



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# Broadcasters Letter

Office of Communications

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Letter No. 3679.2012  
Friday, August 17, 2012  
Creative Media & Broadcast Center  
202-720-7079

## **BROADCASTERS LETTER**

#3679.2012

Friday, August 17, 2012

**(August 17)**

### **THE AGRICULTURE SECRETARY TALKS DROUGHT ASSISTANCE FOR AMERICA'S FARMERS AND RANCHERS AT THE IOWA STATE FAIR**

The leader of the Agriculture Department recognized the strength of producers during his visit to Iowa this week. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack addressed USDA's contingency plan for the "what if scenario" if the drought continues to linger. Mr. Vilsack responded to what he sees as his number one priority as the head of the Ag Department and what he can implement to give producers security. Vilsack was in Iowa with President Barack Obama talking about the drought. He also addressed producers and consumers during a Town Hall meeting.

Radio Story: [Vilsack Praises Farmers And Ranchers On Confronting The Drought  
Crop And Livestock Aid For Long-Term Drought Conditions](#)  
[ACTUALITY: Vilsack's Top Priority As Agriculture Secretary](#)

**(August 16)**

### **USDA SEEKS APPLICATIONS FOR THE VALUE ADDED PRODUCER GRANT PROGRAM**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack invited agricultural producers to apply for the grants to increase the value of their products. "Producers can greatly enhance the bottom line of their businesses and improve their economic prospects when they improve the value of their products, thus expanding their markets and customer base," said Vilsack. "The Value Added Producer Grant program (VAPG) has a proven track record of doing just that and I am pleased to announce that we are inviting producers to apply for these grants by the deadline. The funds

in this program enable America's farmers, ranchers and rural business owners to find ways to expand their product offerings, revenue streams and create more economic opportunity by bringing additional value to what they already produce."

The VAPG application deadline is October 15, 2012. Vilsack emphasized that far too many producers are missing out on significant economic opportunities when their products are enhanced further away from the farm. "When our producers keep their value-added activities closer to the farm, it not only improves their bottom line; it strengthens our rural economy and strengthens our rural communities."

USDA Rural Development is making up to \$14 million in grants available for projects that help farmers and ranchers produce bio-based products from agricultural commodities. The grants, which are competitively awarded, are available for planning activities or for working capital expenses, but not for both. The maximum grant amount is \$100,000 for planning grants and \$300,000 for working capital grants. Generating new products, creating and expanding marketing opportunities and increasing producer income are the goals of the VAPG program.

Businesses of all sizes are encouraged to apply, but priority will be given to operators of small and medium-sized farms or ranches that are structured as family farms, beginning farmers or ranchers, or those owned by socially-disadvantaged farmers or ranchers. Grants are available for projects up to 36 months in duration. For information on how to apply, see page 48951 of the August 15, 2012 *Federal Register*, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-08-15/pdf/2012-20082.pdf>.

Contact: Weldon Freeman (202) 690-1384

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

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### **USDA'S MOST RECENT DROUGHT REPORT IS A MIXED BAG**

There is both a bit of good news and some bad news as well in the latest Agriculture Department report on the drought. Brad Rippey, USDA meteorologist, giving the new numbers for the percentage of U.S. crops and cattle currently in drought areas.

Radio Story: [Edges Of Drought Areas Receding....Center Areas Getting Worse](#)  
[ACTUALITY: Slightly Fewer Farm Acres In Drought Areas This Week](#)

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### **PRODUCERS OF ALL KINDS ARE WORKING TO DEAL WITH THE FUTURE IMPACT OF THE 2012 DROUGHT**

The burned out pastures and soaring cost of feed has put many cattle producers between the proverbial rock and hard place. The devastating 2012 drought has some of the nation's hog producers about to put the production engine into reverse. Meantime, the broiler industry is making a U turn on production in the face of soaring feed costs. Additionally, just as their counterparts in the beef and poultry business, the nation's dairy operators are taking actions that will cut production as well.

Radio Story: [Many Cattle Producers Are Facing Some Serious Decisions](#)  
[Hog Producers Putting Production Engine In Reverse](#)

**(August 15)**

**USDA ANNOUNCES LOW-INTEREST EMERGENCY LOANS AVAILABLE NOW  
TO PRODUCERS IN 172 ADDITIONAL DROUGHT STRICKEN COUNTIES**

To date, USDA has designated 1,792 counties as disaster areas—1,670 due to drought. "USDA is committed to using its resources wherever possible to help the farmers, ranchers, small businesses, and communities being impacted by the drought," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "In the past month, we have streamlined the disaster designation process, reduced interest rates on emergency loans, and provided flexibility within our conservation programs to support struggling producers. In the weeks ahead, the President and I will continue to take swift action to help America's farmers and ranchers through this difficult time."

Vilsack also announced the availability of up to \$5 million in grants to evaluate and demonstrate agricultural practices that help farmers and ranchers adapt to drought. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is taking applications for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to help producers build additional resiliency into their production systems. NRCS is offering the grants to partnering entities to evaluate innovative, field-based conservation technologies and approaches. These technologies and/or approaches are expected to lead to improvements such as enhancing the water-holding capacity in soils and installing drought-tolerant grazing systems, which will help farms and ranches become more resilient to drought. Visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov) for more information.

Additionally, in response to a request from five National Organic Program (NOP) certifying agents, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announced that USDA will grant a temporary variance from NOP's pasture practice standards for organic ruminant livestock producers (Sections 205.237(c) and 205.240 of the USDA organic regulations) in 16 states in 2012. The following restrictions apply: this temporary variance applies to non-irrigated pasture only; producers must supply at least 15% of their dry matter intake (on average) from certified organic pasture; this temporary variance applies to the 2012 calendar year only; and this temporary variance covers only counties that have been declared as primary natural disaster areas by the Secretary of Agriculture in 2012. Granting a temporary variance for 2012 from the pasture practice standards is necessary in order to allow organic ruminant livestock producers to continue to be compliant with the program regulations after the severe drought ends and pasture forage becomes available. Temporary variance requests that are outside the scope of this variance will be considered on a case by case basis.

Visit [www.usda.gov/drought](http://www.usda.gov/drought) for the latest information regarding USDA's drought response and assistance. For a list of the newest primary counties and corresponding states designated as disaster areas for drought and other reasons click [here](#).

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

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**ESTATE TAX RULES SLATED TO EXPIRE AT YEAR'S END;  
PRODUCERS ARE ADVISED TO TAKE PREEMPTIVE MEASURES**

As 2012 winds down, financial experts advise farmers to take advantage of the current tax environment in the wake of potential sweeping tax changes in the coming year. USDA economist Ron Durst outlines various options on the table for addressing the existing estate tax rules slated to go away come January. Estate planning attorney Eido Walny warns farmers on implications of possible estate tax changes and the significance of not leaving the transfer process of the farm to fate and urges action now to begin the succession planning process.

Radio Story: [Existing Estate Tax Exemptions Are Slated To Expire Come 2013](#)  
[ACTUALITY: Proposals To Deal With Possible Expiring Estate Tax Rules](#)  
[ACTUALITY: Don't Leave The Family Farm Transition Process To Luck](#)  
[ACTUALITY: Protecting The Family Farm From Potential Tax Law Changes](#)

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**DESPITE THIS YEAR'S SEVERE DROUGHT CONDITION, USDA OFFICIALS DON'T  
ANTICIPATE A LARGE DEMAND FOR EMERGENCY LOANS**

With damage from the drought severe and widespread, will there be a huge flood of farmers wanting USDA emergency loans? Jim Radintz, with USDA's Farm Service Agency, cautions that the law says USDA cannot compensate farmers twice for the same loss. That means most farmers with crop insurance could not qualify for an emergency loan. Farmers would have to have suffered at least a 30% loss to qualify for an emergency loan. Further, qualifying farmers would also have to be unable to get a loan from commercial sources to be eligible for a USDA emergency loan.

Radio Story: [Official Does Not Expect A Huge Demand For Emergency Loans](#)  
[ACTUALITY: How Crop Insurance Could Reduce Emergency Loan Needs](#)  
[ACTUALITY: Farmers Have To Suffer 30% Loss To Get Emergency Loans](#)

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**(August 14)**

**THE COUNCIL FOR NATIVE AMERICAN FARMING AND RANCHING  
HOLDS FIRST MEETING TODAY**

The Council for Native American Farming and Ranching, appointed by Secretary Tom Vilsack, is holding a two day public meeting Tuesday and Wednesday at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. The Council will advise the Secretary on ways to eliminate barriers to participation in USDA programs for Native American farmers and ranchers. Council members will hear from White House, USDA and Department of the Interior officials. The group will enable USDA to enhance business opportunities for Native American farmers and ranchers, tribal governments and the tribal communities they serve, and those interested in improving tribal economies through food and agriculture production.

Those appointed to the Council can be found [here](#). Among the four USDA officials appointed to the Council: Dr. Joe Leonard, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights; Janie Simms Hipp, Chickasaw Nation; Senior Advisor to the Secretary, Tribal Relations; Juan Garcia, Administrator, Farm Service Agency; and Chris Beyerhelm, Director, Farm Loan Programs, Farm Service Agency.

Appointed by the Secretary as part of the *Keepseagle* settlement, (a lawsuit alleging past discrimination by USDA against Native American farmers and ranchers in the way it operated its farm loan program) the Council is charged with suggesting changes to USDA regulations and offering internal guidance or propose measures that would promote the participation of American Indian farmers and ranchers in all other USDA programs and support government-to-government relations between USDA and tribal governments.

The council held two days of business meetings in the Patron Lounge of the National Museum of the American Indian, on August 14th and 15th, which were open to the public. Additional information is available on the USDA Office of Tribal Relations website: <http://www.usda.gov/otr-council-native-american-farming-ranching.html>

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

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### **THE FAR REACHING EFFECTS OF THE 2012 DROUGHT**

It appears we've finally turned the corner on this year's drought, but it could take years to recover from it. Meantime, topsoil moisture levels remain low, despite cooler and wetter weather across the heartland. USDA Meteorologist Brad Rippey says there's rainfall in the coming forecast, but not every area that needs it will see any of that badly needed moisture. The areas of greatest concern in terms of drought recovery are those experiencing a second consecutive year of drought. Wildfires remain a factor too. The damage thus far this year is topping last year and is still growing.

Radio Story: [The Impact Of The 2012 Drought Is Far Reaching  
Topsoil Moisture Levels Continue To Suffer](#)  
[ACTUALITY: Some Areas Will Get Rain; Others Will Look On In Envy.](#)  
[ACTUALITY: Two Years Of Drought Could Mean Multi Year Recovery](#)  
[Wildfire Numbers Ahead Of Last Year And Ten Year Average](#)

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### **CORN STOCKS ARE DECLINING, WHILE THE OUTLOOK FOR SMALL GRAINS PRODUCERS IS LOOKING POSITIVE**

Corn stocks in the U.S., already small, will get smaller over the next year, despite so called rationing by the market. Soaring corn prices and smaller supplies may cause an increase in the amount of corn the U.S. imports this next season. When it comes to small grains, U.S. wheat growers have been harvesting a larger crop at just the right time, in just the right situation.

Radio Story: [Corn Stocks Will Fall, Despite Less Use U.S. Will Be Importing Corn This Year, But Not A Lot A Good Outlook For U.S. Wheat Growers](#)

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**(August 13)**

**USDA ANNOUNCES MEAT PURCHASE TO ASSIST LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS IMPACTED BY DROUGHT AND TO BOLSTER FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

As part of the Obama Administration's commitment to do everything it can to help farmers, ranchers, small businesses, and communities being impacted by the nation's persistent drought, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced USDA's intent to purchase up to \$170 million of pork, lamb, chicken, and catfish for federal food nutrition assistance programs, including food banks. The purchase is aimed at helping relieve pressure on American livestock producers during the drought, while helping to bring the nation's meat supply in line with demand while providing high quality, nutritious food to recipients of USDA's nutrition programs.

"President Obama and I will continue to take swift action to get help to America's farmers and ranchers through this difficult time," said Vilsack. "These purchases will assist pork, catfish, chicken and lamb producers who are currently struggling due to challenging market conditions and the high cost of feed resulting from the widespread drought. The purchases will help mitigate further downward prices, stabilize market conditions, and provide high quality, nutritious food to recipients of USDA's nutrition programs."

USDA intends to purchase up to \$100 million of pork products, up to \$10 million of catfish products, up to \$50 million in chicken products, and up to \$10 million of lamb products for federal food nutrition assistance programs, including food banks. Through the Emergency Surplus Removal Program, USDA can use Section 32 funds to purchase meat and poultry products to assist farmers and ranchers who have been affected by natural disasters. The pork, lamb and catfish purchases are based on analyses of current market conditions. A major factor affecting livestock producers is the value of feed, which is currently running high because of the drought.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) purchases a variety of high-quality food products each year to support the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Summer Food Service Program, the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Program. USDA also makes emergency food purchases for distribution to victims of natural disasters. Government food experts work to ensure that all purchased food is healthful and nutritious. Food items are required to be low in fat, sugar and sodium. The commodities must meet specified requirements and be certified to ensure quality. AMS purchases only products of 100 percent domestic origin.

Last week President Obama convened his White House Rural Council to review Executive Branch response actions and to develop additional policy initiatives to assist drought-stricken Americans. Following the meeting, [the White House announced](#) a number of new measures the

Administration is taking, including USDA's assistance for livestock and crop producers, the National Credit Union Administration's increased capacity for lending to customers including farmers, and the U.S. Department of Transportation's emergency waivers for federal truck weight regulations and hours of service requirements to drought-stricken communities. President Obama also stressed the need for the entire Administration to continue to look at further steps it can take to ease the pain of this historic drought.

Within the last month, USDA has [opened the Conservation Reserve Program](#) to emergency haying and grazing, has lowered the borrower interest rate for emergency loans, and has worked with crop insurance companies to provide more flexibility to farmers. 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. Visit [www.usda.gov/drought](http://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](#)

Radio Story: [Latest USDA Efforts To Help Drought Plagued Livestock Producers](#)

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## THE IMPACT OF THE 2012 DROUGHT ON FOOD PRICES

The Agriculture Secretary recently explained the role the current US drought has and might have on retail food prices in the short and long term.

Radio Story: [Drought And Food Costs](#)

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## CROP PROGRESS FOR CORN, SOYBEANS, RICE, COTTON, PEANUTS AND SMALL GRAINS

Recent rainfall puts a dent in corn denting, but the same can't be said for corn condition. The cotton crop continues to struggle from the relentless heat and drought. USDA Meteorologist Brady Rippey touched on how there was a slight improvement in the soybean crop and said that winter and spring wheat crop productions are coming along nicely. Rippey added that crops predominately grown in the southeast are faring quite well with the help of rainfall.

Radio Story: [Rain Proves Good For Corn Denting, But Did Little For Its Condition](#)

[Cotton Crop Unable To Escape Prolonged Arid And Dry Conditions](#)

[ACTUALITY: Soybeans Edge A Bit Ahead In Condition This Week](#)

[ACTUALITY: Wheat Crop Across The Board Is Looking Good](#)

[ACTUALITY: Rain Has Rice And Peanuts Coming Along Nicely](#)

For more agriculture news visit [www.USDA.gov](http://www.USDA.gov)



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**Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's Weekly Radio Address**

[TV #32 Ag Sec Weekly Address – Supporting Jobs By Increasing Exports](#)



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

[Click To Access Stories on USDA Celebrating 150 Years](#)

## FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

*(Feature Line-Up Subject To Change Prior to Update On August 21, 2012)*

**AGRICULTURE USA CD # 34.12** – If you have kids in school, they may be coming home this fall with stories about the food in the cafeteria. This is the year when new government nutrition guidelines go into effect for many schools. On this back to school edition of AGRICULTURE USA, Gary Crawford explores the new meal standards and what they mean.

**CONSUMER TIME CD # 34.12** – Change In School Meals This Fall. Special Wildfire Program Could Save Your Home And Your Life. Tips To Raising Sheep And Goats In Suburban Areas. More Than Just One Apple A Day To Keep Doctors Away? Students Provide Grains For Hope.

**AG UPDATE CD # 34.12** – There's Still Some Good News For US Farmers. Higher Feed Costs Bringing Lower Meat And Milk Production. A Forecast Of Global Food Security. Considering Goats For Getting Rid Of Invasive Species. Raising Small Ruminants On A Suburban Farm.

**UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE** – August 21 – Crop Weather Report (WAOB); August 24 – Food Price Outlook (ERS). August 27 – 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

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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**

### **President Obama In Iowa On USDA Purchases To Help Farmers**

USDA makes purchases to help drought stricken farmers

#### **FTP Download instructions:**

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## OFF MIKE



**TWO NOTED LOUISIANA NEWS AND RADIO NETWORKS JOIN FORCES** – The Louisiana Agri-News Network and the Louisiana Farm Bureau Radio Network (Louisiana Farm Bureau Agri-news Radio Network - Baton Rouge, Louisiana [LFBARN.com](http://LFBARN.com)) have teamed up to form the Louisiana Farm Bureau Agri-News Radio Network. The August 6 merger creates the largest agri-news network in the state. The two reportedly have shared news and commodity prices since 2008.

Louisiana Radio Network President **Jim Engster** said the merger represents the largest consolidation of Louisiana stations that carry farm news. “Over the years we’ve worked closely with the Farm Bureau to provide our listeners with timely and accurate farm news and commodity prices. This merger gives us both an opportunity to improve our farm news presence across the state.”

**Ronnie Anderson**, president of the Louisiana Farm Bureau, said merging the networks represents the next logical step. “This is an opportunity for us to increase public awareness of the important role farmers and ranchers play in our daily lives. “It’s also a chance to showcase the economic impact that farming has on our state while keeping residents updated on things going on in their communities.”

Farm Broadcasters **Don Molino** (Louisiana Radio Network’s farm director) and **Neil Melancon** (general manager of the Farm Bureau network) will produce and anchor all the agri-news programming on the more than 40 station network with affiliates in both Louisiana and Mississippi. Each will take on more field production which is a win for listeners, because it broadens the range of stories. [Press Release On Merger](#)

**WESTERN  
AGRI-RADIO NETWORKS**  
**CHANGES TO THE WESTERN AGRI-RADIO NETWORKS** – Comprised of the California Agri-Radio Network and Southwest Agri-Radio Network, at the helm is President and Networks director **George G. Gatley** and his wife **Christine** (Chris) who is the secretary and traffic director (Western Agri-Radio Networks®-WA-RN - Yuma, Arizona [WesternAgri-Radio.net](http://WesternAgri-Radio.net)). **Gatley** said the largest radio agri-network in California and Arizona announced it signed and partnered into a long-term relationship with Broadcast Sales, Inc. (BSC - South Loop, Chicago [broadcastsales.com](http://broadcastsales.com)).

The national agri-business sales representation agreement allows WA-RN and BCS to now provide advertisers with complete and customized farm radio network coverage throughout California and Western Arizona. Broadcast Sales is one of the nation’s largest independent national radio representation firms and largest independent Agri-Radio Rep firms. [Press Release On Western Agri-Radio Networks New Representation](#)



## **BARN'S MORNING AG NEWS**

**140<sup>TH</sup> EDITION OF THE COLORADO STATE FAIR HEARD ON "THE BARN"** – Inside the Barn's **Brian Allmer** (The BARN – Northeastern Colorado [barnmedia.net](http://barnmedia.net)) talks with fair general manager Chris Wiseman. Click [Chris Wiseman on the Colorado State Fair](#) to here the interview. The 140th Colorado State Fair runs August 24<sup>th</sup> through September 3<sup>rd</sup> in Pueblo. The fair has attractions for the whole family ranging from such free events as concerts, rodeos, livestock, carnival, Fiesta and all kinds of food for the palate.

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

Compiled and Edited by **Susan Carter**  
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