



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Broadcasters Letter

Office of Communications

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Friday, August 10, 2012
Creative Media & Broadcast Center
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BROADCASTERS LETTER

#3678.2012

Friday, August 10, 2012

(August 9)

USDA PROVIDES NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL MEAT AND POULTRY PROCESSORS

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan announced that Ohio will be the first state to participate in USDA's Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program. Under this program, Ohio's small, state-inspected meat processors will be able to ship their products across state lines. The cooperative interstate shipment program will expand economic opportunities for America's small meat and poultry processors, strengthen state and local economies, and increase consumer access to safe, locally-produced food.

"This agreement allows a small processor in Ohio to sell products to neighbors in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Indiana, and beyond," said Deputy Secretary Merrigan. "Expanding market opportunities for meat from local processors makes these small businesses more viable, while also ensuring that participating establishments have robust food safety systems in place to produce safe food for consumers."

The announcement is reflective of USDA's ongoing focus on strengthening the critical connection between farmers and consumers and supporting local and regional food systems. USDA's Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative, launched in September 2009, coordinates USDA resources and expertise on local and regional food systems. Through this initiative, USDA integrates programs and policies that:

- Stimulate food- and agriculturally-based community economic development;
- Foster new opportunities for farmers and ranchers;
- Promote locally and regionally produced and processed foods;
- Cultivate healthy eating habits and educated, empowered consumers;
- Expand access to affordable fresh and local food; and
- Demonstrate the connection between food, agriculture, community and the environment.

For more information, visit the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food website at www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer.

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

Radio Story: [First State Qualifies For Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program](#)

USDA UNVEILS NEW AGGRESSIVE TACTICS TO COUNTER FRAUD AND ENHANCE SNAP PROGRAM INTEGRITY

Agriculture Under Secretary Kevin Concannon announced a broad range of additional strategies to further improve program integrity in USDA's [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#) (SNAP) and hold those misusing benefits accountable. The measures include tougher financial sanctions for the small number of retailers that defraud the program and new requirements and tools for States to ensure benefits go solely to eligible individuals.

"USDA has a zero tolerance policy for SNAP fraud," said Concannon. "These additional measures reaffirm our ongoing commitment to ensuring these dollars are spent as intended—helping millions of people in need get back on solid economic footing."

The retailer sanctions proposal allows USDA to not only permanently disqualify a retailer who traffics, but also assess a monetary penalty in addition to the disqualification. Financial penalties would be proportional to the amount of SNAP business the store is conducting, which will help ensure that the financial punishment more closely fits the crime. Currently, when a retailer is found guilty of fraud or abuse, USDA can either disqualify the retailer from participating in SNAP, or issue a financial penalty, but not both.

The announcement includes new requirements for States to take specific actions that would catch fraud and abuse on the front end and ensure that ineligible people do not participate in the program. The new standards strengthen integrity by giving States an additional tool to identify cases that may require further investigation and review when an applicant or recipient is found in a Federal database.

"These requirements will make us better at identifying potential fraud and abuse before it occurs, as well as help us hold bad actors even more accountable than in the past and discourage them from abusing the public's trust," said Concannon.

Concannon also released third quarter, fiscal year 2012 results of USDA work in fighting fraudulent activity in SNAP retail stores, tallying final actions to sanction or disqualify retailers violating program rules. In that quarter, USDA staff took final actions to:

- Impose sanctions, through fines or temporary disqualifications, on more than 574 stores found violating program rules; and
- Permanently disqualify 1,016 stores for trafficking SNAP benefits (i.e. exchanging SNAP benefits for cash) or falsifying an application.

These announcements are part of the Obama Administration's ongoing Campaign to Cut Waste designed to fight fraud and abuse in Federal programs. For more information about USDA efforts to combat fraud, visit the Stop SNAP fraud website at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/fraud.

USDA continues to work with local, state and federal partners to root out fraud, waste and abuse in SNAP and ensure the integrity of our nation's most important food assistance program. Recent actions include:

- Sending letters to the CEOs of Craigslist, Ebay, Facebook and Twitter to reiterate the need to help prevent the illegal sale or purchase of SNAP benefits online;
- Proposing a rule to provide States the option to require recipients to make contact with the state when there have been an excessive number of requests for EBT card replacements;
- Increasing documentation required for high-risk stores applying to redeem SNAP benefits;
- Continuing to notify state social service agencies and federal agency partners about violators to better protect our public programs. This includes information on program recipients with suspicious transactions at stores that have been sanctioned for trafficking so that the recipients can be further investigated by States.

Reducing childhood obesity and improving the nutrition of all Americans are vital to achieve a healthy future for America. That's why the Obama administration and USDA are committed to promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles and to ensuring that all Americans have access to safe, nutritious, and balanced meals.

SNAP—the nation's first line of defense against hunger—helps put food on the table for millions of low income families and individuals every month. The largest of USDA's 15 nutrition assistance programs, it has never been more urgently needed than it is today. SNAP is a vital supplement to the monthly food budget of more than 46 million low-income individuals. Nearly half of SNAP participants are children and more than 40 percent of recipients live in households with earnings.

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

Radio Story: [USDA Has New Measures To Combat Food Snap Benefits Fraud](#)

ANNOUNCES FUNDING TO IMPROVE RURAL ELECTRIC SERVICE TO THOUSANDS OF CUSTOMERS IN 18 STATES

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that rural electric utilities in 18 states will receive loan guarantees to make improvements to electric lines, transmission facilities and to reduce peak electric loads by deploying smart grid technologies. USDA Rural Utilities Administrator Jonathan Adelstein made the announcement on Vilsack's behalf while visiting the offices of one of the recipients, Southside Electric Cooperative (SEC) in Crewe, Virginia. The cooperative is using funds to build and improve a distribution line, transmission line, and will invest almost \$7.4 million for smart grid system enhancements. In all, service will be upgraded for about 1,500 SEC members.

"Maintaining and upgrading rural electric systems improves system reliability, creates jobs and supports economic development," said Vilsack. "With these loans, we are continuing to help cooperatives provide reliable service to rural residents. A significant portion of this funding will go to smart grid technologies, helping consumers lower their electric bills and reducing peak demand for producers."

With this funding, USDA Rural Development moves closer to reaching Secretary Vilsack's goal to fund more than \$250 million for smart grid technologies. Today's announcement includes support for nearly \$29 million in smart grid projects. In all, USDA is investing more than \$420 million in rural electric infrastructure.

For a list of rural utilities that will receive USDA funding click [here](#).

Contact: Candice Celestin (202) 690-2385

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

(August 8)

USDA DELIVERS NEW DROUGHT ASSISTANCE TO AMERICA'S PRODUCERS

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack signed disaster designations for an additional 44 counties in 12 states as primary natural disaster areas due to damage and losses caused by drought and excessive heat. The latest counties designated are in the states of Arkansas, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma and South Dakota. During the 2012 crop year, USDA has designated 1,628 unduplicated counties across 33 states as disaster areas—1,496 due to drought—making all qualified farm operators in the areas eligible for low-interest emergency loans. The [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) indicates that 66 percent of the nation's hay acreage is in an area experiencing drought, while approximately 73 percent of the nation's cattle acreage is in an area experiencing drought.

For a list of the latest counties added to the secretarial disaster list click [here](#).

Visit www.usda.gov/drought for the latest information regarding USDA's drought response and assistance.

Contact: Office of Communications (202)720-4623

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMERS AND RANCHERS GET HELP FROM USDA

Agriculture Secretary Vilsack announced the award of 70 grants to tribes, educational institutions and non-profit organizations across the country to conduct training, outreach and technical assistance for socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, and landowners. The awards are being made through the Outreach Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFR) Competitive Grants Program, known as the "2501 program."

"USDA continues working to help improve the success of minority farmers and ranchers in today's agricultural economy," said Vilsack. "These grants provide crucial assistance to help institutions who are helping American producers build capacity and increase profitability, and thereby create stronger rural communities."

As authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill, these latest grants being awarded will bring \$19 million in new and additional funding to programs and organizations to bolster assistance for socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers and forest landowners. Grants will enable recipients to work with prospective farmers as they acquire, build and operate farms and ranches, revitalize the rural economy, and create new, sustainable economic opportunities in the region and nation. For details of the New Fiscal year 2012 awards click [here](#).

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

SMALL RUMINANTS IN SMALL SUBURBAN FARMS

An Extension expert says there are several advantages in raising sheep and goats for small hobby or for profit farmers, especially those in suburbs. Raising sheep and goats on small suburban farms can be profitable, but an Extension expert says that takes planning.

Radio Story: [Small Ruminants In Small Suburban Farms Profitability In Small Ruminant Production On Suburban Farms](#)

(August 7)

NEW DROUGHT RELIEF EFFORTS FOR PRODUCERS

As the drought continues, part of president Obama's administration-wide drought response was Tuesday's designation of 44 additional counties in 12 states as primary natural disaster areas. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack outlined the drought aid roles of the Rural Council members.

Radio Story: [USDA And Other Rural Council Members Helping Producers](#)
[ACTUALITY: New Additional Drought Assistance Provided By USDA](#)
[ACTUALITY: Vilsack On Multi-Agency And Department Drought Aid](#)
[ACTUALITY: Several Departments/Agencies Involved In Drought Relief](#)

MORE USDA FUNDING FOR OHIO TO ERADICATE ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced \$14.8 million in additional funding to prevent the spread of the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) in Ohio. "The USDA, together with our partners in Ohio, is working hard to contain and eradicate the Asian longhorned beetle from Clermont County," said Vilsack. "With this funding, USDA reinforces our shared goal of stopping this destructive pest and protecting as many trees as possible. The additional funds will allow for an increased effort in fighting the beetle and help prevent the beetle from spreading to surrounding areas." The additional funding will be used to increase tree inspection surveys in order to determine the extent of the infestation and ensure the timely removal of infested trees.

The beetle threatens recreational areas, forests, and suburban and urban shade trees and directly impacts important American industries. They include timber, nursery stock, maple syrup

production, and tourism—industries that support millions of American jobs and pump billions of dollars into our nation's economy.

The beetle was discovered in Bethel, Ohio in June 2011. Currently, a 56-square mile area regulated to control the pest includes all of Tate Township and a portion of Monroe Township. Due to the recent detection of two infested trees in Stonelick Township, the regulated area will be expanded to include additional properties near this new infestation. To date, USDA and its partners have removed 8,489 trees and surveyed 146,620 host trees in an effort to stop the ALB infestation in Ohio.

Early detection is crucial in the fight to eradicate the Asian longhorned beetle. USDA encourages the public to inspect their trees regularly and to be aware of the risks of transporting forests pests when moving firewood. If you see any signs of an Asian longhorned beetle infestation, report it immediately. Visit www.BeetleBusters.info for more information or to report a sighting. You can also call the ALB toll free hotline at 1-866-702-9938. For information about the beetle and program activities, please contact the Ohio ALB eradication program at 513-381-7180 or log on to www.aphis.usda.gov.

Contact: Rhonda Santos (508) 852-8044 or Lyndsay Cole (970) 494-7410
Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

PASTURE LAND HIT EXTREMELY HARD BY HOT DRY WEATHER CONDITIONS

The weather keeps chopping away at the nation's pastures and range. There doesn't seem to be any relief in sight for the foreseeable future despite tropical storms that are brewing. USDA meteorologist Brad Rippey says U.S. farmers will likely not get any drought relief from tropical storms over at least the next two weeks.

Radio Story: [Weather Takes Another Bite Out Of Pastures
Still No Drought Help From Any Tropical Storms](#)

(August 6)

MOTHER NATURE'S RECENT MOISTURE FROM THE HEAVENS IS JUST NOT ENOUGH TO HELP THE AILING CORN AND SOYBEAN CROPS

The rain that fell in the Midwest during the last two weeks wasn't enough to prevent further corn condition deterioration. Brad Rippey, USDA meteorologist, says soybean development and condition pretty much mirrors that of corn. While the cotton crop is faring a bit better, Rippey says cotton is having its own problems.

Radio Story: [Recent Rain In The Midwest Not Enough To Improve Corn Condition
ACTUALITY: Soybeans Continue To Falter In Condition
ACTUALITY: Mixed Bag Of News On Cotton Crop Progress](#)

**USDA LOAN GUARANTEES TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF NEVADA
ADVANCED BIOFUELS FACILITY THAT CREATES ENERGY FROM SOLID WASTE**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a \$105 million loan guarantee to Fulcrum Sierra BioFuels, LLC to finance development of a facility to convert municipal solid waste into advanced biofuels. The ground-breaking project is aimed at helping to reduce the nation's dependence on foreign oil, relieve pressure on existing and future landfills, and stimulate economic growth in Northern Nevada through job creation.

"The time is now to embrace alternative American-produced feedstocks that support our nation's energy independence, provide jobs in rural areas, and support the Obama Administration's 'all of the above' energy strategy," said Vilsack. "At USDA we are focused on the production of renewable energy from a wide variety of non-food sources, including waste, algae, wood, and switchgrass as a long-term solution to America's energy needs. The facility we are announcing will help create nearly 500 jobs in Nevada and is a perfect example of how producing home-grown energy is good for the economy and good for our energy future."

The Nevada plant is expected to create an estimated 430 jobs during construction and 53 permanent jobs in Storey County, 20 miles east of Reno. Once operational, the plant is expected to convert 147,000 tons of processed municipal solid waste into over 10 million gallons of advanced biofuels annually using a two-part thermo-chemical process.

USDA, through its Rural Development Biorefinery Assistance Program (Section 9003 of the 2008 Farm Bill), approved an 80 percent loan guarantee to finance the project, with a conditional commitment that Fulcrum Sierra BioFuels, LLC must meet before loan closing.

The Pleasanton, California based Fulcrum Sierra BioFuels is a privately held company that focuses on developing facilities that convert municipal solid waste and other waste products to a low-cost, reliable and environmentally clean renewable transportation fuel.

Contact: Jay Fletcher, (202) 690-0498
Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

**SOME NORTHEAST GROWERS ARE TRYING TO MAKE
GROWING CANOLA INTO A PROFITABLE INDUSTRY**

A group of interested growers and researchers in Michigan is trying to build canola into a viable ag industry in that state. Russ Freed of Michigan State University Extension explains the many uses of canola oil and efforts to increase production in Michigan via research.

Radio Story: [Growing Canola Into A Profitable Industry](#)
[ACTUALITY: On Canola And Boosting Production In Michigan](#)

**USDA NATIONAL FARMERS MARKET DIRECTORY SURPASSES
THE 7,800 MARK OF FARMERS MARKETS LISTED**

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan announced a 9.6 percent increase in [National Farmers Market Directory](#) listings as the kickoff to National Farmer's Market Week. The [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)'s directory, a database published online at [farmersmarkets.usda.gov](#), identifies 7,864 farmers markets operating throughout the United States. The information

collected in the directory is self-reported data provided voluntarily by farmers market managers through an annual outreach effort. Last year, USDA's directory listed 7,175 markets.

"Farmers markets are a critical ingredient to our nation's food system," said Merrigan. "These outlets provide benefits not only to the farmers looking for important income opportunities, but also to the communities looking for fresh, healthy foods. The directory is an online tool that helps connect farmers and consumers, communities and businesses around the country."

The top states, in terms of the number of markets reported in the directory, include California (827 markets), New York (647 markets), Massachusetts (313 markets), Michigan (311 markets), Wisconsin (298 markets), Illinois (292 markets), Ohio (264 markets), Pennsylvania (254 markets), Virginia and Iowa (tied with 227 markets) and North Carolina (202 markets). Together they account for nearly half (49 percent) of the farmers markets listed in the 2012 directory.

Geographic regions like the mid-Atlantic (Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia), the Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont), and the Southeast (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee) saw large increases in their listings, reporting, 15.8, 14.4 and 13.1 percent more markets, respectively.

USDA has taken several steps to help small and mid-sized farmers as part of the department's commitment to support local and regional food systems, and increase consumer access to fresh, healthy food in communities across the country. For example:

- USDA's [Food and Nutrition Service](#) (FNS), is outfitting more [farmers markets with the ability to accept SNAP](#) (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly food stamps), announcing [\\$4 million dollars in available funding](#) to equip farmers' markets with wireless point-of-sale equipment. Currently, over 2,500 farmers markets are using Electronic Benefit Transfer technology.
- USDA recently released the 2.0 version of its [KYF Compass](#), a digital guide to USDA resources related to local and regional food systems. The updated version includes new data sets to help consumers locate local food resources, such as farmers markets, and plot them on an interactive map.

The USDA National Farmers Market Directory is available at farmersmarkets.usda.gov. Users can search for markets based on location, available products, and types of payment accepted, including participation in federal nutrition programs. Directory features allow users to locate markets based on proximity to zip code, mapping directions and links to active farmers market websites. Customized datasets can also be created and exported for use by researchers and software application designers.

Contact: Gwen Sparks, (202) 260-8210 or gwen.sparks@ams.usda.gov

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

Radio Story: [USDA SEES Increase In Number Of Farmers Markets On Record](#)
[Farmers Market Week Serves As Catalyst To Bring On More Markets](#)

[ACTUALITY: The Economic Benefits Of Farmers Markets](#)

[ACTUALITY: Impact Of Drought On Farmers Markets Viability](#)

For more agriculture news visit www.USDA.gov



[The Latest USDA Blog Posts](#)

USDA Rural Development Assists in Construction of a Key Tribal Facility in Arizona (**RD**)

Residents of Pennsylvania's Shenandoah Borough Relieved that a New USDA-funded Police Cruiser Is On the Way (**RD**)

Thanks to USDA, Hundreds of Alaska Natives Will Receive Convenient, Accessible Health Care (**RD**)

Deputy Under Secretary Attends Groundbreaking for a New Modern Iowa Hospital (**RD**)



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's Weekly Radio Address
[TV #31 DROUGHT UPDATE](#)



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 August 14, 2012)

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 33.12 – Stink bugs are on the brink of becoming a crisis in the U.S. In this edition of Agriculture USA, Susan Carter gets the story on what's being done to help curb the population of the pesky Chinese-exported brown marmorated stink bug.

CONSUMER TIME CD # 33.12 – Dealing With Stink Bugs In Homes, More Than An Apple A Day To Keep Doctors Away?, Using Micronutrients To Fortify Food Aid, Ecocar Competition Plugs Students Into The Future. Things To Know Before Becoming A Vegetarian.

AG UPDATE CD # 33.12 – News From USDA August Crop Reports And Supply And Demand Estimates. The History Of The World Ag Supply And Demand Estimates. Inspecting A Key Part Of US Exports, The Stink Bug - From Pest To A National Crisis. Germplasm Research - Examples In War Against Food Insecurity.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – August 14 – Crop Weather Report (WAOB); Wheat And Feed Grain Outlooks (ERS-WAOB). August 16 – Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry Outlooks (ERS-WAOB). August 17 – Cattle On Feed Report (NASS). August 20 – Crop Progress Report (NASS). **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

Drought Hanging On In Most Areas

USDA meteorologist Brad Rippey says while some areas are getting rain, the current drought is still affecting large portions of the nation

USDA YouTube: [Drought Hanging On In Most Areas](#)

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



4-H ACHIEVEMENT DAYS SOUTH DAKOTA COVERAGE – Jody Heemstra (KWAT - Watertown, South Dakota www.GoWatertown.net) tells us KWAT finished its whirlwind coverage of 9 area county 4-H Achievement Days on Friday. “We started Wed. August 1. Parts of our coverage area have received much needed rains over the past few weeks...ranging from a tenth to a couple inches.” While soybeans should be helped by the moisture, it has done little corn, as many farmers are cutting silage on their worst fields. “Nitrogen levels vary, but most will be letting it sit for several weeks before feeding it,” said **Heemstra**. “I’ve heard stories of tarp companies and bagging companies being booked for weeks out because of the large demand for their products to protect the silage. Pastures are looking tough. Some are already having to supplement with hay. Water supplies are ok, but some are having issues with algae--depending on when the dugouts were last cleaned out.”



Here photos during Jody’s 4-H Achievement Days coverage with cows, goats and people.

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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