadcasters. We jump on the phone and find out what happening in their area,” said **Oppold**. Regular contributors include, John Jenkinson, The Ag Network; Mike Hergert, Red River Farm Network; Gary Cooper, SE Ag Net; Dave Williams, Pennsylvania Farm Country Radio Network; and Ron Hays, Radio Oklahoma Network. “I remember growing up listening to Keith Kirkpatrick and Maynard Speece on their Sunday morning radio visit about what was going on in their area, and that’s kind of what we’ve re-created on RURAL TV.”



WORLD FOOD PRIZE ESTABLISHES PUBLIC HOURS AND FREE TOURS –

The World Food Prize Hall of Laureates is now open during regular public hours and offers free tours of the restored historic library located on the riverfront. The World Food Prize Hall of Laureates is a century-old building on the National Historic Register that recently underwent a \$30 million restoration. Through artwork and architecture, the building celebrates Dr. Norman Borlaug, Iowa's greatest hero, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 for his agricultural innovations that helped stave off famine in Asia. Throughout the building, artwork depicts agricultural scenes from around the world, educates people about hunger and global food security, and celebrates the heroes who have won the \$250,000 World Food Prize over the past 25 years. In addition, original artwork celebrates Iowa's agricultural and humanitarian heritage. Interactive educational exhibits will be installed this fall, and at that time, visiting hours will be extended. Learn more online [World Food Prize Hall of Laureates](#).

***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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