



Letter No. 3647
Friday, January 6, 2012
Creative Media & Broadcast Center
202-720-7079

BROADCASTERS LETTER

#3647

Friday, January 6, 2012

(January 6)

THE AGRICULTURE ECONOMY IS ONE REASON WHY THE NATION'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HAS FALLEN

The economic success of the nation's farmers over the last year is being given as one reason for the better jobs situation. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack gives some of the highlights of the December jobs report. The Secretary says that the rural unemployment rate is dropping faster than in the rest of the nation.

For Radio Story: [Unemployment Rate Falls and the Ag. Economy Is One Reason](#)
[ACTUALITY: Secretary Vilsack Outlines New Job Report Numbers](#)
[ACTUALITY: Rural Jobless Rate Dropping Faster Than Rest of Nation](#)

WILL AGRICULTURAL LAND VALUES SOAR AGAIN IN 2012?

After last year's big increase in the value of the nation's farmland, what will those values look like in 2012?

For Radio Story: [Will Agricultural Land Values Soar Again In 2012?](#)

EXPECT TO SPEND MORE MONEY AT THE GROCER THIS YEAR WITH EXPECTED PRICE HIKES ON FOOD

Food prices went up at a very high rate last year, so what is the outlook for this year?

For Radio Story: [More Food Price Hikes Coming This Year](#)

(January 5)

OPPORTUNITY TO ADVISE LAND MANAGEMENT PLANNING

[Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack](#) is calling for nominations to serve on a newly-formed advisory committee that will guide better management of our national forests and grasslands. The National Advisory Committee for Implementation of the National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule will advise and give recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service.

"Input from the public is critical to successful land management planning," said Vilsack. "I'm forming this committee to help us implement planning that conserves our forests and grasslands for the benefit of water, wildlife, recreation and the economic vitality of our rural communities."

The committee will provide advice and recommendations on issues such as planning rule directives for implementation, best practices, effective monitoring practices and ongoing collaboration efforts. It will meet three to four times a year, or as often as necessary to complete its work. Members of the committee do not receive compensation, but may be reimbursed for travel expenses. The announcement of this committee builds on the Agency's efforts to develop a new Land Management Planning Rule for the National Forest System.

"We will keep the collaborative momentum going as we transition to implementing a new rule," said U.S. Forest Service [Chief Tom Tidwell](#). "Forming this committee demonstrates the same commitment to public involvement that has guided us throughout the development of this crucial new rule."

The committee will be comprised of up to 21 members with diverse backgrounds, who represent the full range of public interests in management of the National Forest System lands and who represent geographically diverse locations and communities. For details of the three categories of interests click [here](#). The 45-day nomination period closes Feb. 21, 2012. Additional details on the committee and the [application form](#) are available at the [U.S. Forest Service](#) website, or by calling 202-205-0830. The call for nominations will be published tomorrow in the Federal Register.

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

FARM PROGRAMS MAY HAVE THEIR FATE DECIDED THIS YEAR

With the farm bill debate and big elections, this year will be a pivotal one for many U.S. farmers and rural residents. USDA's Gary Crawford went to the Department's chief economist Joe Glauber for some answers.

For Radio Story: [Fate of Farm Programs May Be Decided This Year](#)

CONCERNS GROW ABOUT WESTERN MOUNTAIN SNOWPACK

Much of the West has below normal mountain snowpack levels and there's growing concern about available irrigation water later in the year. USDA Meteorologist Brad Rippey says a lack of snowfall this winter so far is creating worries about a lower than normal Western mountain snowpack.

For Radio Story: [Concerns Grow About Western Mountain Snowpack](#)
[ACTUALITY: On Growing Concerns of Western Mountain Snowpack](#)

MINERAL MANAGEMENT IMPORTANT IN CATTLE FEEDING PROGRAMS

With more diets including byproducts, beef producers should keep better tabs on minerals for nutrition purposes. Ron Lemenager of Purdue University Extension says cattle producers moving towards a diet with more byproducts for their herds must increase their management of minerals for their livestock's nutrition.

For Radio Story: [Mineral Management Important In Cattle Feeding Programs](#)
[ACTUALITY: On Cattle Diets And Mineral Deficiencies](#)

(January 4)

USDA CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANT PRE-PROPOSALS JANUARY 31 DEADLINE APPROACHING

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack reminds applicants that January 31, 2012, is the last day to submit project pre-proposals for fiscal year 2012 Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Pre-proposals support large-scale demonstration projects that test and prove original approaches to conserving America's private lands.

"These conservation grants continue to generate exciting new ideas that help farmers and ranchers run sustainable and profitable operations and address high-priority natural resource concerns," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "We are proud to encourage the advancement of innovative conservation methods that will benefit producers, the public and the economy for years to come."

For a list of this year's CIG projects focus on nutrient management, energy conservation, soil health, wildlife and CIG projects assessment click [here](#). Results of successful projects will be included in NRCS policy, technical manuals, guides and references.

There are two types of eligibility for CIG – applicant eligibility and project eligibility. For applicant eligibility, an applicant must be located in one of the following areas: the 50 States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Also, an applicant must be one of the following: a federally recognized Indian Tribe; a State or local government; a non-governmental organization; or a private individual.

For project eligibility, the proposed project or activity must encompass the development and assessment, evaluation and implementation of either of the following: conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems, including market-based systems; or promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures or activities. Landowners must meet [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) eligibility requirements defined in [16 U.S.C. Section 3839aa-1](#).

CIG funds will be awarded through a competitive grants process. At least 50 percent of the total cost of CIG projects must come from non-Federal matching funds, including cash and in-kind contributions provided by the grant recipient.

To apply electronically, visit <http://www.grants.gov/> or contact a local NRCS office. To view the complete Announcement of Program Funding, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/>. For more information about NRCS conservation programs, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov> or visit your local USDA service center.

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

MANAGING THOSE HOLIDAY BILLS

What can you do if those holiday shopping bills come back to haunt you this month every year? USDA Radio's Gary Crawford goes on a mission to find out.

For Radio Story: [Handling Those Holiday Bills](#)

(January 3)

A FEW NEW QUESTIONS WILL SHOW UP IN UPCOMING AG CENSUS

Some new questions are being included in the 2012 Census of Agriculture surveys which producers will receive this time next year. Joe Prusacki of National Agricultural Statistics Service offers the details.

For Radio Story: [A Few New Questions Will Show Up In Upcoming Census of Ag](#)

2012 BEGINS WITH SPECULATION ABOUT SPRING PLANTINGS

We are only three days into the 2012 new year and folks are already speculating on what farmers may plant this spring. USDA chief economist Joe Glauber offers an explanation.

For Radio Story: [2012 Begins With Speculation About Spring Plantings](#)

NOTABLE AGRICULTURE STORIES of 2011

There are a number of agricultural stories among the top ten last year. Extension officer in Ohio has come up with his list which centers on some happenings in his state. Mark Mechling a university extension officer in Ohio has come up with his list which centers on some happenings in his state. Mechling also shares some of the top ten agricultural stories in his state, including ongoing issues connected to record rainfall and a new weed that surfaced last year which is wreaking havoc on Ohio soybean farmers.

For Radio Story: [Noted 2011 Agriculture Stories](#)
[ACTUALITY: Dealing With Mega Rain And An Aggressive New Weed](#)

(December 28)

WINNERS OF THE MYPLATE FRUITS AND VEGGIES VIDEO CHALLENGE ANNOUNCED

Dozens of contestants demonstrated innovative ways to "make half your plate fruits and vegetables" with skits, songs, and dance submitted via video to USDA. Each video provided a unique point of view to inspire adults and children to eat healthier and illustrated that fruits and vegetables can be a part of any household budget. Schools, community groups, and families shared insightful, practical tips to include fruits and vegetables in every meal and snack. In addition to the winning submissions, USDA selected five videos for honorable mention. All of these videos capture the spirit of the Fruits and Veggies Challenge and are featured on [ChooseMyPlate.gov](#) a long way toward reversing the overweight and obesity epidemic, not only for children but for all Americans."

In September, USDA encouraged individuals and teams to submit inspiring and instructive videos that provide innovative, easy, and practical tips on how to "make half your plate fruits and vegetables." Each award winning video features one easy to apply tip and directs viewers to visit ChooseMyPlate.gov. USDA congratulates the schools, families, communities and teams who created the 1st, 2nd, and Popular Choice winning videos. USDA received 142 submissions in three categories: Tips for Kids; Tips When Eating at Home; and Tips When Eating Away from Home. The Challenge awards \$9,000 in prize money to 1st, 2nd, and Popular Vote winners.

Winning submissions will be available on the ChooseMyPlate.gov website and featured on partner websites. The MyPlate Fruits and Veggies Video Challenge was sponsored by the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. For more details on the video challenge, go to ChooseMyPlate.gov or fruitsandveggies.challenge.gov.

Announcement of the winners comes as USDA highlights the second in a series of themed [consumer messages](#) supporting the MyPlate icon – *Enjoy Your Food, But Eat Less* – that USDA is promoting the next three months in conjunction with more than 5,000 organizations participating in the MyPlate [Nutrition Communicators Network](#).

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

(December 22)

NEW ONLINE NUTRITION SUPERTRACKER HELPS TO KEEP THOSE HEALTHY NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

The [SuperTracker](#) is a new web tool designed to help Americans make healthy food and physical activity choices. The tracker is a comprehensive, state-of-the-art resource available at ChooseMyPlate.gov designed to assist individuals as they make changes in their life to reduce their risk of chronic disease and maintain a healthy weight. Release of this new web tool comes as USDA highlights the second in a series of themed [consumer messages](#) supporting the MyPlate icon – *Enjoy Your Food, But Eat Less* – that USDA is promoting the next three months in conjunction with more than 5,000 organizations participating in the MyPlate [Nutrition Communicators Network](#).

"This easy-to-use website will help Americans at all stages of life improve their overall health and well-being as they input dietary and physical activity choices into the tool. During the holiday season we are surrounded by good food and this is a perfect time to *Enjoy Your Food, But Eat Less*," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

The [SuperTracker](#) is designed to assist individuals as they make changes in their life to reduce their risk of chronic disease and maintain a healthy weight and can be accessed for free at anytime. For details of what the tracker offers consumers click [here](#).

The [SuperTracker](#) complements First Lady Michelle Obama's [Let's Move!](#) initiative and provides practical information to help individuals, health professionals, nutrition educators, and consumers build healthier diets. As Americans are experiencing epidemic rates of overweight and obesity, the online resources and tools available at ChooseMyPlate.gov can empower people to make healthier food and physical activity choices for themselves, their families, and their children.

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

(December 15)

NEW RISK MANAGEMENT TOOL TO HELP PRODUCERS ACHIEVE GAP CERTIFICATION

The USDA along with leaders from food and agriculture organizations introduced a free online tool to help American producers of all sizes achieve Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) harmonized standards and certification. This will help to further expand economic opportunities for U.S. agriculture. The USDA's GAP audit verification program focuses on best agricultural practices to verify that farms are producing, and packers are handling and storing, fruits and vegetables in the safest manner possible to minimize food safety hazards. The free online tool—developed by FamilyFarmed.org with funding from USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA)—helps farmers design a customized manual to meet GAP harmonized standards and certification requirements, including USDA GAP standards, and mitigate business risks by answering just a few questions. The online tool, part of FamilyFarmed.org's On-Farm Food Safety Project, is the first of its kind and was developed by a broad coalition of farm and produce industry partners. It is available at www.onfarmfoodsafety.org.

To generate a food safety plan using the tool, the user must answer a series of questions on topics including worker health and hygiene, agricultural water, previous land use, soil amendments and manure, animals and pest control, packinghouse activities, product transportation, agricultural chemicals, and field harvesting. In addition to helping farmers create a food safety plan, the tool offers farmers a full-set of record keeping templates to document their food safety efforts as well as useful food safety resources.

Once users have completed their farm's food safety plan and compiled necessary documentation, they have the capacity to apply for GAP food safety certification, a process asked for by many larger buyers. Large buyers including Compass Group, SYSCO, and Chipotle Mexican Grill supported the project financially and with technical assistance. Groups that participated in the development and review of the tool include: Chipotle Mexican Grill, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, Compass Group, Earthbound Farm, Farm Aid, FDA, NSF Agriculture, Produce Marketing Association, SYSCO, The Organic Center, Western Growers, Wallace Center at Winrock International, Wild Farm Alliance, University of California at Davis, United Fresh Produce Association, and USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

"USDA believes that a strong farm safety net—including effective, market-based risk solutions for producers of all variety and size—is crucial to sustain the vitality of American agriculture," said Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan. "Effectively managing risk is important to all producers, and having an acceptable food safety program is in the best interest of consumers, buyers, and the farmers themselves. USDA is proud to have worked with private, public and non-profit partners to introduce this free tool to farmers seeking to gain certification as a Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) producer."

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-3088

For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

EXPANDING WINTERS FARMERS MARKETS

For those looking for fresh locally grown foods during the cold fall and winter months, you're in luck there are now more than 1,200 locations to visit nationwide. The updated National Farmers Market Directory, which began in 2010, concludes the number of winter markets has increased 38% from 886 to 1,225. These winter markets also account for nearly 17% of the nation's 7,222 operating farmers markets.

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan said, "Consumers are looking for more ways to buy locally grown food throughout the year. Through winter markets, American farmers are able to meet this need and bring in additional income to support their families and businesses."

Farmers markets operating at least once between November and March are considered winter farmers markets. For a list of the top 10 states for these markets click [here](#).

The expanded adoption of hoop house technology, which has enabled many smaller growers to extend their production seasons at low cost, has been a contributing factor to the growth of winter farmers

markets. Hoop houses have allowed growers to produce locally-grown products for longer time periods and in colder climates.

Contact: Gwen Sparks (202) 260-8210 or gwen.sparks@ams.usda.gov
For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

NEW FARM FOOD SAFETY TOOL FOR FARMERS

Farmers who want to better ensure the safety of their products now have a new free online tool that could help. Jim Slama with FamilyFarmed.org describes the new farm food safety tool.

For Radio Story: [New Farm Food Safety Tool](#)
[ACTUALITY: A Description Of The New Food Safety Tool For Farmers](#)

USDA TO KEEP STATS REPORTINGS

If you depend on USDA reports on things like farm numbers or commodities like cattle, sheep, flowers and many others, you will continue to get those reports for the next year.

For Radio Story: [USDA Won't Cancel Statistical Reports After All](#)

For more agriculture news visit USDA.gov and click Newsroom on the toolbar.



In Oregon, beaver dams are being used to restore habitat **(FS)**
Protecting Natural Resources Impacted by Tourism in Chile **(FS)**
Agricultural Trade Missions Create Opportunities for U.S. Businesses **(FAS)**
Social Media Moments #2 **(OC)**
Commodity Export/Import Data Just a Mouse Click Away **(AMS)**
World Vet Year **(APHIS)**
DOT Tiger Program **(OC)**
Agricultural advisors are helping to improve Afghan processes and procedures for harvesting and juicing pomegranates, and helping improve Afghanistan's overall agricultural sector. **(FFAS)**
Congressional Rhetoric Runs into Reality on 'Dust Rule' **(OC)**
Science Tuesday: New *Natural Inquirer* World's Forest Edition **(REE)**
Brazilian beetles released in Hawaii **(FS)**
USDA Rural Development Invests \$1.4 Million in Maine School through Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants **(RD)**
Midwest Schools Find Benefits in Serving Local Foods **(FNS)**
Goats, Turtles and WHIP Restore Rare Natural Area **(NRCS)**

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

(Feature Line-Up Subject To Change Prior to Update On January 10)

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 02.12 – As the war in Iraq ends, many at USDA are reflecting on things they did to help bring about positive change in the lives of the Iraqi people. In this edition of Agriculture USA Susan Carter profiles two people who were a part of bringing about that change.

CONSUMER TIME CD # 02.12 – How Not To Start A New Year's Exercise Program. How Not To Keep Your New Years Weight Loss Resolution. Distance Learning Helps Improve Rural Education And Health Care. Citizen Scientists Help Track Invasive Plant Species. Keeping Toxic Substances Away From Pets.

AG UPDATE CD # 02.12 – What's Next After Ten Years Of Trying For A World Trade Agreement? Never Too Early To Think About The Next Census Of Agriculture. Using Conservation Easements In Land Planning. Wheat Straw May Supplement Low Hay Quality. Fingerprinting Fugitive Dust CSI Style.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – January 10 – Crop Weather Bulletin (WAOB). January 12 – USDA Crop Production Reports (NASS) and World Agricultural Supply And Demand Estimates (ERS – WAOB). January 13 – Oil Crops, Rice, and Cotton Outlooks (ERS – WAOB). January 16 – NO NEWSLINE (Martin Luther King Jr. Federal Holiday).

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AGRICULTURE USA CD # 52.11 – One of the winners of this year's Google Science Fair conducted research that affects the safeness of food. In this edition of Agriculture USA, Susan Carter spoke with the winner of the 13-14 age category about her winning project.

CONSUMER TIME CD # 52.11 – Christmas Trees Have New Jobs After The Holidays, Fuel Up To Play Sixty Two Years Later, Making Holiday Parties Fun And Safe, Fee Waivers To Encourage Public Lands Recreation, A Rave About Radishes

AG UPDATE CD # 52.11 – New Transportation Projects And Rural America Job Creation. Russia Receives A WTO Invitation. Cattle Producers Have Tough Decisions To Make These Days. New Nutrient Management Standards For Farmers. Saying Good Riddance...We Mean Goodbye To An Old Radio Friend.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE –December 27 – Crop Weather (WAOB); December 30 – Agricultural Prices Report (NASS) January 2 – NO NEWSLINE (New Year's Day Federal Observation).

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AGRICULTURE USA CD # 51.11 – The 2011 Ms America has set a precedent by introducing a new platform ... the importance of food and agriculture in our well being and way of life. Rod Bain talks with Teresa Scanlan about her year reign and opportunities to express her platform in this edition of "Agriculture USA".

CONSUMER TIME CD # 51.11 – Miss America Talks About Food And Agriculture. Future Weather Patterns Like A Roller Coaster Ride. Some Christmas Tree Info For Next Year. Making Holiday Parties Fun And Safe. Strange Aircraft Given Access To US Air Space.

AG UPDATE CD # 51.11 – Never Too Early To Think About Next Census Of Agriculture. Climate Change And Weather Predictability For Farmers. Mixed Bag In Winter Weather Outlook. Fingerprinting Fugitive Dust CSI Style. Troubling Times For The Christmas Tree Industry.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE –December 20 – Crop Weather (WAOB); December 23 – Quarterly Hogs And Pigs Report (NASS). December 26 – NO NEWSLINE (Christmas Day Federal Day Observation).

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

Conservation Programs Present and Future

Conservation programs are the backbone of USDA's efforts to address environmental concerns. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Chief Dave White talks about the importance of these programs and their role in solving future challenges.

YouTube: [USDA on YouTube: Conservation Programs Present and Future](#)

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Normal Food Price Inflation For 2012

FTP Download instructions:

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

User name: usdanews

Password: Newscontent1

Filename: 2012 food prices

The new file is in QuickTime Movie (H.264), MPEG 4, MPEG2 and HDV

YouTube: [USDA on YouTube: Normal Food Price Inflation for 2012](#)

Video Podcast: [USDA Video Podcast: Normal Food Price Inflation for 2012](#)

RSS feed: [USDA RSS Fed: Normal Food Price Inflation for 2012](#)

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Testing Meals for U.S. Combat Troops

FTP Download instructions:

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

User name: usdanews

Password: Newscontent1

Filename: MRE Feature

The new file is in QuickTime Movie (H.264), MPEG 4, MPEG2 and HDV.

YouTube: [USDA on YouTube: Testing Meals for U.S. Combat Troops](#)
Video Podcast: [USDA Video Podcast: Testing Meals for U.S. Combat Troops](#)
RSS Feed: [USDA RSS Feed: Testing Meals for U.S. Combat Troops](#)

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

HAPPY NEW YEAR – Now that we've said good bye to 2011 and hello to 2012, let's look forward to a fantastic productive year. Please forward "OFF MIKE" items of interest every week. As usual be on the lookout for the weekly Monday requests for input.

KWAT RINGS IN THE NEW YEAR – Following what **Jody Heemstra** (KWAT - Watertown, South Dakota www.kwat950.com) called a gorgeous fall, 2012 at KWAT is already jumping. "We begin the time of winter meetings and farm shows. Before we know it, it'll be planting time again."

STRANGE DECEMBER RAIN – The heavy December rainfall also brought about dense fog to KZ-Country. **Susan Littlefield** (KZEN-FM - Three Eagles Communications Columbus, Nebraska mycentralnebraska.com). **Littlefield** says, "Old timers have said count out 90 days and we will get rain or snow and so far it has matched up within a day or two." Since the New Year the weather has been pretty sunny, breezy and mild for the crops.

PICKING THE GUITAR STRINGS – That's what farm broadcaster **Von Ketelsen** (KWMT - Fort Dodge, Iowa www.kwmt.com) has been doing aside from his agri-reporting duties. "I've been busy performing with my guitar at various rural electric coop annual meetings this season. I've been doing this at events such as county cattlemen's banquets, and other ag gatherings. A highlight for me was opening for the country band, "Highway 101" at a Salute to Agriculture, at the Iowa State Fairgrounds." In the spirit of the holiday season, **Ketelsen** says his station did a promotion called "Bikes for Tykes", where bicycles were collected for children whose parents can't afford them. The response was very good.

***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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call (800) 795-3272 (voice), or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).*