UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
USDA
Broadcasters Letter
Office of Communications
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Letter No. 3667
Friday, May 25, 2012
Creative Media & Broadcast Center
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BROADCASTERS LETTER

#3667

Friday, May 25, 2012

(May 25)

USDA PROPOSES ADDITIONAL STEPS TO FIGHT FRAUD AND ENHANCE THE INTEGRITY OF SNAP

The announcement highlights ongoing efforts to fight fraud in the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The new measures will help root out waste, fraud and abuse so that federal dollars are invested wisely by giving states new tools to examine excessive requests for replacement benefit cards. Current law lacks needed flexibility for States to contact households for information about requests for multiple replacements, which in some cases may indicate fraudulent activity.

"There are many legitimate reasons for replacing cards and the vast majority of recipients follow the rules," said Kevin Concannon, Agriculture Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services. "But we are concerned that a few bad actors are using replacement cards to exchange SNAP benefits for cash, commonly referred to as trafficking."

Trafficking is an illegal activity punishable by disqualification from the program, fines, and even criminal prosecution. Over the last 15 years, FNS has aggressively implemented a number of measures to reduce the prevalence of trafficking in SNAP from 4 percent down to 1 percent.
The proposed rule provides States the option to require SNAP recipients to make contact with the state when there have been an excessive number of requests for replacements in a year. The proposal lets States set the threshold for contact but stipulates that it be no fewer than four requests in the 12 month period prior to the requests. This will provide States the opportunity to determine whether the request is legitimate, or requires further investigation, Concannon said. States using the option must also ensure that they protect vulnerable people who lose their cards but are not committing fraud. The proposed rule is available on the Food and Nutrition Service website and will be published in the Federal Register for public comment in the near future.

USDA continues to work with local, state and federal partners to root out fraud, waste and abuse in SNAP, also known as food stamps. Most recently, USDA sent letters to the CEOs of Craigslist, EBay, Facebook and Twitter to reiterate the need to help prevent the illegal sale or purchase of SNAP benefits on their websites. The proposed rule also codifies current policy that such attempted sales are trafficking violations.

Contact: FNS Communications (703) 305-2281
Story Info: USDA Newsroom
Radio Story: Beefing Up The Food Assistance Program From Fraud
ACTUALITY: Making It Easier To Investigate Food Stamp Fraud

THE USDA ANNOUNCES THE RESULTS FOR CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM 43 GENERAL SIGN-UP

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture will accept 3.9 million acres offered under the 43rd Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general sign-up. During the extended five-week signup, the Department received nearly 48,000 offers on more than 4.5 million acres of land, demonstrating the CRP's continuing leadership as one of our nation's most successful voluntary efforts to conserve land and improve our soil, water, air and wildlife habitat resources. Under Vilsack's leadership, USDA has now enrolled nearly 12 million acres in the CRP since 2009. Currently, there are more than 29.6 million acres enrolled on more than 736,000 contracts.

"For more than 25 years, lands in CRP have helped to support strong incomes for our farmers and ranchers and produce good middle-class jobs throughout the country related to outdoor recreation, hunting, and fishing," said Vilsack. "As the commodities produced by our farmers and ranchers continue to perform strongly in the marketplace—supporting 1 out of every 12 jobs here in the United States—it is no surprise that American producers also recognize the importance of protecting our nation's most environmentally sensitive land by enrolling in CRP."

Enrollment of the new 3.9 million acres will allow USDA to continue important targeting of CRP acres through continuous sign-up initiatives—including those announced earlier this year for highly-erodible land, as well as grasslands and wetlands—while also maintaining and enhancing the significant benefits that the program has already achieved. The two continuous sign-ups announced earlier this year will target an additional 1.75 million acres in total.

CRP is a voluntary program designed to help farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers protect their environmentally sensitive land. Eligible landowners receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland throughout the duration of 10 to 15 year contracts.

USDA selected offers for enrollment based on an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) comprised of five environmental factors plus cost. The five environmental factors are: (1) wildlife enhancement, (2) water quality, (3) soil erosion, (4) enduring benefits, and (5) air quality. The minimal acceptable EBI level for this sign-up was 209. The average rental rate per acre for this sign-up is $51.24.

Contact: Isabel Benemelis (202) 720-7809
Story Info: USDA Newsroom
Radio Story: CRP General Sign-Up Acreage Numbers Announced
Criteria For Accepting Latest General CRP Offers

USDA SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON MAJOR STATISTICAL REPORTS, RETAINS CURRENT RELEASE TIMES

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Chief Economist Joseph W. Glauber announced today that USDA is reviewing release times for several major statistical reports due to recent changes in market hours by major commodity exchanges. The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) and the World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB)—the USDA entities responsible for the reports—will seek public comment on the release times and procedures of their key statistical reports. In the coming weeks, USDA expects to publish a notice in the Federal Register advising the public of the comment period. USDA is

reviewing release times of the following statistical reports: World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates, Acreage, Cattle, Cattle on Feed, Crop Production, Grain Stocks, Prospective Plantings, Quarterly Hogs and Pigs, and Small Grain Summary. The current USDA release times of 8:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. ET will remain in effect until further notice.

"It is important that USDA continue to ensure the integrity of its report release process, particularly as global exchanges move closer to 24-hour trading," said Glauber. "To this end, USDA is reviewing our procedures and will solicit public input to determine the needs of those who use our data."

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

(May 24)

MEMBERS NAMED TO THE COUNCIL FOR NATIVE AMERICAN FARMING AND RANCHING

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack created the Council for Native American Farming and Ranching to advise him on ways to eliminate barriers to participation for Native American farmers and ranchers in USDA farm programs. The Council is being appointed as part of the *Keepseagle* settlement. *Keepseagle v. Vilsack* was a lawsuit alleging that USDA discriminated against Native American farmers and ranchers in the way it operated its farm loan program. The Obama Administration worked to settle the lawsuit in 2010 and the settlement was subsequently approved by the court.

"The Council for Native American Farming and Ranching will help Native governments, businesses, farmers and ranchers and tribal governments partner with USDA to create jobs, drive economic growth and strengthen tribal communities," said Vilsack.

The Council will suggest changes to Farm Service Agency (FSA) regulations and also provide internal guidance or propose measures that would promote the participation of Native American farmers and ranchers in all other USDA programs and support government-to-government relations between USDA and tribal governments. The Council is a discretionary advisory committee established under the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture, in furtherance of the settlement agreement. For a list of the appointees click here.

The Council will hold its first meeting this summer. It will work with the Office of Tribal Relations, the FSA, and other USDA agencies to improve the success of Native farmers and ranchers who access USDA's entire portfolio of programs to build and achieve profitability in their businesses. Under Secretary Vilsack's leadership, USDA is addressing civil rights concerns that go back decades, and today's announcement of the appointment of the Council for Native American Farming and Ranching is another step toward achieving that effort.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623
Story Info: USDA Newsroom
Radio Story: Members Named For Council For Native American Farming And Ranching
Makeup Of The New Native American Farming And Ranching Council
Settling The USDA'S Outstanding Lawsuits
ACTUALITY: Closing The Book On The Old Making Way For The New

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USDA PROVIDES FUNDING TO COOPERATORS FOR PEST AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT AND DISASTER PREVENTION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will support 321 projects in all 50 states, plus American Samoa and Guam that help to prevent the introduction or spread of plant pests and diseases threatening American agriculture and the environment. The funding, totaling $50 million, is provided by Section 10201 of the 2008 Farm Bill.

"We are committed to partnering with our stakeholders to achieve our mutual goals of identifying and mitigating threats to American agriculture, enhancing our emergency response capabilities, and increasing public awareness of the danger of invasive pests and diseases," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "American agriculture supports 1 in 12 jobs in the United States and provides safe, affordable food to consumers. I am confident that the selected projects will help our farmers, ranchers and foresters continue to flourish and build upon these successes."

The FY 2012 funding plan, list of selected projects, and general feedback are posted at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/section10201. APHIS engaged stakeholders, such as the National Plant Board, Specialty Crops Farm Bill Alliance and USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service and U.S. Forest Service, in designing the evaluation criteria for the suggestions. More than half of the suggestion reviewers came from outside of APHIS.

Funded projects were organized around six Section 10201 goal areas: enhancing plant pest/disease analysis and survey; targeting domestic inspection activities at vulnerable points in the safeguarding continuum; enhancing and strengthening pest identification and technology; safeguarding nursery production; enhancing mitigation capabilities; and conducting outreach and education about these issues.

Contact: Alyn Kiel (301) 851-4072 or Lyndsay Cole (970) 494-7410
Story Info: USDA Newsroom

Radio Story: Invasive Pest And Disease Control
ACTUALITY: Safeguarding The U.S.'S Billion Dollar Ag Industry
ACTUALITY: Helping The Public To Be Good Environmental Stewards

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USDA HIGHLIGHTS EFFORTS TO BOOST RURAL JOB CREATION DURING NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

USDA Rural Development was a part of highlighting rural small business accomplishments and observing "National Small Business Week". "We know that to build a strong foundation for our country, we must continue to invest in rural communities and small businesses that create new economic opportunities for those who call rural America home," said John Padalino, Acting Administrator of USDA Rural Development's Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS). "We've seen continued growth in rural business development and the Obama Administration will continue working to strengthen local economies throughout the country."

Padalino met this week with business leaders in Iowa and South Dakota and highlighted ways RBS business and cooperative programs help improve rural economic conditions by providing guaranteed loans and development grants for projects that help create and save jobs.
Nationally, from 2009 through 2011, RBS provided 12,214 guaranteed loans, direct loans and grants that assisted more than 50,000 businesses and helped create or save more than 266,000 jobs.

Contact: Dane Henshall (202) 260-0996
Story Info: USDA Newsroom

(May 23)

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK ANNOUNCES NEW AND EXPANDED ACCESS TO CREDIT FOR AMERICA'S FARMERS AND RANCHERS

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that a new microloan proposal helps small farmers avoid high-interest credit card and personal loans. The way it works is that small and family operations progress through their start-up years with needed resources, while building capacity, increasing equity, and eventually graduating to commercial credit.

Vilsack said the U.S. Department of Agriculture has made substantial, year-over-year gains in expanding credit opportunities for farmers and ranchers across the United States. The increase in farm and operating loans has helped improve farmer and rancher productivity, launched new start-up operations, and ensured opportunities in agriculture for many more Americans. With expanded access to credit, USDA is helping a new generation of farmers sustain and build upon what is now the most productive period in history for American agriculture.

"Over the past three years, we have expanded farm and operating loans to Americans from all backgrounds to help raise a new crop of producers across the country," said Vilsack. "As we expand options in agriculture, we're seeing a new vibrancy across the countryside as younger people—many of whom are now involved in local and regional production—pursue livelihoods in farming, raising food for local consumption. By leveraging USDA's lending programs for beginning farmers and ranchers and smaller producers, we're helping to rebuild and revitalize our rural communities."

The proposed rule may be viewed at https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2012/05/25/2012-12685/microloan-operating-loans or through the FSA home page at http://www.fsa.usda.gov. Comments should be submitted no later than July 23, 2012 by either of the following methods:
Federal eRulemaking Portal: http://www.regulations.gov. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623
Story Info: USDA Newsroom
Radio Story: USDA'S New Microloan Program
Making Farm Credit More Accessible

PAY CLOSER ATTENTION TO HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Taking care of blood pressure problems now can help prevent many potential health problems later on.

Radio Story: Pay Closer Attention To High Blood Pressure

(May 22)

USDA AND PARTNERS INVEST NEARLY $32 MILLION IN MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN WATER QUALITY AND WETLANDS PROJECTS

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and its partners will invest nearly $32 million this year in financial and technical assistance for five water quality and wetlands improvement projects in seven Mississippi River Basin states. When fully implemented, the projects will prevent sediment and nutrients from entering waterways, decrease flooding

and improve bird and fish habitat. NRCS estimates that this investment will restore 11,400 acres to wetland habitat.

"These projects are great examples of USDA working with partners to improve water quality in the Mississippi River Basin," Vilsack said. "Through these projects, agricultural producers are voluntarily taking action to restore and protect wetlands on private lands in watersheds that USDA has identified as being critical to water quality restoration in the basin."
Landowners interested in applying for funding should contact their local NRCS office (http://go.usa.gov/m2Y) or the partner listed below. Signup dates may vary based on the individual project.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623
Story Info: USDA Newsroom
Radio Story: Mississippi River Basin Wetlands Projects Receive Awards
ACTUALITY: On Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative

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AG SECRETARY VILSACK SAYS MATCHING MARKET AND REPORT TIMING COMPLICATED

The Agriculture Secretary was asked about the recent expansion of grain market trading hours and how that may affect when market sensitive USDA reports are released.

Radio Story: VILSACK - Matching Market And Report Timing Complicated

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UP AND DOWN WEATHER CONDITIONS AROUND THE NATION

While moisture is expected to grace the North and East, a large swath of the country in the lower plains and southeast will continue to be plagued by drought and heat. Crop and pasture land conditions across parts of the U.S. have been patchy and hit or miss. Meantime, the northern tier of states is in for some good weather news.

Radio Story: Parts Of The South Are Wishing For Rain
A Lack Of Rain Has Some Crops And Pasture Land All Dried Out
Some Northern Areas To Get Welcomed Showers

(May 21)

FOOD SECURITY AND G-8 DISCUSSIONS

The latest summit of the Group of Eight developed nations included a focus on addressing global food security issues.

Radio Story: Food Security And G8 Discussions

EMPLOYMENT NUMBERS BODE WELL FOR AGRICULTURE

The latest employment numbers are showing continued progress for the agricultural community. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack explains why agriculture jobs are growing the most.

Radio Story: Employment Numbers Bode Well For Agriculture
ACTUALITY: Ag Jobs Greatly Account For Employment Increases

BRINGING FOOD SAFETY TO THE SUMMER COOKOUT GRILL

It's a busy time of year for USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline as many of us gear up for the unofficial start of the summer cookout season. Keeping uncooked meats and poultry cold while taking them to cookouts at parks, beaches, and campgrounds this summer, is an important food safety tip.

Radio Story: Bringing Food Safety To The Summer Cookout Grill
Cold Transport Is A Key To Safe Summer Cookouts Away From Home

For more agriculture news visit **www.USDA.gov**

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

The Latest USDA Blog Posts

In Honor of Small Business Week, Save Mother Earth by Saving Resources (**RD**)
Rural Development Under Secretary Dallas Tonsager Tours Biofuels Lab in Washington State (**RD**)
On the one year anniversary of a devastating Tornado season, a rural area returns to life (**RD**)
Indiana USDA Celebrates 150 Years of Accomplishments (**RD**)
Intertribal Agriculture Council Executive Director Praises Appointment of Members to the USDA Council for Native American Farming and Ranching (**RD**)
Island Flowers Bloom with Assistance from FSA (**FSA**)
Mississippi Marks the 150th Anniversary of USDA (**RD**)
USDA Funding Means Jobs and Increased Production for Tractor Manufacturing Company in Jackson, MN. (**RD**)
Two hundred and fifty feet up with only a rope to get down (**FS**)
U.S. Agricultural Statistics – A History – and New Historical Timeline (**NASS**)
Help Wanted: Grant Reviewers for Farmers Market Promotion Program (**AMS**)
A Year After Disastrous Missouri River Flooding, the “MINK” Corridor is ‘Open for Business’ (**RD**)
USDA Forest Service response to the Pentagon on 9/11 –The Leader’s View (**FS**)
The Slippery Slope of Ramps (**REE/FS**)
Together We Can: Webinar Series for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (**FBNP**)

Learn more about President Lincoln's agricultural legacy here.

USDA Celebrates 150 Years

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

(Feature Line-Up Subject To Change Prior to Update On May 29, 2012)

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 22.12 – Rural economic development is becoming more centered towards a regional approach in strategies to create not only jobs for local areas, but some times greater wealth creation in lieu of jobs. Rod Bain takes a look at examples of this approach in this edition of "Agriculture USA".

CONSUMER TIME CD # 22.12 – One Year After Joplin Missouri's Catastrophic Tornado, USDA Proposes Loophole On Retail Pet Sales, How To Stay As Cool As Possible And Save Money, Squirrels In Your Attic?, Lawn Watering The Right Way.

AG UPDATE CD # 22.12 – Latest Efforts To Restore Mississippi River Basin Watersheds, What's Next For Beef Cattle Producers, Proposed Changes For Internet Pet Sales, Food For Peace A Historic Mission, A Study Of Equine Guided Leadership Education.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – May 29 – Crop Progress Report (NASS); May 30 - Crop Weather Report (WAOB); May 31 – Agricultural Price Report (NASS). June 4 – 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

USDA JOINS GRILL SERGEANTS FOR SAFE BBQ ADVICE

U.S. Department of Agriculture experts share advice on food safety for barbecuing with chefs from the U.S. Army's "Grill Sergeants" cable TV program

FTP Download instructions:
The host: ftp://ocbmtcmedia.download.akamai.com
User name: usdanews
Password: Newscontent1

Filename for **TV Feature**: safe grilling
The new file is in QuickTime Movie (H.264), MPEG 4, MPEG2 and HDV
YouTube: safe grilling
Video Podcast: safe grilling podcast
RSS Page: safe grilling rss

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MAY IS WETLANDS MONTH

May is wetlands month and the U.S. Department of Agriculture reminds us that healthy wetlands provide environmental benefits
The USDA's Bob Ellison reports on a program helping landowners preserve wetlands

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Video Podcast: wetland month podcast
RSS Page: wetland month rss

Please email Bob.Ellison@OC.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

NORTHWEST CHERRY CROP PROGRESSING NICELY – Greg Martin (Northwest Ag Information Network - Cashmere, WA Ag Information Network) says the crop is on pace to be one of the largest on record. "Even though there are not as many cherries on the trees the mild winter and spring have combined to make the cherries on the trees larger and hopefully sweeter. Estimates are that this year's crop could be in the 20.9 million box range and with the bad weather in the east and Midwest the northwest cherry crop could be an important one in filling a void both domestically and in the export market."

AN INDIANA DAIRY FARMER LANDS AN ENVIABLE JOB – He's Logansport, Indiana dairy farmer Dave Forgey. **Andy Eubank** (Hoosier Ag Today - Lafayette, Indiana Hoosier Ag Today) says, "Dave is the Milkman who will deliver the milk to the winning driver at Sunday's Indy 500." The American Dairy Association of Indiana also sponsored the 38th annual Fastest Rookie of the Year Luncheon last Tuesday honoring all 8 rookie drivers in this year's field.

Andy Eubank on the left and on the right Dave Forgey.

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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

Compiled and Edited by **Susan Carter**
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USDA Broadcasters Letter

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