



Letter No. 3632  
Friday, September 2, 2011  
Creative Media & Broadcast Center  
202-215-3931

## **BROADCASTERS LETTER**

#3632

Friday, September 2, 2011

### **(September 2)**

#### **THE HURRICANE WATCH FOR LABOR DAY WEEKEND**

One current, and one potential, storm have the nation keeping an eye out for possible hurricane landings in the US this weekend. The Gulf Coast and much of the East and Midwest will be areas travelers will need to watch if those locales are part of their Labor Day weekend plans.

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16112>  
<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16113>

### **(September 1)**

#### **STATEMENT FROM AGRICULTURE SECRETARY TOM VILSACK ON REPORTS OF RECORD AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS AND STRONG FARM INCOME**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack made the following statement on data released this week showing record U.S. farm exports and farm income:

"This year brought a host of challenges for America's farmers, ranchers and producers: Hurricanes, floods, drought and other extreme weather have driven thousands of Americans from their homes, destroyed crops, and threatened our rural communities. But despite the setbacks, American agriculture is thriving, demonstrating again that the men and women who own and operate America's farms and ranches are some of the most resilient in the world.

"We learned this week in the Farm Income report that both net cash income and net farm income are record in nominal terms and, adjusting for inflation, are at their highest levels since the early 1970s. Meanwhile, total farm debt declined nearly two percent.

"That's a major achievement and a testament to our farmers and ranchers, who continue to work hard, innovate and make smart business decisions in these challenging times. It shows that they are making good investments, reducing their debt, and using their resources wisely. Their success story is not celebrated often enough. And it is due, in part, to their willingness to seize opportunities in new markets, both domestic and foreign.

"Farmers are working with USDA and other partners to expand opportunities to sell their products regionally and in their own communities. Making these sorts of connections—so a farmer can sell to a

local school, hospital, or a family just a few dozen or hundred miles away—helps keep wealth right here in America, and is creating good paying jobs in our rural communities.

"Our farmers are also the best in the world at finding consumers far from home. Today, a new forecast of U.S. agricultural exports confirmed that 'Grown in America' products remain in high regard and high demand in the rest of the world. The current U.S. export forecast for fiscal year 2011 is \$137 billion, \$22 billion higher than the previous record set in 2008 and \$28 billion above 2010. And exports for 2012 will remain equally strong and help to support over one million American jobs. In fact, taken as a whole, the United States is in the midst of experiencing the three best years in our history in terms of agricultural exports.

"Strong exports have enabled agriculture to remain one of only a few sectors of the U.S. economy to enjoy a trade surplus. This year's surplus is projected at \$42.5 billion—a record—and next year should be \$32 billion, the third-highest. In the months ahead, USDA will continue to work to maintain and expand this level of production through our commitment to agricultural research and development, removing barriers to trade, maintaining a strong safety net for farmers, and helping to expand our local and regional food systems. This is how we will build an economy that continues to grow, innovate and out-compete the rest of the world.

"The export forecast also highlights why we must move forward with pending trade agreements. Congress can help U.S. farmers and ranchers maintain a competitive advantage –and help to keep jobs here at home—by ratifying the South Korea, Colombia and Panama agreements. When fully implemented, those three agreements will immediately add more than \$2 billion per year to our economy and support thousands of additional jobs here in the United States." The latest export data is available via the Global Agricultural Trade System at <http://www.fas.usda.gov/data.asp> . The latest Farm Income data is available at [www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FarmIncome/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FarmIncome/)

Contact: USDA Office of Communications 202-720-4623

For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

---

## **USDA OFFERS A VARIETY OF HELP TO HURRICANE IRENE VICTIMS**

The Agriculture Secretary recently explained the many facets of USDA programs and services available to help with natural disaster recovery efforts.

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16107>

---

## **STILL TIME TO GET DISASTER ASSISTANCE HELP, BUT THE CLOCK IS TICKING**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) Administrator Bruce Nelson reminded producers today about upcoming deadlines for disaster assistance. Nelson emphasized that losses must be the result of a weather event occurring on or before Sept. 30, 2011.

"This year brought a host of extreme weather challenges for America's farmers, ranchers and producers," said Nelson. "USDA is committed to use the resources at our disposal to reduce the impact of these conditions and help producers get back on their feet. And this year, especially, it's important for producers to be aware of program deadlines and to have their records in order so that they get the assistance they need."

The 2008 Farm Bill authorizes coverage of disaster losses through these five programs:

- Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments Program (SURE);
- Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP);
- Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish (ELAP);

- Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP); and the
- Tree Assistance Program (TAP).

For details on the program and important dates for the five disaster programs visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov); click on Newsroom, then Fact Sheets. Additional information regarding the programs is at <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>

Contact: USDA Office of Communications 202-720-4623

For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16114>

<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16115>

<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16116>

## (August 31)

### **USDA HIGHLIGHTS ASSISTANCE TO RESIDENTS AFFECTED BY HURRICANE IRENE**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack says USDA is ready to deploy personnel and resources to assist the efforts by federal, state and local authorities in response to Hurricane Irene. Yesterday, the Secretary joined Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano for a tour of hurricane-impacted areas in North Carolina and Virginia.

"Our thoughts and prayers go out to all who have suffered losses caused by this massive storm," say Vilsack. "USDA is ready to provide food, emergency assistance and other resources to the affected areas. We continue to closely coordinate with many partners to meet the immediate and plan for the long-term needs of those affected by Hurricane Irene."

USDA encourages farmers, ranchers, producers, landowners and rural communities to contact their local USDA Farm Service Agency Service Center to report damages to crops or livestock loss; their local Rural Development office for housing, business or community assistance information and/or their local Natural Resources Conservation Service office for help with debris removal.

Specifically, USDA is offering the following assistance in response to the hurricane: food, housing, community, business, utility, and farmer and rancher assistance - USDA encourages farmers who have crop and or physical damage, to contact their local Farm Service Agency Service Center as soon as possible.

The affected State and County Emergency Boards, chaired by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), are assisting with the response efforts and quickly assessing agricultural needs and determining the storms impact on crops. Emergency loans are available to agricultural producers through the Farm Service Agency Emergency (EM) Loan Program which provides low-interest EM loans for crop and livestock production and physical losses. The loans are available in counties declared under a Presidential (FEMA) declaration or Secretarial disaster designation. Assistance also might be available through the Farm Service Agency Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) funds, subject to the availability of funds. ECP signup will be held where authorized by FSA State Committees. ECP applications will be processed subject to available funding. And farmers and ranchers may qualify for assistance for any crop or livestock losses if they meet certain eligibility requirements.

Additionally, USDA staff is coordinating closely with agricultural industry representatives to address specific needs as they arise.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications 202-720-4623

For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

-----

## **AG EXPORTS FORECASTS HOLD STEADY FOR 2012**

The first ag export forecast for the new fiscal year is the same as the projections for 2011. Meantime, ag imports are forecasted to increase for this and next fiscal year, per the latest USDA Ag Trade Forecasts.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications 202-720-4623

For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16098>

<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16101>

<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16104>

### **(August 30)**

## **VILSACK AND CABINET MEMBERS VISIT IRENE STRICKEN LOCALES**

High ranking members of the Obama Administration are assessing damages in areas hit by Hurricane Irene.

For a Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16093>

-----

## **USDA, DEPARTMENTS OF ENERGY AND NAVY SEEK INPUT FROM INDUSTRY TO ADVANCE BIOFUELS FOR MILITARY AND COMMERCIAL TRANSPORTATION**

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Energy Steven Chu, and Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus announced the next step in the creation of a public-private partnership to develop drop-in advanced biofuels. The Secretaries issued a Request for Information (RFI) laying out the Administration's goals, assumptions, and tools and requesting from industry specific ideas for how to leverage private capital markets to establish a commercially viable drop-in biofuels industry. The critical information gathered through this process will help accelerate the development and use of these biofuels, reduce the Nation's demand for foreign oil, and strengthen rural America. The RFI can be viewed [here](#).

On August 16, 2011, the three Departments announced an investment in the private sector of up to \$510 million during the next three years to produce advanced drop-in aviation and marine biofuels to power military and commercial transportation. The initiative responds to a directive from President Obama issued in March as part of his Blueprint for a Secure Energy Future, the Administration's framework for reducing dependence on foreign oil. Drop-in biofuels serve as direct replacements or supplements to existing gasoline, diesel and jet fuels, without any changes to existing fuel distribution networks or engines.

The Request for Information (RFI) was released on behalf of the Secretaries by the Office of the Secretary of Defense Acquisition Technology and Logistics in coordination with the Defense Production Act Title III executive agent Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications 202-720-4623

For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16089>

**(August 29)**

### **IRENE AND AGRICULTURAL IMPACTS IN THE MID ATLANTIC**

A USDA Meteorologist says the damage to ag crops in North Carolina and Virginia from the hurricane could have been much worse. USDA Meteorologist Brad Rippey gave the latest maturity and condition numbers from the Crop Progress report. Rippey had the latest soybean progress and conditions numbers for the week ending August 28th. He also gave the progress report for Winter and Spring Wheat for that time period.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications 202-720-4623

For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16078>

<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16079>

<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16080>

<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16081>

---

### **CONSUMERS IN 14 STATES TO BENEFIT FROM SMART GRID, TRANSMISSION SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS**

The loans will benefit more than 19,000 rural residents. "Rural electric cooperatives provide direct jobs and support economic growth in our rural communities," says Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "By financing electrical system improvements USDA and the Obama Administration helps ensure sustainable growth and business job creation. Investments in smart grid technologies will give rural electric utilities and their consumers one more tool to better manage use of electricity, increase reliability and lower costs."

Among the rural electric cooperative utilities that will receive funding are Hoosier Energy Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc., which serves Indiana and parts of Illinois. Hoosier received a \$462.5 million loan to fund system projects to improve reliability and comply with environmental requirements. The loan will also finance smart grid technologies and transmission line improvements.

Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, Inc., received a of \$23.5 million loan to build or improve nearly 250 miles of distribution line and make other system improvements. The loan includes \$1.2 million for automated metering.

The \$900 million in loans announced today are provided by USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to help electric utilities upgrade, expand, maintain and replace rural America's electric infrastructure. RUS funding will help build nearly 1,500 miles of line and improve more than 1,700 miles of existing line in rural areas. More than \$19 million will finance smart grid technologies. USDA Rural Development also funds energy conservation and renewable energy projects.

For a list of the rural utilities that were selected to receive USDA funding visit <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom> for the complete story.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications 202-720-4623

For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

For more agriculture news go to [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) and click Newsroom on the toolbar.

Also, check out the [USDA Blog](#)



## FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

**AGRICULTURE USA CD # 36.11** – A recent USDA study shows the potential link between the amount of funding for agricultural research and its correlation with future ag productivity growth. Rod Bain goes inside the numbers of this study in this edition of "Agriculture USA".

**CONSUMER TIME CD # 36.11** – Hurricane History Uncovered. Record Growth For Farmers Markets. Avenues To Rebuild The Forest Economy. The Value Of Wild Pollinators In Agriculture. Football Terminology And Food Safety.

**AG UPDATE CD # 36.11** – Ag Exports Steady, Imports Up In Latest Trade Forecasts. The Record Setting Farm Income Report. Potential Ag Impacts From Irene Still Assessed. Ag Research Spending And Productivity Connected. The Rural Water Systems Partnership Grows.

**UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE** – September 6 – Crop Progress (NASS). September 9 – US Agricultural Trade Data Update (ERS); Cash Rents – County Report (NASS). September 12 – Crop Production Report (NASS) and World Agricultural Supply And Demand Estimates (ERS-WAOB); Crop Progress (NASS). **These are USDA reports we know about in advance. The Radio Newslines carries many stories every day that are not listed in this lineup.**

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

Or go to [www.usda.gov](http://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

### Restoring Florida Everglades

A USDA effort in central Florida aims to help Florida farmers and ranchers improve the quality and quantity of water reaching the Everglades.

YouTube: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zdgWuFEyH0&feature=channel\\_video\\_title](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zdgWuFEyH0&feature=channel_video_title)

**A new TV feature is available on the USDA FTP site  
Filename: Vilsack Florida WRP**

#### Download instructions:

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

User name: usdanews

Password: Newscontent1

The new file is in QuickTime Movie (H.264), MPEG 4, MPEG2 and HDV  
Please email [bob.ellison@usda.gov](mailto: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

**THE COLORADO STATE FAIR IS IN ITS 139<sup>TH</sup> YEAR** – Many of the fair activities were broadcasted in the first ever webcast provided by the BARN Brian Allmer Radio Network. **Brian Allmer** (The BARN – Briggsdale, Colorado <http://www.barnmedia.net>) informs us that weather wise it has been a mixed bag in Colorado. “In the southeast part of the state it is dry, dry, dry. We’re suffering through a drought. A lot of people were concerned about the subsoil moisture and wheat yields were in the single digits.” Then the northeastern part of the state the weather has been whacky. Allmer says, “We’ve had some severe from the stand point of tornadoes and heavy winds.” The pounding rainfall which included hail damaged some crops.

Colorado is also getting an influx of livestock from Texas where producers are hoping to sell their cattle and some are coming to get hay to take back for feed and stock up for the winter since it’s dry. There have been weeks of consecutive triple digit heat and brush fires are erupting in parts of the state due to a lack of rain.

**ARKANSAS RESIDENTS LEARN ABOUT AGRITOURISM** – Among the topics was animal agritourism. **Gary Digiuoseppe** (Arkansas Radio Network – Little Rock, Arkansas) says the speakers and seminars touched on wildlife enterprises and establishing a brand. “It was put on by a consortium led by Farm Bureau, the Extension service and other educational institutions and state agencies. About 75 people were in attendance; I talked to one, Randy Motley, who has a pumpkin patch and Christmas tree farm in Little Rock. He says he adds new features every year and says seminars like this one are like gold, they offer information you can’t get anywhere else.” Conference speaker, L.C. Ratchford of Marshall, took over his family’s cattle ranch when his father passed away. In 2004 he decided to diversify and he now has buffalo, swine, emus, llamas, strawberries, blueberries and bee hives. **Digiuoseppe** offered this caution to colleagues, “I heard a lot of paranoia from speakers who felt reporters had agendas and were out to destroy them; one speaker offered ways to avoid difficult questions.”

**THE NEW YORK STATE FAIR IS THE BIG AGRICULTURE EVENT OF LATE** – In a few weeks the All American Dairy Show will go on in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania reports **Tom Cassidy** (Ag Radio Network, Inc. – Barneveld, New York). “The more powerful story however, the affects of Hurricane Irene. Eastern New York, Vermont and New Hampshire have big areas of devastation in the river valleys. Long Island had damage to high value horticulture crops, though grapes and apple crops appear to be mostly unharmed. An undetermined number of dairy cows drowned or were swept away; there are a few reports of entire barns with cattle being washed away in flash floods. These areas were not given warning and were not asked to evacuate.” **Cassidy** tells first hand that small communities were left without access because several roads and bridges were washed out, leaving them stranded. Also, power outages and washed out roads added to the difficulties of dairy farmers that must ship their milk on a daily basis. Interstates were closed as well as state and county roads, making what should be one hour trips into 8 and 9 hour adventures. “Crop losses were limited and mostly isolated to the river valleys which are much narrower here in the Northeast than they are in the Midwest, one advantage to farming hillsides. Officials are still trying to determine the extent of the losses, difficult even several days later as they wait for streams and rivers to subside.”



**FFA MEMBERS HELP FIGHT HUNGER WITH AFRICAN FARMERS IN RWANDA** – Seven collegiate FFA members chosen to participate in the National FFA Organization’s *FFA Global Outreach: Africa (FFA GO: Africa)* program recently returned from the African nation of Rwanda. The FFA says the students spent two weeks helping local farmers fight hunger and poverty through sustainable agriculture

techniques. The group experienced firsthand the reality of food insecurity and agriculture and conservation issues in a sub-Saharan African country where the average annual income is \$1,500 or less.

The program goals were to engage students at a personal level in global issues and challenges of agriculture, food, hunger, poverty and human suffering; provide opportunities for service learning in developing countries; and inspire students to serve and make a positive humanitarian difference in the world through agriculture. "The experience was so directional for me," said Washington State University student **Victoria Marsh**. "It gave me a clear focus on where I want to go and what I want to do. Being able to work with CRS and see the hope they fuel every day in their work pushes me even further to want to work for nonprofits in other parts of Africa."

The students devoted themselves to several activities, from information gathering and conducting baseline farmer interviews to determining the viability of crop yields and gaining a broader understanding of the challenges faced by small-scale farmers and the environmental conflicts that arise from income- and food-insecure families.

"We would sit down with the farmers and ask them very personal questions, like how many months have they gone without eating in the past year and how many sets of clothing do they own," said **Jamie Renier**, Denmark, Wisconsin. "We listed everything they owned and everything they made so that CRS could get a picture of where things are. Then we would input the data on an iPad. The information would be sent wirelessly to CRS partners who would track the farmers' progress during the five-year program."

"What surprised me the most about this experience is that the farmers we worked with weren't asking us to give them money or food," said **Thomas Griffin** from Culver, Oregon. "When we traveled to different parts of Rwanda, farmers wanted us to advocate for them back in the United States. I'm hopeful that through this experience I can make an impact advocating for their issues and fight for a way to add value to their crops."

\*\*\*\*\*

**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



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

---

*USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice), or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).*