



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Broadcasters Letter

Office of Communications

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Friday, June 8, 2012

Creative Media & Broadcast Center

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BROADCASTERS LETTER

#3669.2012

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(June 8)

IT'S JUNE AND THE USDA IS CELEBRATING NATIONAL HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH

The kick off of National Homeownership Month brings a reminder for rural residents the opportunities to purchase or refinance homes in rural areas. "This is a great time to buy a home," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Interest rates are at or near record lows, and housing prices are more affordable than they've been in nearly a generation."

Throughout the month of June, the USDA will hold events to highlight the ways Rural Development programs provide affordable homeownership opportunities. Rural Development has programs to help people refinance as well as buy homes. In February, Secretary Vilsack announced a 19-state pilot program for homeowners to get lower monthly mortgage payments. The refinance program is available to rural residents with mortgages issued or backed by USDA Rural Development. It is aimed at helping save homeowners' time and money and helping to ensure that hardworking, creditworthy borrowers protect their investment and remain in their homes.

The USDA also provides loans and grant funds to help rural homeowners repair their homes and to assist affordable rural rental property owners repair their properties. The Secretary announced last month that USDA is accepting grant applications from qualified organizations for repairs, health, safety and accessibility improvements. The application deadline is June 25. For information on how to apply, please see page 27179 of the May 9, 2012 [Federal Register](#) or go to [Federal Register](#).

Vilsack noted that Rural Development's housing portfolio is sound. It does not include subprime and exotic loans such as so-called "no doc" loans. USDA uses solid underwriting criteria to ensure borrowers are able to repay their loans. By doing so, we're helping to keep people in their homes.

Since the start of the Obama Administration, USDA has helped more than 520,000 rural families buy a home. For example, Rural Development helped Theresa Jetland of Ilwaco, Wash., buy her first home. Jetland, a single working mother raising two teenagers, qualified to buy a home after she completed a local program that helps low- and moderate-income renters obtain employment that will lead to economic independence. Jetland bought a home guaranteed by USDA Rural Development and received payment assistance from the Longview Housing Authority.

Vilsack noted that In Fiscal year 2011, approximately 17 percent of Single Family Housing homeownership opportunities were provided to individuals and families that identified themselves as members of minority groups. Over 25,500 of the loans obligated (made) by USDA went to minority homeowners.

Contact: Weldon Freeman (202) 690-1384

Radio Story: [June Is National Homeownership Month](#)

[ACTUALITY: Affordable And Stable Loan Terms For Rural Home Buyers](#)

[ACTUALITY: Seeing Rural Residents Live The Homeownership Dream](#)

[Available Programs For Achieving Homeownership In Rural Areas](#)

[ACTUALITY: Federal And Private Homeownership Partners](#)

(June 7)

THE U.S. SENATE MOVES FORWARD WITH THE FARM BILL DEBATE

The US Senate Thursday approved bringing the 2012 Farm Bill to the floor for debate, and eventual consideration.

Radio Story: [Senate Moves Forward With Farm Bill Debate](#)

A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH WITH THE NEW FOOT AND MOUTH VACCINE

There will soon be a new tool in our arsenal of weapons against foot and mouth disease. Dr. Catherine Woteki, USDA Chief Scientist, talks about the effort that resulted in the new foot and mouth vaccine. Woteki explains why development of new foot and mouth vaccines has to be a continuing effort.

Radio Story: [New Foot And Mouth Vaccine Is A Major Breakthrough](#)

[ACTUALITY: New Foot And Mouth Vaccine Was A Collaborative Effort](#)

[ACTUALITY: Reasons Why Foot And Mouth Research Is Ongoing](#)

A NEW TECHNIQUE MAY HELP IN THE FIGHT TO COMBAT POULTRY VIRUSES

Metagenomics could provide researchers with a bigger picture of avian intestines and turn find antimicrobial viruses that could aid in disease prevention.

Radio Story: [New Technique May Help Combat Poultry Viruses](#)

(June 6)

THE U.S. SENATE OPENS THE FLOOR FOR A DISCUSSION ON THE NEW FARM, FOOD AND JOBS ACT

It could take several weeks to complete, but the Senate has brought the Agriculture Committee's farm bill up for floor discussion and procedural votes. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow giving an overview of the cuts, reforms and new approaches of the Senate version of the Agricultural Reform, Food and Jobs Act.

Radio Story: [Senate Opens Floor Discussion Of New Farm, Food And Jobs Act](#)
ACTUALITY: [Senate Farm Bill Has Cuts, Reforms And New Safety Net](#)

IT'S LESS THAN A MONTH'S TIME TO SIGN UP TO BE ON THE MAILING LIST TO RECEIVE THE 2012 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE SURVEY

Farmers, ranchers and producers that have not gotten a Census of Agriculture form in the mail before are reminded to sign up for the Census of Agriculture so they can be counted. What is the purpose of the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service's census survey? Renee Picanso of USDA's Census and Survey Division says being counted in the Census of Agriculture every five years is both critical and required.

Radio Story: [Sign Up Reminder For 2012 Census Of Agriculture](#)
[How Is Census Of Agriculture Data Used?](#)
ACTUALITY: [Being Counted In Ag Census Is Necessary And Mandatory](#)

USDA PROVIDES FUNDING TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND SAFETY, AND INCREASE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced funding for 52 distance learning and telemedicine projects that will increase access to health care and enhance educational opportunities in 29 states. "Our rural communities need access to the latest educational and health care services to compete in the 21st Century," Vilsack said. "The funding I am announcing today for the Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) program will help ensure that rural citizens receive the same high-level, specialized medical care and educational services as enjoyed by their fellow citizens in urban areas."

The projects announced today total \$14 million and include 19 distance learning projects, 32 telemedicine projects and one combined project. All will benefit rural counties. Nearly half of the total funding will go to counties where the minority population is greater than 30 percent.

Another 18 percent of this funding will benefit areas where the Native American population exceeds 30 percent. For a complete list of the DLT awards, please [click here](#).

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

(June 5)

EUROPEAN GRAPEVINE MOTH QUARANTINE LIFTED IN FOUR CALIFORNIA COUNTIES AND UNRESTRICTED TRADE TO MEXICO RESUMES

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) announced the eradication of European grapevine moth (EGVM) from Fresno, Mendocino, Merced, and San Joaquin counties in California and the removal of restrictions on exports of EGVM host commodities, including stone fruit and table grapes, from those counties to Mexico.

"The removal of these counties from the European grapevine moth quarantine will save stone fruit and table grape growers an estimated \$10 million a year," said Rebecca Blue, deputy under secretary for marketing and regulatory programs. "USDA is committed to partnering with our stakeholders in the fight against invasive pests and doing our part to minimize their impact on agricultural trade and export markets for American agricultural products."

Mexico is one of the top five export markets for American table grapes and the third largest importer of American fresh stone fruit. In 2011, California exported 3.4 million cartons of fresh stone fruit, valued at \$45 million, and 5.7 million boxes of fresh table grapes, valued at \$102.1 million, to Mexico. Fresno, Mendocino, Merced, and San Joaquin counties are a part of the primary production area of fresh U.S. stone fruit and table grapes.

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

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

FINAL RULE PUBLISHED TO PROVIDE GREATER PROTECTION FOR HORSES

The USDA's action will require horse industry organizations to assess minimum penalties for violations. The move by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), which administers the Animal Welfare Act, is meant to help eliminate the inhumane practice of horse soring—a practice primarily used in the training of Tennessee Walking Horses, racking horses and related breeds to accentuate the horse's gait. Horse soring is done by irritating or blistering a horse's forelegs through the application of chemicals or the use of mechanical devices.

"Requiring minimum penalty protocols will ensure that these organizations and their designees remain consistent in their inspection efforts," said Deputy Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Rebecca Blue. "USDA inspectors cannot be present at every horse show and sale, so we work with industry organizations and their designees to ensure the wellbeing of these animals. Our goal, together, is to make horse soring a thing of the past."

The regulations currently provide that such penalties will be set either by the horse industry organizations or by APHIS. This final rule requires all APHIS-certified horse industry organizations, which have already been administering penalties as part of their role in enforcing

the HPA, to make their penalties equal or exceed minimum levels. The penalties in this final rule increase in severity for repeat offenders to provide an additional deterrent effect for people who have already shown a willingness to violate the HPA.

The final rule will also help to level the playing field for competitors at all horse shows. Previously, as some horse industry organizations have declined to issue sufficiently serious penalties to deter soring, those shows have attracted more competitors than shows where horse organizations have used APHIS' minimum penalty protocols. With this final rule, competitors now know that inspections and enforcement will take place consistently at all shows they and their horses attend.

Contact: David Sacks (301) 851-4079 or Lyndsay Cole (970) 494-7410

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

VILSACK ANNOUNCES PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF TWELVE NEW BIOBASED PRODUCT CATEGORIES

Once the proposed rule is finalized, more than 2,300 additional biobased products will be offered for preferred purchasing consideration by all Federal government agencies and contractors. "President Obama has directed the federal government to take decisive steps to dramatically increase the purchase of biobased products over the next two years, which will create jobs and drive innovation where biobased products are grown and manufactured," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "With these 12 additional categories USDA will have increased the number of designated categories by 39 percent overall since the issuance of the [President's memorandum](#). When procuring agencies buy biobased products they are helping their organizations increase energy security and independence, spur economic development, and improve our environment."

The proposed rule designates the following biobased products for preferred Federal procurement:

- agricultural spray adjuvants
- animal cleaning products
- deodorants
- dethatcher products
- fuel conditioners
- leather, vinyl, and rubber care products
- lotions and moisturizers
- shaving Products
- specialty precision cleaners and solvents
- sun care products
- wastewater systems coatings
- water clarifying agents

Contact: Office of Communications 202-720-4623

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

(June 4)

THE PROCESS IS STREAMLINED FOR TRADE OF ORGANIC PRODUCTS BETWEEN UNITED STATES AND EUROPEAN UNION BEGINS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that organic products certified in the U.S. or European Union are now allowed to be sold as organic in either market. Friday, June 1, trade opened up under a new U.S.-EU equivalency partnership. Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan signed formal letters creating the partnership in February, along with Dacian Cioloș, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, and Ambassador Isi Siddiqui, U.S. Trade Representative Chief Agricultural Negotiator.

"This partnership will open new markets for American farmers and ranchers, create more opportunities for small businesses, and result in good jobs for Americans who grow, package, ship, and market organic products," said Merrigan. "In the months ahead, USDA will continue to work hard to expand opportunities for all U.S. products, including organics. Equivalency arrangements such as this are critical to growing the U.S. organics industry—they require careful negotiation to ensure that we maintain existing U.S. trade policies while ensuring that U.S. agricultural products will compete on a level playing field in world markets."

The United States signed a similar partnership with Canada in July 2009, and additional equivalency arrangement conversations have begun with South Korea, Taiwan and Japan.

"This agreement provides economic opportunities for certified organic farmers as well as additional incentives for prospective farmers," said Miles McEvoy, National Organic Program Deputy Administrator. "We look forward to working with our European Union counterparts to support organic agriculture."

Later this year, representatives from both markets will compare the USDA organic wine standards to the recently published European Union wine standards and determine how wine can fit into the trade partnership. In the interim, traded wine must meet the production and labeling requirements of the destination market.

The arrangement covers products exported from and certified in the United States or the European Union only. All products traded under the partnership must be shipped with an organic import certificate, which shows the location where production occurred, identifies the organization that certified the organic product, and verifies that growers and handlers did not use prohibited substances and methods. In addition to certifying that the terms of the partnership were met, the certificates also allow traded products to be tracked. Both parties are committed to ensuring that products traded under the agreement retain their organic integrity from farm to market. The European Commission's Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development and the USDA National Organic Program—which oversees all U.S. organic products—will take on key oversight roles.

For details on the trade partnerships [click here](#) or contact the National Organic Program at (202) 720-3252. The National Organic Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture facilitates trade and ensures integrity of organic agricultural products by consistently implementing the organic standards and enforcing compliance with the regulations.

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

PILOTS DIE IN PLANE CRASH FIGHTING WILDFIRE ALONG UTAH-NEVADA BORDER

The Agriculture Secretary pays homage to two pilots that died when their plane crashed as they worked to control a remote wildfire on the Utah border.

Radio Story: [Vilsack Remembers Fallen Pilots](#)

VILSACK TO APPOINT SOCIALLY-DISADVANTAGED FARMERS AS VOTING MEMBERS OF COUNTY COMMITTEES

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack intends to appoint voting members from socially disadvantaged (SDA) communities to serve on county committees in county jurisdictions that lack fair SDA representation. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) published an interim rule in the Federal Register that is open for public comment for 60 days. County committees have served as a direct link between the farm community and USDA for more than 75 years, helping to deliver FSA farm programs at the local level.

"As we continue to build a USDA that is responsive to the needs of an evolving, 21st century agricultural economy, we must ensure a strong and sustainable future for these important committees," said Vilsack. "Appointing new voting members to committees that lack representation will help ensure that county committees continue to play a vital and relevant role in delivering important federal farm programs to citizens of rural communities across our nation."

The appointments will supplement the existing election process where currently there are 7,700 elected county committee members representing 2,244 county jurisdictions.

"We are proud of the great diversity that makes up our rural communities," said FSA Administrator Bruce Nelson, "and appointing voting members to committees that lack representation is an important step in helping to maintain a robust county committee system for all producers."

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

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

For more agriculture news visit www.USDA.gov



Deputy Under Secretary Encourages Michigan USDA Home Loan Borrowers to
Explore a Streamlined Refinancing Pilot Program (RD)



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 June 12, 2012)

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 24.12 – Further development of and collaboration between crop plant germplasm databanks around the world could help resolve some of the many issues involving global food insecurity. Rod Bain looks at some examples in this edition of "Agriculture USA".

CONSUMER TIME CD # 24.12 – The Changing Scene At Farmers Markets, Genetic Research May Bring Us A Better Tomato, More Concerns As The Southwest Dries Out, Gardening Without A Yard, Tips For Food Safety For That Cookout Away From Home.

AG UPDATE CD # 24.12 – Ag Job Numbers On The Rise, Measures For Accepting CRP Offers, Researchers Unlocking The Genetic Secrets Of Corn, USDA Invests Millions For Pest Control And Disease Management, Latest On GE Sugar Beet Deregulation Process.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – June 12 – Crop Weather Report (WAOB); Crop Production Reports (NASS) and World Agricultural Supply And Demand Estimates (ERS – WOAB). June 13 – Oilseed, Rice, and Cotton Outlooks (ERS – WAOB). June 14 – Wheat and Feed Grain Outlooks (ERS – WAOB). June 18 – 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

Growing Tomato 'Abraham Lincoln' – Share Your Harvest

Healthy tomato plants will produce an over-abundance of fruit. Watch the video for helpful tips on picking, storing, and preserving tomatoes. More gardening resources are available at www.usda.gov.

(Reference herein to any specific product, service, or enterprise does not constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the United States government. The views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the United States government.)

YouTube: [Growing Tomato 'Abraham Lincoln' - Share Your Harvest](#)

Kids Rock Nutrition In The Kitchen

Are you ready to have some fun in the kitchen? Teaching kids to cook is a great way for everyone to learn about different foods and how nutritious they are. Watch a chef and registered dietitian show children how easy it is to make chicken or fish veggie packets and yogurt parfaits.

YouTube: [Kids Rock Nutrition In The Kitchen](#)

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



FARM TV AND RADIO HOST MARK PEARSON PASSES – Mark Pearson died suddenly Sunday at his farm home near East Peru in Madison County. The Madison County Sheriff's Department reports Pearson passed away from an apparent heart attack.

The longtime Iowa farm news broadcaster had been host of Iowa Public Television's popular "Market to Market" show and co-

hosted WHO-AM radio's "The Big Show," which also focused on agricultural news. Pearson was known as a founder of the annual "Great Iowa Tractor Ride" and was well respected in the farm community. His career included his having been an assistant secretary of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and serving 10 years as an officer in the U.S. Naval Reserve. Pearson was 54.



REMEMBERING MARK PEARSON – Max Armstrong (Farm Progress – WHO Radio – Chicago, Illinois [Farm Progress America WGN Radio](#)) who this past week hosted his 11th Heritage Tractor Adventure antique tractor ride in Northern Illinois. **Armstrong** said the ride was dedicated to the memory

of Iowa farm broadcaster Mark Pearson who died last weekend. “At WHO Mark and the late Gary Wergin started the rides in Iowa, and I conferred with Mark when we started the one in Illinois. From our TV coverage of the Illinois ride, the fervor for these has spread across the country.”



2012 WORLD FOOD PRIZE LAUREATE TO BE ANNOUNCED – The ceremony will take place Tuesday, June 12, at 10:30 a.m. at the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C. **Megan Forgrave** (The World Food Prize Foundation - Des Moines,

Iowa www.worldfoodprize.org) Director of Communications said, “This year’s announcement will be a significant one, where we will honor an esteemed scientist whose work spans many countries around the globe.”



THE D.C. FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK DIRECTOR SAYS SO LONG – “It is with both excitement and sadness that I share with you all that I will be leaving the D.C. Farm to School Network at the end of June. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working with you all over the past four years, but I am ready for something new,” said **Andrea**

Northup (D.C. Farm to School, Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture – Washington, District of Columbia www.dcfarmtoschool.org). **Northup** is headed off to Minneapolis, Minnesota to work on farm to school programs with Minneapolis Public Schools.

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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