UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
USDA
Broadcasters Letter
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BROADCASTERS LETTER

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Friday, August 24, 2012

(August 24)

USDA AWARDS $26 MILLION IN CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced $26 million in Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) awarded by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to entities across the nation for projects that test and prove innovative approaches to conserving America's private lands. The grant winners will demonstrate innovative approaches to improving soil health, increasing pollinator and wildlife habitat, protecting water quality and producing on-farm energy savings. Grant recipients will pay 50 percent of all project costs.

"We're announcing 59 grants today in 47 states that will help some of America's top agricultural and conservation institutions, foundations and businesses develop unique approaches to enhancing and protecting natural resources on agricultural lands," said Vilsack. "The grants will help spur creativity and problem-solving to benefit conservation-minded farmers and ranchers. Everyone who relies on our nation's natural resources for clean water, food and fiber, for their way of life, will benefit from these grants. We believe there are states around the nation that are on the cusp of having thriving water quality trading markets. These grant awards will help develop projects that create new revenue streams for farmers and ranchers while they are helping to improve water quality."

Twelve of the awarded grants are for development of water quality trading markets to demonstrate how farmers and ranchers can help municipalities, utilities and others overcome high pollution control costs.

This is the first time USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has offered a separate request for proposals that specified support for water quality trading markets. In a water quality trading program, point sources buy environmental benefits or "credits" from landowners who install specific conservation practices.

Water quality trading is a market-based approach that enables facilities to achieve needed pollution controls through the purchase of credits for a particular pollutant. Farmers can produce water quality credits by implementing conservation practices that reduce nutrients or sediment losses, and generally at a much lower cost than a municipal treatment facility. The goal is to achieve water quality improvements more cost-effectively by bringing together participating buyers and sellers.

For a complete list of CIG awardees and more information about NRCS conservation programs online, visit: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov.

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623
Story Info: USDA Newsroom
Radio Story: USDA Awards New Conservation Innovation Grants
ACTUALITY: An Expected Project Type

THE AUGUST FOOD PRICE OUTLOOK IS SIMILAR TO JULY'S

There were few changes to report in this month's edition of USDA's compared to last, with both still projecting a rise in prices in 2013. USDA Economist Ricky Volpe explains the numbers of the latest USDA Food Price Outlook and its comparisons from month to month, and year to year.

Radio Story: Similar August Food Price Outlook As July
ACTUALITY: On August Food Price Outlook

THE 2012 DROUGHT WILL HAVE AN INCREMENTAL IMPACT ON FOOD PRICES

A USDA Economist says the rising price of commodities will eventually translate to an increase in food prices, but not right away. USDA's Food Price Outlook for this month revealed some positive news - lower projected prices - for some food items. USDA Economist Ricky Volpe looks at one of the brighter spots in the August Food Price Outlook - forecasted fish and seafood prices. Volpe recaps the outlook for fruit and vegetable prices in USDA's August Food Price Outlook.

Radio Story: Impacts Of Drought On Food Prices Will Be Incremental
Bright Spots In August Food Price Outlook
ACTUALITY: On Price Outlook For Fish And Seafood
ACTUALITY: On Produce Projections In Latest Food Price Outlook

(August 23)

RFS WAIVER ISSUE WOULD BE A TOUGH DECISION EITHER WAY

The person or group that decides whether or not to reduce the amount of ethanol production mandated by the government will have a lot of factors to consider.

Radio Story: RFS Waiver Issue Would Be A Tough Decision Either Way

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IMPROVED METHODS TO DETECT MEAT TENDERNESS AND COLOR STABILITY

USDA researchers are using advance technology as a means to determine the tenderness and rate of color deterioration in beef and pork cuts. Steve Shackleford of USDA's Meat Animal Research Center explains how technology to determine tenderization and color stability in beef and pork cuts might advance in the future.

Radio Story: Improved Methods To Detect Meat Tenderness And Color Stability
ACTUALITY: On Future Of Meat Tenderization Analysis

BED BUGS HAVE CAUGHT THE EYE OF SCHOOLS

With bed bug populations growing in recent years, an Extension expert says there is the possibility of them spreading via book bags and other school items. Paul Guillebeau of University of Georgia Extension explains how schools and parents can prevent a spread of bed bugs, as well as eliminate the pests.

Radio Story: Schools Now Keeping An Eye Out On Bed Bugs
ACTUALITY: Preventing The Spread Of Bed Bugs

(August 22)

USDA SUSPENDS CENTRAL VALLEY MEAT FOR HUMANE HANDLING VIOLATIONS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to take aggressive action to investigate and respond to disturbing evidence of inhumane treatment of cattle at Central Valley Meat in Hanford, Calif. Central Valley Meat was notified by USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) that the agency was immediately suspending the assignment of inspectors at the establishment on August 19, effectively halting slaughter operations at the establishment.

Within hours of being provided video taken by an animal welfare organization, the Department initiated an investigation. USDA has dispatched several teams of investigators to California and continues to gather information on the ground.

- In terms of humane handling, FSIS found violations and suspended the mark of inspection. The teams will continue to examine the violations which have been documented in the video provided.

- In terms of food safety, the video footage provided to USDA does not show a "downer" animal entering the food supply. However, the Department is conducting a thorough investigation that encompasses food safety and will respond appropriately to its results.

"Our top priority is to ensure the safety of the food Americans feed their families," said Al Almanza, Administrator of the Food Safety and Inspection Service. "We have reviewed the video and determined that, while some of the footage provided shows unacceptable treatment of cattle, it does not show anything that would compromise food safety. Therefore, we have not substantiated a food safety violation at this time. We are aggressively continuing to investigate the allegations."

USDA food safety regulations state that, if an animal is non-ambulatory disabled at any time prior to slaughter, it must be condemned promptly, humanely euthanized, and properly discarded so that it does not enter the food supply.

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623 and FSIS Press Office (202) 720-9113
Story Info: USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service
Radio Story: USDA Suspends Operations At A California Slaughterhouse
ACTUALITY: No Food Safety Violation Found; Food Supply Is Safe
ACTUALITY: Update On Slaughterhouse Investigation

USDA GUARANTEES LOAN TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF ADVANCED BIOFUELS PRODUCTION FROM ENERGY GRASSES

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a loan guarantee to Chemtex International, Inc., (Chemtex), to construct a 20 million gallon per year cellulosic ethanol refinery in Sampson County in eastern North Carolina. The project, a first-of-its-kind commercial facility in the mid Atlantic region, aims to help reduce the nation's dependence on foreign oil, increase farm income, enhance land stewardship and create more than 300 jobs in the region.

"This announcement supports the Obama Administration's 'all-of-the-above' energy strategy to embrace alternative American-produced feedstocks that support our nation's energy independence and provide jobs in rural areas," said Vilsack. "At USDA we are focused on the production of renewable energy from a wide variety of non-food sources, including energy grasses. The facility we are announcing today will help create more than 300 jobs in North Carolina and is a perfect example of how producing home-grown energy is good for the economy and good for our energy future."

The Chemtex facility is expected to create 65 full time jobs with estimated average salaries of more than $48,000 per year. An additional 250 indirect jobs are also anticipated in areas such as feedstock supply, maintenance, and transportation.

Once operational, the facility is expected to convert 600,000 tons of energy grasses per year into an estimated 20 million gallons of cellulosic ethanol (advanced biofuel) using a proprietary enzymatic hydrolysis process. The plant will produce biofuel for eastern transportation markets using non-food biomass feedstocks. USDA, through its Rural Development Biorefinery Assistance Program (Section 9003 of the 2008 Farm Bill), approved a $99 million, 80 percent

loan guarantee to finance the project. The loan guarantee approval is subject to conditions that Chemtex must meet prior to closing of the loan.

Sampson County and eastern North Carolina farmers will directly benefit through the sales of newly established energy grasses to the biorefinery. Chemtex is working with local farmers and producer organizations to begin growing energy grasses for the facility. About 30,000 acres will be required to supply the facility with sufficient feedstock.

In partnership with the Biofuels Center of North Carolina, Chemtex has identified nearby farmland that is currently growing Coastal Bermuda grass to manage swine lagoon effluent. Conversion from Coastal Bermuda to high yielding energy grasses, including miscanthus and switchgrass, will provide Chemtex a cost effective biomass feedstock for cellulosic ethanol production and area swine farmers with increased economic opportunity as well as the land stewardship benefits of enhanced effluent management.

In June of this year, Chemtex was awarded $3.9 million by the USDA, under its Biomass Crop Assistance Program, to support the establishment of over 4,000 acres of miscanthus and switchgrass across eleven counties in North Carolina. The feedstock will be part of the biomass supply for Chemtex's facility. The net increased revenue to local growers is projected to be $4.5 million per year.

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

USDA PROVIDES NEW HELP FOR LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS WITH CHANGES TO EMERGENCY LOANS, CROP INSURANCE

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack made a series of announcements that continue to help farmers, ranchers and businesses impacted by the most severe drought in 50 years. The Secretary said the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) intends to file special provisions with the federal crop insurance program to allow haying or grazing of cover crops without impacting the insurability of planted 2013 spring crops, a move that can help provide much needed forage and feed this fall and winter for livestock producers. In a separate step, Vilsack will modify emergency loans, allowing loans to be made earlier in the season helping livestock producers to offset increased feed costs and those who have liquidated herds.

"At the direction of the President, USDA continues to work as swiftly as possible to get help to America's farmers and ranchers by providing flexibility within existing programs, particularly those that assist livestock producers," said Vilsack. "In the weeks ahead, the Obama Administration will continue to stand with and support our farmers, ranchers and business as they recover from this drought. Still, it is important that Congress pass a Food, Farm and Jobs Bill as soon as possible, to give USDA more tools to help and to give more certainty to producers in this difficult time."

The new changes announced will benefit America's livestock and crop producers alike by improving procedures and lessening requirements during a time of disaster.

For the 2013 crop year, USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA)—which manages and operates the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation—intends to file special provisions statements to allow haying or grazing of cover crops without impacting the insurability of planted 2013

spring crops. This flexibility will help farmers, if they choose, plant a cover crop without risking crop insurance coverage in 2013, providing much needed forage and feed this fall and winter.

In a separate announcement, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will make changes to the emergency loan program that will help producers obtain the loans earlier in the season. Previous to this change, emergency loan eligibility was based on crop losses that were determined after the production cycle; loan amounts were based on production during normal years. With these changes, producers no longer are required to wait until the end of the production cycle to obtain a loan, benefiting livestock producers who need assistance today to help offset increased feed costs, as well as producers liquidating herds as a result of the drought.

At the direction of the President, Secretary Vilsack is helping coordinate an Administration-wide response that has included: the National Credit Union Administration's increased capacity for lending to customers including farmers; the U.S. Department of Transportation's emergency waivers for federal truck weight regulations and hours of service requirements to get help to drought-stricken communities; and the Small Business Administration's issuance of 71 agency declarations in 32 states covering 1,636 counties, providing a pathway for small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives and non-farm small businesses that are economically affected by the drought in their community to apply for Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL). President Obama also stressed the need for the entire Administration to continue to look at further steps it can take to ease the pain of this historic drought.

Vilsack also designated 33 additional counties in 8 states as natural disaster areas—23 counties due to drought. In the past six weeks, USDA has designated 1,821 counties in 35 states as disaster areas—1,692 due to drought—while USDA officials have fanned out to more than a dozen drought-affected states as part of a total U.S. government effort to offer support and assistance to those impacted by the drought.

Contact: Office of Communication (202) 720-4623
Story Info: USDA Newsroom
Radio Story: Special Crop Insurance Provisions For Cover Crops On The Way
ACTUALITY: Crop Insurance Tool Expanded In Drought Circumstance
ACTUALITY: Special Crop Insurance Provisions

(August 21)

PALATABLE HEAT AND NEEDED RAIN ARE IN THE CURRENT WEATHER FORECAST

Heat and badly needed rain are in the cards for this week’s weather outlook. The condition of the dry pasture and rangeland in the U.S. is better in some places.

Radio Story: Palatable Heat And Needed Rain Are In The Current Weather Forecast
Improved Pasture And Rangeland Conditions

THE U.S. SEES AN INCREASE IN WILDFIRES

The wildfire activity across the Northwestern part of the country has increased over the past two weeks. Brad Rippey USDA Meteorologist explains the reason behind the expanded wildfire acreage this year. Rippey outlines the number and location of wildfires burning in the West.

Radio Story: U.S Sees An Increase In Wildfires In Recent Weeks
ACTUALITY: Why Wildfire Acreage Is Up In Recent Years
ACTUALITY: Areas In The West Continue To Have Wildfires

DEVELOPING FOOD BANKS IN RURAL UNDEVELOPED AREAS GLOBALLY

An analyst says some out of the box creativity is needed to implement food bank concepts in rural parts of underdeveloped areas for use as a food security tool. More countries around the world are adopting the concepts of food banks as a means to boost food security in local and regional areas.

Radio Story: Developing Food Banks In Rural Undeveloped Areas Globally
Food Banks As A Global Food Security Tool

(August 20)

RECREATION.GOV GETS A FACELIFT

There's a new design, improved navigation tools and expanded content for Recreation.Gov, the interagency website that guides visitors to 90,000 sites on federal lands such as national parks, wildlife refuges, waterways, forests and recreation areas. The redesign of www.recreation.gov is an initial step in a multi-year strategy to engage visitors with enhanced interactive content and more multimedia, mobile, trip-planning tools. The seven million visitors who use the web site every year will be able to make reservations, see ready-made itineraries for destination cities, and search for activities on an interactive map.

"Tourism and outdoor recreation are powerful economic engines in communities across the country," said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. "With the redesign of Recreation.Gov, we are making it easier for people to plan trips, find outdoor adventures, and explore activities at our public lands across the country."

"Outdoor activities contribute an estimated $646 billion to the U.S. economy, according to independent estimates, and this enhanced website will provide a gateway for Americans to enjoy their great outdoors," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

"If we can provide visitors both here and abroad easily accessible information and itineraries at the click of a mouse, we will increase the number of people who choose to vacation and travel in the United States," said Acting Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank. "From hotels to restaurants to taxis, small businesses across the nation stand to benefit from this new website."

"Recreation.gov is a 'one-stop' website to find places that are close to home for a day's fishing, boating, swimming, hiking, and much more. There are so many sites within a short drive of urban areas that people don't know about," Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy said. "At Recreation.gov people can find parks, swimming beaches, boat ramps, and other places to get away to for a few hours, days, or weeks."

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Story Info: USDA Newsroom

EMERGENCY LOANS AREN'T THE ONLY ASSISTANCE FOR FARMERS

For farmers hit hard financially by the drought, there's more help available than just emergency loans.

Radio Story: There's More Help For Farmers Than Just Emergency Loans

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THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE AND NASA COLLABORATE IN SPACE

A recent agreement brought two agencies together for awareness and research with the latest International Space Station Mission. Jeff Miller of the US Forest Service in Alaska explains the relationship between his agency and NASA in efforts to prevent wildfires and improve safety.

Radio Story: A Forest Service - NASA Collaboration In Space
ACTUALITY: On Space Act Agreement

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FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

(Feature Line-Up Subject To Change Prior to Update On August 28, 2012)

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 35.12 – Stink bugs are on the brink of becoming a crisis in the U.S. In this edition of Agriculture USA, Susan Carter gets the story on what's being done to help curb the population of the pesky Chinese-exported brown marmorated stink bug.

CONSUMER TIME CD # 35.12 – Latest From USDA's Food Price Outlook. USDA Helps To Expand Wireless Technology At Farmers Markets. Dealing With Stink Bugs In Homes. Bed Bugs Could Hitch A Ride To School. Handling Food Safely While On The Road This Holiday.

AG UPDATE CD # 35.12 – The In's And Out's Of USDA Emergency Loans. A Forecast Of Global Food Security. Livestock Producers Benefit From Special Crop Insurance Provisions. The Stink Bug – From Pest To A National Crisis. DNA Barcording Deciphers Beneficial Insects.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – August 28 - Crop Weather Report (WAOB); Farm Income And Costs Report (ERS). August 30 – Outlook For US Agricultural Trade (ERS). August 31 – Agricultural Prices Report (NASS). September 3 – NO NEWSLINE (Labor Day Federal Holiday). **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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FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

USDA Suspends Central Valley Meat for Humane Handling Violations

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service Administrator Al Almanza comments on actions to investigate and respond to evidence of inhumane treatment of cattle at Central Valley Meat in Hanford, California

YouTube: USDA Suspends Central Valley Meat for Humane Handling Violations

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

POSITIVE CROP PROGRESS IN NORTH DAKOTA AND NORTHERN MINNESOTA –
2012 has been dry in the northern Plains, but **Mike Hergert** (Red River Farm Network - Grand Forks, North Dakota http://www.rrfn.com) adds abundant subsoil moisture and very timely rains have resulted in an excellent hard red spring wheat crop. "Yields have been much above average, with reports of 60 to 75 bushels very common, with some pushing closer to triple digits. Protein content has averaged well over 14 percent and test weights have been near 61 pounds per bushel."

Hergert says due to the expected huge crop of sugarbeets, the three sugar cooperatives in Minnesota and eastern North Dakota started their pre-pile harvest earlier than ever, on August 14th. Yields are already above 20 tons per acre, and by the time the stockpiling harvest begins in October, could exceed the co-ops' processing capacity. For that reason, sugarbeet grower-shareholders have been told they may have to destroy some of their crop.

As for other row crops including corn and soybeans, they appear to be about average and well ahead of normal progress.

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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

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