UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
USDA
Broadcasters Letter
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BROADCASTERS LETTER

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Friday, March 23, 2012

(March 22)

USDA TRADE MISSION TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR U.S. AGRICULTURE IN CHINA

Nearly 40 U.S. companies to form business ties and joint ventures when Acting Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services Michael Scuse leads a U.S. Department of Agriculture trade mission to China March 23-28. U.S. agricultural exports to China have grown more than 80% in the past three years. The USDA trade mission aims to help American businesses strike new deals, strengthen business ties, expand their markets, and support jobs for Americans.

"This is the largest USDA trade mission to date," said Scuse. "China and the United States share a special relationship, and we embrace this opportunity to demonstrate that our U.S. farmers, ranchers, and producers are reliable suppliers of the highest-quality food and agricultural products. At the same time, USDA and our federal partners will continue to aggressively work to expand export opportunities and reduce barriers to trade."

Joining Scuse on the mission are leaders from six state departments of agriculture, including Iowa Agriculture Secretary Bill Northey, Oklahoma Agriculture Secretary Jim Reese and representatives from North Carolina, Illinois, Kansas and South Dakota. In Shanghai, the delegation will be joined by Deputy Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services Darci Vetter and Ambassador Islam Siddiqui, who is the chief agricultural negotiator for the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

Chinese demand for bulk commodities like soybeans and cotton is high, while demand for high-value U.S. products like meat and processed foods continues to grow. Bilateral trade between the United States and China in fiscal year 2011 reached an all-time high of $32.1 billion. U.S. exports to China were $22.8 billion and exports from China to the United States were $9.3 billion. Today, USDA's largest overseas presence is in China. With seven offices in five cities, USDA is well-positioned to support American agriculture and agribusinesses.

A list of companies participating in the China trade mission follows. For more information, visit http://www.fas.usda.gov/icd/ATM/China2012/default.asp.

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

For Radio Story: Historic U.S. Ag Trade Mission to China
ACTUALITY: More Details of the U.S. Ag Trade Mission to China

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THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES NEW FUNDING FOR BIOMASS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

The research is to advance next generation biofuels and renewable energy technologies. This project is part of President Obama's all-out, all-of-the-above strategy for American energy. The White House is allocating up to $35 million over three years to support research and development in advanced biofuels, bioenergy and high-value biobased products. The projects funded through the Biomass Research and Development Initiative (BRDI) – a joint program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Energy Department (DOE) – will help develop economically and environmentally sustainable sources of renewable biomass and increase the availability of renewable fuels and biobased products that can help replace the need for gasoline and diesel in vehicles and diversify our energy portfolio. The announcement to invest in advanced biofuels supports Mr. Obama's blueprint for an economy fueled by homegrown, alternative energy sources designed and produced by American workers. The investments are slated to help cut America's oil imports, develop clean alternative energy technologies, and protect American families and businesses from the ups and downs of the global oil market.

"USDA's partnership with the Department of Energy aims to improve our country's energy security and provide sustainable jobs in communities across the country," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "This funding represents the kind of innovation we need to build American-made, homegrown biofuels and biobased products that will help to break our dependence on foreign oil and move our nation toward a clean energy economy."

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

NEW CHERRY TREE VARIETY HIGHLIGHTS 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF JAPANESE GIFT

The USDA's Agricultural Research Service released a new cherry tree variety named for former First Lady Helen Taft to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Japanese gift of cherry trees that are now a celebrated landmark of the nation's capital. At the Tidal Basin during a ceremony on March 27, 1912, Helen Herron Taft and Viscountess Iwa Chinda, wife of the Japanese ambassador, planted the first two of the cherry trees.

The "Helen Taft" variety is part of a series of flowering cherry tree varieties being developed by the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, DC and named in honor of first ladies. The new variety was created by crossing a Yoshino cherry (Prunus × yedoensis) with a Taiwan cherry tree (*Prunus campanulata*). The Yoshino parent, currently growing at the arboretum, is a clone of a tree originally planted by Chinda.

Growing to as much as 35 feet tall and 35 feet wide over 30 years, "Helen Taft" has large, pale pink single flowers that turn darker in the center as the flowers mature. While most Yoshino flowering trees' blossoms are white or fade to white, the "Helen Taft" flowers retain their pink color.

U.S. National Arboretum Director Colien Hefferan said as beautiful as the ornamental cherry trees are, "unfortunately, cherry trees have a narrow genetic base, especially in this country. That can make them vulnerable to attack by a single insect, disease or environmental stress."

Geneticist Margaret Pooler runs the cherry tree breeding program at the National Arboretum said, "Stronger, well-adapted cherries also require less fertilizer and pesticides, making them even more

functional in the landscape. The arboretum fulfills an important role with its long-term breeding program to improve ornamental cherry trees."

Helen Taft is a new flowering cherry tree joining the cadres of ornamental cherry trees in America.

With 76 different varieties, the U.S. National Arboretum is home to the Washington area's most diverse array of ornamental cherry trees. "Helen Taft" is the second variety in the First Lady series. The initial, a 25-foot-tall, upright tree with dark pink, single, semi-pendulous flowers, was released in 2003 and is named "First Lady."

Historical materials documenting Japan's gift of cherry trees to the city of Washington, D.C., are available in the Special Collections of the National Agricultural Library and online at http://riley.nal.usda.gov/cherrytrees.html.

Contact: Margaret Pool, U.S. national Arboretum (301) 504-5218 Margaret.Pooler@ars.usda.gov
For More Story Info: ARS Newsroom
For Radio Story: New Cherry Tree Variety Named In Honor of a Former First Lady
The Latest Cherry Tree Variety Makes Its Way to Center Stage
ACTUALITY: The Uniqueness of This Year's New Cherry Tree Variety

(March 21)

AG SEC EXPLAINS BENEFITS OF THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT TO RURAL AMERICANS

On the second anniversary of the programs Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack discussed how the Affordable Care Act is building a stronger health system in rural communities and providing better care for farm families and the agricultural community. "No one should have to go without health care because of where they live, and for too long, rural Americans have been getting the short end of the health care stick." said Vilsack. "The Affordable Care Act is helping millions of young people access health care, strengthening Medicare, and training thousands of new doctors to serve rural areas to give middle-class families the health security they deserve."
This Fact Sheet has more about how the Affordable Care Act helps Rural America.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623
For More Story Info: USDA Newsroom
For Radio Story: Health Care Law Is Two Years Old
USDA Continuing To Improve Rural Health Care
ACTUALITY: New Rules Will Help Farm Accident Victims Get Help Faster
ACTUALITY: Less Worry Now About Pre-Existing Conditions

RURAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS TO AVOID DUPLICATION

The Department of Agriculture is attempting to reduce costs and still provide service to clients of its rural development programs. USDA Under Secretary Dallas Tonsager telling a Congressional panel about ways some of its rural development efforts could be consolidated to save money.

For Radio Story: Rural Development Efforts to Avoid Duplication
ACTUALITY: On Additional Rural Development Consolidation Ideas

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SCHOOLS HAVE A CHOICE ABOUT USING SO CALLED "PINK SLIME"

Food companies, restaurants and food stores all have a choice of whether to use the meat filler product now known as pink slime and the Agriculture Secretary says the nation's schools have that choice as well. Food companies, restaurants and food stores all have a choice of whether to use the meat filler product now known as pink slime and the Agriculture Secretary says the nation's schools have that choice as well.

For Radio Story: Schools Have a Choice About Using So Called "Pink Slime"

(March 20)

AG SEC RELEASES ACCOMPLISHMENTS SUPPORTING RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY EFFORTS

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack released a report highlighting the ways in which USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) contributes to U.S. energy independence and helps rural small businesses and farmers become more energy efficient. The Secretary also reminded eligible farmers, ranchers and rural business owners that the deadline to apply for some types of funding this year is approaching.

"The Obama Administration understands that helping our nation become more energy efficient is key to continuing the current economic recovery and reducing our reliance on foreign oil," Vilsack said. "Stable energy costs are a prime factor in an employer's decision to expand a business or hire new workers. That is why USDA has partnered with more than 13,000 of America's farmers, ranchers and rural businesses to improve their bottom line by helping them find energy efficient solutions that will spur economic growth and prosperity in rural America."

The REAP program is part of President Obama's all-of-the-above approach to energy that includes increasing domestic oil and gas production, developing new alternative energy sources, and reducing our reliance on oil through energy efficiencies. To coincide with the report's release, Rural Development state offices across the nation are held events to demonstrate how REAP helps reduce energy use and supports the development of renewable energy sources. During the next several weeks, RD state offices also are continuing to conduct energy stakeholder roundtable meetings to highlight Rural Development programs that help businesses conserve energy. Click here to find out how REAP is making a difference and saving energy in your state.

While applications for REAP guaranteed loans for renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements are being accepted through June 29, 2012, applications for REAP grants and loan/grant combinations must be submitted no later than March 30th. For additional information on how to apply for REAP funding, see Page 2948 of the January 20 Federal Register, http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/SupportDocuments/MN-RBS-REAP-AuditNOFA.pdf, or contact your USDA

Rural Development state office. A list of these offices is available at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/StateOfficeAddresses.html.

Contact: Jay Fletcher (202) 690-0498
For More Story Info: USDA Newsroom
For Radio Story: New Report Outlines Results of Rural Energy for America Program
Deadlines Approaching for R.E.A.P. Program Applications
ACTUALITY: The Application Deadlines for the R.E.A.P. Program
ACTUALITY: Three Strategies for Dealing with Energy Costs
Vilsack Outlines His Focus for Helping Struggling Ethanol Industry

(March 19)

YOU'RE INVITED! "MATCH MAKING" IN THE BIOFUELS VALUE CHAIN AT USDA

The Department of Agriculture will host a "match making day" Friday, March 30th to promote connections between agricultural producers of energy feedstocks (and their related businesses) with biorefiners seeking to produce biofuels for commercial sale and consumption. USDA, Navy, Energy and Federal Aviation Administration officials will also be on hand. "America needs and is developing a reliable, sustainable, fuel supply. If we are able to produce more of it here at home – rather than relying on foreign oil – we'll generate good, middle-class jobs and strengthen our economy in the long run," said Sarah Bittleman, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture. "That is why USDA and the Obama administration are working with our federal partners, states and private industry to pursue an 'all-of-the-above' energy strategy to promote American-produced renewable energy coupled with domestic oil and gas production."

The objectives of this USDA hosted match making session is to improve awareness and increase understanding of the biofuels supply-chain links between those involved in feedstock production and the processors of that feedstock into biofuels. This includes logistical challenges, potential roles of service providers, and potential pitfalls. Federal officials will provide a short profile of each section of the supply chain and representatives from the participating stakeholders will respond with brief presentations that outline their experiences in that respective supply chain sector, barriers encountered and lessons learned. They will outline potential growth and opportunities.

For event registration instructions and information go to USDA Newsroom.

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

RENEWABLE FUELS INDUSTRY COULD BE A BIG USER OF WATER

An agricultural economist says one growing industry may become yet another major competitor for the nation's limited water supply.

For Radio Story: Renewable Fuels Industry Could Be a Big User of Water

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WAYS TO FURTHER REDUCE FOODBORNE ILLNESS

While salmonella in poultry has been reduced, scientists maintain more can be done to further ensure a safe food supply. Dane Bernard, Keystone Foods' food safety and quality expert, talks about one of the best experimental methods to combat salmonella in poultry and how it's awaiting regulatory approval. Bernard says there a need for a cost effective means for enumerating salmonella in poultry. He outlines poultry salmonella detection and prevention processes used at his company's facilities.

For Radio Story: Ways to Further Reduce Foodborne Illness
ACTUALITY: An Effective Poultry Salmonella Intervention Is In the Works
ACTUALITY: Better Ways Needed to Measure Poultry Salmonella Levels
ACTUALITY: A Poultry Salmonella Detection and Prevention Process

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
USDA Blog
-Reaching Out, Every Day in Every Way-

The Latest USDA Blog Posts

USA pavilion at Foodex Japan 2012
USDA Provides One-Stop Information Shop for Ag Exporters (**FAS**)
Science Tuesday: USDA Scientists Offer Solutions to Global Water Issues (**REE**)
Strength testing of glulam beams (**FS**)
Forest Service Information Center in Washington, DC to reach its 250,000 visitor this spring season (**FS**)

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

(Feature Line-Up Subject To Change Prior to Update On March 27)

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 13.12 – Digital cameras and aerial technology are among the ways surveying and land use monitoring for agricultural fields, rangelands, and public lands are improving for researchers studying such changes. Rod Bain takes a look at these advances in this edition of "Agriculture USA".

CONSUMER TIME CD # 13.12 – Health Care Law Beginning To Show Results As Provisions Kick In, Bringing Kids Meals In The Summer Proving A Challenge, New Cherry Tree Highlights 100th Anniversary Of Japanese Gift, In Search Of Eggs, Bunnies, And Baskets, A Spring Time Hair Tonic.

AG UPDATE CD # 13.12 – The Significance Of US Ag Trade Mission To Chian, Crop Insurance And The Next Farm Bill Farm Safety Net, The Growing Importance Of The BRIC Nations, Efforts Science Is Making To Combat Salmonella Threats, A Panoramic View Of Changing Landscapes.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – March 27 – Crop Weather Report (WAOB); March 29 – Agricultural Prices Report (NASS); March 30 – Prospective Plantings Report (NASS), Quarterly Hogs And Pigs Report (NASS); April 2 – 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.

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USDA Radio and TV Programming

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

Risk Management Hearing Highlights Crop Insurance

The U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee focused on the importance of crop insurance to farmers and ranchers during a hearing on Capitol Hill

FTP Download instructions:
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USDA on YouTube: Crop Insurance Hearing

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

COLLEGIATE AGRICULTURE STUDENTS SELECTED FOR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE – The twelve students are headed to Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore May 19–June 1 to study international grain marketing and trade and global agriculture. During the program, they will visit an array of agricultural operations, including grain inspecting facilities, fruit/vegetable production farms, livestock

operations, and open air grain, meat and animal markets. The tours are designed to help the students, all who plan to pursue careers in the industry of agriculture- understand current international trade and cultural issues and gain awareness of how international markets for agricultural products operate.

The selected students are: Daniel Alvey of North Carolina State University, McKenzie Baecker from University of Wisconsin-River Falls, Breanne Brammer of University of Missouri-Columbia, Nellie Hill of Kansas State University, Karl Kearns of Iowa State University, Margery Magill of University of California-Davis, Bethany Markway of Missouri State University, Mathias Peterson of University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Bethany Olson of Iowa State University, Edward Silva of University of California-Davis, Shasta Sowers of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and Sarah Warren of University of California-Davis.

The trip is sponsored by the International Collegiate Agricultural Leadership (I-CAL) Program. I-CAL was developed as a partnership with the U.S. Grains Council and The Grains Foundation. the global marketplace affects American agriculture.

FFA MEMBERS CONNECT WITH LOCAL FARMERS TO WIN OVER $275K IN CHAPTER PRIZES – The FFA Chapter Challenge prize comes from Monsanto where more than 850 FFA chapters in 12 states competed. In the end 201 FFA chapters were awarded. This included the Lawrence County High School FFA Chapter in Moulton, Alabama which took the grand prize. In total, they connected with 1,110 farmers in their area.

“The mission of FFA goes beyond farming but its heart will always be in creating new generations of leaders who understand agriculture and small communities,” said Linda Arnold, Monsanto customer outreach lead. “Monsanto is proud to partner with the National FFA Foundation to help local chapters create that bond with the people who grow our food and build our communities.”

“Relationships are central to growing a career in any field, let alone agriculture. We love how this program emphasizes that while also supporting FFA chapters who work the hardest,” said Rob Cooper, executive director of the National FFA Foundation. “We're very grateful of Monsanto's support of this program and truly believe it will be a great tool to grow tomorrow's agriculture leaders."

The winning FFA chapters are from Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas. The top chapter in each state received a $2,500 FFA certificate, while chapters ranked second to tenth in each state received FFA certificates worth between $1,000 and $2,000. 80 chapters who didn’t score in their state’s top-10 also won $1,000. Complete results, state-by-state, are available on the FFA Chapter Challenge website.

As the grand prize winner, the Lawrence County High School FFA Chapter will join over 50,000 FFA members, advisors and guests at October’s 85th National FFA Convention in Indianapolis for concert-like general sessions featuring dynamic keynote speakers and lauded dignitaries, a massive career-focused trade show, hundreds of national competitions and award presentations, career success tours and more.

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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. 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

USDA Broadcasters Letter

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