



Letter No. 3621
Friday, June 17, 2011
Creative Media & Broadcast Center
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BROADCASTERS LETTER

#3621

Friday, June 17, 2011

(June 16)

STATEMENT FROM AGRICULTURE SECRETARY TOM VILSACK ON VOTES TO UNDERMINE AMERICA'S RENEWABLE ENERGY INDUSTRY

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack issued the following statement on votes to undermine America's renewable energy industry:

"President Obama has outlined a plan to reduce our oil imports by one-third by 2025. Biofuels play a central role in this plan, which is why this administration continues to support and invest in the development of these important, domestically produced fuels.

The Administration supports efforts currently underway in the Senate to reform and modernize tax incentives and other programs that support biofuels. However, today's amendments are not reforms and are ill advised. They could lead to job loss and pull the rug out from under industry, which will lead to less choice for consumers and greater dependence on foreign oil.

"We need reforms and a smarter biofuels program, but simply cutting off support for the industry isn't the right approach. Therefore, we oppose a straight repeal of the Volumetric Ethanol Excise Tax Credit (VEETC) and efforts to block biofuels infrastructure programs."

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15535>

<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15536>

NATION'S PRIMARY NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM REACHES HIGHEST ACCURACY RATE IN HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM

Improved administration results in \$356 million reduction in incorrect payments. The Department of Agriculture in cooperation with state partners has improved payment accuracy and program integrity in the nation's largest nutrition assistance program. Selected states have been commended for their excellence in administering the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Fiscal Year (FY) 2010. The national average level of program payment accuracy for FY 2010 is (96.19 percent), the fourth consecutive year the program has achieved a historically high rate. The accuracy rate for Fiscal Year 2010 is at an all time high and underscores the Administration's ongoing effort to make government more accountable to the American people.

Working in collaboration with USDA, state agencies continue to enhance SNAP program integrity even as demand has increased in response to national economic conditions. This year, the USDA is investing in process improvement efforts that examine local office processes and identify and implement efficiencies. The department is also interested in funding projects that use technology to achieve procedural changes, such as document imaging, telephone interviews or web-based access to case status information. Today's announcement proves that states' efforts to ensure program integrity and improve their process for administering SNAP are working.

SNAP benefits are essential to the nutrition and well-being of one in seven people in our nation and also provide an economic stimulus that strengthens communities. Research shows that every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates as much as \$9.00 in economic activity. SNAP benefits move quickly into local economies, with 97 percent of SNAP benefits redeemed within a month. It is estimated that at least 8,900 full-time equivalent jobs are created from \$1 billion of SNAP benefits.

The USDA provides monetary incentives to the seven states with the best payment accuracy rates and the three states with the most improved payment accuracy, while \$6 million is awarded among the four states with the lowest negative error rates and the most improve negative error rates. For the second straight year, states overall have improved their negative error rates (a measure of denials, terminations, and suspensions). Two states, Texas and Illinois, are being recognized for both best payment accuracy rates and most improved accuracy rates. For a list of the states recognized for their performance rates got to <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>.

Contact: 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=15534>

<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15533>

<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15532>

(June 15)

FINALISTS ANNOUNCED IN RECIPES FOR HEALTHY KIDS COMPETITION

Student chefs are poised to compete for the grand prize in First Lady Michelle Obama's Recipes for Healthy Kids national cook-off competition. The finalists are part of a national contest promoting healthy eating among children. The first place recipes from categories of Whole Grains, Dark Green and Orange Vegetables, and Dry Beans and Peas will compete for the Grand Prize at a national cook-off event during the American Culinary Federation National Convention in Dallas, Texas, July 25. "Creating and consuming nutritious meals provides a foundation for healthy lives among America's children," says Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

The USDA and the First Lady launched the Recipes for Healthy Kids competition last September, challenging teams of school nutrition professionals, chefs, students, and community members to develop creative, nutritious, and kid-approved recipes that schools can easily incorporate into National School Lunch Program menus. The contest is a component of the First Lady's broader *Let's Move!* initiative that also includes Chefs Move to Schools, which encourages chefs to work with schools in their communities.

For a list of the first, second, and runner-up winning recipes and schools for each category go to <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>. Meantime, the public voted for their favorite selection in the Popular Choice Award. The honoree for the Popular Choice Award, *Tasty Tots* from Bellingham Memorial Middle School Bellingham, Mass., will receive \$1,500.

To recognize and share the culinary creativity nationwide, the top ten recipes in each category will be published in a Recipes for Healthy Kids Cookbook.

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623
For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

USDA ANNOUNCES PROJECTS PROVIDING INCREASED RENEWABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the establishment of four additional Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) project areas to promote the cultivation of crops that can be processed into renewable energy. Acreage in Arkansas, Missouri, Ohio and Pennsylvania will be designated to grow giant miscanthus, a sterile hybrid warm-season grass that can be converted into energy to be used for heat, power, liquid biofuels, and bio-based products. "Renewable, home-grown, clean energy from American producers is vital to our country's energy future because it reduces our reliance on foreign oil and creates good-paying production jobs that cannot be exported," says Vilsack.

It is estimated that each of the four project areas and conversion facilities would earn about \$50 million per year. According to industry estimates, a large number of biorefinery, agriculture and support jobs will be created in each area. The estimates are: Ashtabula, Ohio - 1,210 jobs added; Paragould, Ark. - 750 jobs added; Aurora, Mo. - 960 jobs added; and Columbia, Mo. - 980 jobs added. These numbers are estimated based on an economic impact study that measures the amount of jobs the projects will generate at full production levels. There is also the possibility of establishing "green hubs" in the project areas leading to other green industries, including green industrial parks.

Yields for biomass from giant miscanthus are expected to range between 10 and 12 tons of dry matter per acre and can be as high as 15 tons per acre. BCAP project areas provide financial incentives to eligible agriculture producers to establish dedicated energy crops that will be used for production of heat, power, liquid biofuels or bio-based products. A project area must have specific boundaries that are approved by the Secretary of Agriculture. For a list of project areas announced go to <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

Contact: 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=15526>
<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15525>
<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15524>

(June 14)

WHAT IS NEEDED TO MOVE DOHA FORWARD

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack was asked if reduction of U.S. and European Union ag subsidies would encourage developing nations to push global trade negotiations to completion.

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15516>

MOVE TO CUT ETHANOL SUBSIDIES IMMEDIATELY FAILS TO GET A SENATE VOTE

Senate proponents of an amendment that would immediately slash ethanol subsidies have failed to get enough support to bring it up for a vote. Senators Amy Klobucher, Tom Coburn, John Thune, John Hoeven and Dianne Feinstein weigh in.

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15518>

WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS IN GROWING FIRE SEASON

The U.S. Forest Service should be sufficiently prepared to tackle wildfires this season even with the severe fire season underway. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell comments.

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15508>

FIRE SEASON COULD GET EVEN WORSE

The already bad situation could become more devastating. You can probably expect to hear about even more trouble with wildfires in the months to come, and not just in Arizona and Texas says USDA meteorologist Brad Rippey.

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15512>

(June 13)

DEVASTATING MISSOURI RIVER FLOODING DAMAGE

A USDA official assesses current and anticipated damage to farmland from the Missouri River flooding. National Food & Agriculture Council Executive Director John Berge talks about the level of potential damage to crop land.

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15501>
<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15502>

AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS: ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES FEDERAL COUNCIL DEDICATED TO PROMOTING OUTDOOR RECREATION

The Obama White House has created the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR). It coordinates and promotes outdoor recreation opportunities on public lands in partnership with federal, state, and tribal agencies. As part of President Obama's America's Great Outdoors Initiative, the Department of the Interior, Department of Agriculture, Department of the Army, Department of Commerce, and the White House Council on Environmental Quality signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the FICOR.

The outdoor industry is contributing an estimated \$730 billion to the U.S. economy, outdoor recreation is a vital part of growing our nation's economy and creating jobs," says Interior Secretary Ken Salazar. "America's Great Outdoors initiative provides a great opportunity for Americans to reconnect with our country's amazing forests and grasslands," adds Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Together with the rest of the Obama administration, USDA is working to revitalize our rural economies and communities, many of which neighbor the 193 million acres of forests and grasslands managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The Forest Service offers a huge array of programs to help families and individuals connect with their natural environment and learn about how to conserve our vital natural resources. AGO is also important in our efforts to offset childhood obesity through outdoor activities and healthier lifestyles, led by the [Let's Move! Outside](#) campaign launched by First Lady Michelle Obama."

For details on the purpose of the FICOR got to is to: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>. The new council will work closely with the existing Federal Advisory Committee Act bodies and will work to strengthen the

relationship between health and the outdoors through the First Lady's *Let's Move!* initiative and the President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition.

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USDA ANNOUNCES NEW RECREATIONAL, FISHING AND HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES IN RURAL AREAS

The U.S. of Agriculture is enrolling 2.8 Million acres for the 41st Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Additionally, 8 additional states and one tribe have been approved for the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP). The selections preserve and enhance environmentally sensitive lands while providing payments to property owners. It also encourages private landowners to provide public access to their lands for wildlife-dependant recreational opportunities, including fishing and hunting. "USDA is committed to enhancing the great conservation legacy of our nation's hunters and anglers to benefit current and future generations," says Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

Under CRP, farmers and ranchers plant grasses and trees in crop fields and along streams or rivers. The plantings reduce soil and prevent nutrients washing into waterways, reduce soil erosion that may otherwise contribute to poor air and water quality, and provide valuable habitat for wildlife. The average rental rate per acre for this sign-up is about \$48.

The VPA-HIP program expands existing efforts or develops new initiatives to encourage owners and operators of privately held farm, ranch and forest land to voluntarily provide public access for the enjoyment of wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting or fishing, in exchange for financial incentives or other assistance under programs implemented by state or tribal governments. VPA-HIP is a competitive grants program that is only available to state and tribal governments. Funding may be used to expand existing public access programs, create new public access programs or provide incentives to improve wildlife habitat on enrolled lands.

Up to \$50 million is authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill through VPA-HIP through fiscal year 2012. State and tribal grant recipients use the federal funding to provide additional landowner incentives or assistance in order to increase the number of acres available for public access.

To learn more about CRP, visit your FSA county office or online at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp. For more information on VPA-HIP, visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/vpa>.

Contact: Isabel Benemelis (202) 720-7809
For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

NEW RESEARCH FACILITY WILL HELP SAFEGUARD THE SUPPLY OF GLOBAL WHEAT CROPS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) broke ground on a state-of-the-art greenhouse that will play a key role in helping scientists combat a growing global disease threat to the world's wheat and barley supplies. The 2,880-square-foot greenhouse will be operated by scientists from the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), USDA's principal intramural scientific research agency.

"Historically, stem rust has been the most destructive disease of wheat and barley, but in recent decades, scientists have been able to breed resistance to this disease into new varieties of wheat," says ARS Administrator Edward B. Knipling. "Since 1999, the world has faced a new and unprecedented threat from a stem rust called Ug99. More than 80 percent of our global wheat crop is vulnerable to Ug99.

This new greenhouse puts another U.S. research facility on the front lines to battle Ug99 and help secure global food security."

"By expanding our commitment to research that targets crop diseases like Ug99, we can strengthen food security and reduce hunger and poverty in countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan," says Robert Bertram, head of USAID's Office of Agriculture, Research and Technology. "This research concurrently helps U.S. scientists protect America's wheat crops."

The greenhouse will increase controlled growing space at ARS' Cereal Disease Laboratory (CDL) on the University of Minnesota campus in St. Paul, and boost the laboratory's analytic capacity five-fold. The construction of the greenhouse is being funded through a \$4.5 million cooperative agreement between USAID and USDA through Feed the Future, the U.S. government's global hunger and food security initiative. Feed the Future is a Presidential Initiative to improve agricultural productivity, promote market development, facilitate trade expansion, invest in global innovation and research, promote equitable rural economic growth, and address child malnutrition in 20 food-insecure countries.

For more information, see www.feedthefuture.gov or www.ars.usda.gov/Ug99/.

Contact: ARS Public Affairs (301) 504-1654

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

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15500>

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY ANNOUNCES GOAL FOR SMART GRID INVESTMENTS AND FUNDING TO IMPROVE ELECTRIC SERVICES TO CUSTOMERS IN 10 STATES

The United States Department of Agriculture's initiative aims to modernize the nation's electric grid, including the USDA's goal to invest \$250 million in smart grid equipment deployment in rural America over the next 12 months. "This is one more step in our effort to modernize rural America's electric grid," says Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Smart grid technologies give consumers greater control over their electric costs and help utilities efficiently manage power generation and delivery. Through the use of modern technology we can improve the efficiency of distribution, increase reliability, and win the future through innovation."

Smart grid technologies give consumers more control over their electric costs and help utilities better manage the electric grid to improve operational efficiency. Smart grid investments make it possible to increase the use of renewable energy by balancing intermittent sources of power – like wind and solar – with other fuels. A smart grid also enables greater use of demand side management tools to save energy.

With funding from USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service (RUS), rural electric cooperatives are leading the way in smart grid deployments. Last year, RUS approved \$7.1 billion in loans for a broad range of rural electric grid modernization, including \$152 million in loans for smart meters. Smart grid infrastructure includes metering, substation automation, computer applications to monitor and control systems and processes, two-way communications, geospatial information systems, and additional system. For a full listing of rural utilities that were selected to receive the USDA funding go to <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>.

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

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

Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=15498>

For more agriculture news go to www.usda.gov and click Newsroom on the toolbar.

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



FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 25.11 – A usually quiet time in the USDA Crop Report cycle, June 2011's reports turned out to be eventful thanks to extreme weather, and its impact on crop production. Rod Bain looks at some of the numbers and what they might mean in this edition of "Agriculture USA".

CONSUMER TIME CD # 25.11 – The G20 And Addressing Food Security. Celebrating The International Year Of Forests. The Cost Of Raising That New Baby Is Going Up. Rural Jobs Are Tied To Rural Homes. Put Some Fruit On The Grill This Summer.

AG UPDATE CD # 25.11 – President Creates New Rural Council. Programs May Jumpstart Environmental Markets. Prices Continue Up In New Crop Forecasts. County Committee Nomination Process Underway. Conservation Programs And Outdoor Recreation Benefit.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – June 21 – Crop Weather (WAOB). June 23 – Cherry Production (NASS). June 24 – Quarterly Hogs And Pigs (NASS). June 27 – Crop Progress Report (NASS). **These are USDA reports we know about in advance. The Radio Newsline carries many stories every day that are not listed in this lineup.**

Access the Radio Newsline at 202-720-6776, 5PM ET or go to www.usda.gov, click on Newsroom at top of page, scroll down on right side of page to Radio and TV.

Then click on Daily Radio News Service or Weekly Radio Feature Service.

Questions on USDA Radio's Features, fax name, station, and address to 202-690-2165.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

ACTUALITIES – Secretary Vilsack Comments On Trade, Biofuels, Food Security

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack addressed the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on a variety of issues including the upcoming G-20 Summit, DOHA, biofuels and food security.

New actualities are available on the USDA FTP site

Download instructions:

Filename: vilsack press club

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

User name: usdanews

Password: Newscontent1

Please email bob.ellison@usda.gov if you have problems or suggestions.

Also, use this free ftp client if you have problems.

<http://filezilla-project.org/download.php?type+client>

OFF MIKE

NEW PROGRAMMING AT THE BARN – The new 30 minute radio program is called "CO COrn Presents: Inside the BARN w/Brian Allmer." **Brian Allmer** (The BARN – Briggsdale, Colorado www.BarnMedia.net) says you can hear it on AM 1310 KFKA. "The focus is on ag news/markets/interviews/events in Colorado and the region." **Allmer** also has a new side gig and one that's quite honorable. "I have been hired to be the "Official Voice" of all the livestock shows @ the 2011 Colorado State Fair this August in Pueblo."

THE WESTERN DAIRY ASSOCIATION CELEBRATES 75 YEARS – Did you know that local farmers in three western states produce 3.23 billion pounds of fresh milk annually? June is Dairy Month and the Western Dairy Association (WDA) has launched a year-long effort to recognize the contributions made to consumers by dairy farm families in Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana. Aside from contributing to the fresh food supply and state and local economies, the tri-state area dairy farmers have worked together for 75 years through the WDA and its predecessor organizations to advance nutrition education and teach consumers about the nutrient-rich values of milk and dairy products in a healthy, fit lifestyle. **Cindy Haren**, chief executive officer of the WDA says, "Seventy-five years is a major milestone. Since 1936, this region's dairy farmers have invested in and supported promotional programs that have directly benefited consumers. This is way more than promoting products, it's about enriching lives."

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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