UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
USDA
Broadcasters Letter
Office of Communications
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Friday, August 31, 2012
Creative Media & Broadcast Center
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BROADCASTERS LETTER

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Friday, August 31, 2012

(August 30)

USDA GIVES GRANTS TO SUPPORT BEGINNING FARMERS AND RANCHERS ACROSS 24 STATES

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced more than $18 million in grants to organizations across 24 states to help beginning farmers and ranchers with the training and resources needed to run productive, sustainable farms. Under the Secretary's leadership since 2009, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has driven a number of efforts meant to spur interest in agriculture and provide the necessary support to young, beginning and socially-disadvantaged producers.

"In the past few decades, U.S. agriculture has become the second most productive sector of the American economy thanks to farmers adopting technology, reducing debt, and effectively managing risk," said Vilsack. "Last year, America's farmers, ranchers and producers achieved record farm income and record exports. To protect and sustain these successes, we must continue to build an agriculture industry diverse and successful enough to attract the smartest, hardest-working people in the nation. These grants will help beginning farmers and ranchers overcome the unique challenges they face and gain knowledge and skills that will help them become profitable and sustainable."

USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) awarded the grants through its Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) established through the 2008 Farm Bill. In his June 30, 2010 testimony before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry, the Secretary reminded Congress of the need to attract thousands of new producers in the coming years as American farmers and ranchers continue to age. Vilsack urged members of Congress to address this critical need when drafting a 2012 Food, Farm and Jobs bill. That legislation remains unfinished, while the current Farm Bill is set to expire on September 30, 2012.

BFRDP will provide $18 million in funding this year, the fourth year of the program. Future funding is dependent on congressional reauthorization. For more information on the BFRDP program, and for a list of fiscal year 2012 awards, visit NIFA.

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623
Story Info: USDA Newsroom
Radio Story: USDA Gives Grants To Help Next Generation Of Farmers And Ranchers

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AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK EXTENDS EMERGENCY GRAZING TO ASSIST RANCHERS IMPACTED BY DROUGHT

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a two-month extension for emergency grazing on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres, freeing up forage and feed for ranchers as they look to recover from this challenging time. This flexibility for ranchers marks the latest action by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide assistance to producers impacted by the drought, which has included opening CRP and other conservation acres to emergency haying and grazing, lowering the interest rate for emergency loans, and working with crop insurance companies to provide flexibility to farmers.

"It is also important that our farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses have the tools they need to be successful in the long term, said Vilsack. That's why President Obama and I continue calling on Congress to pass a comprehensive, multi-year Food, Farm and Jobs Bill that will continue to strengthen American agriculture in the years to come, ensure comprehensive disaster assistance for livestock, dairy and specialty crop producers, and provide certainty for farmers and ranchers."

The Secretary also designated 147 additional counties in 14 states as natural disaster areas-128 counties in 10 states due to drought. In the past seven weeks, USDA has designated 1,892 unduplicated counties in 38 states as disaster areas-1,820 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 in need.

To assist producers, USDA is permitting farmers and ranchers in drought stricken states that have been approved for emergency grazing to extend grazing on CRP land through Nov. 30, 2012, without incurring an additional CRP rental payment reduction. The period normally allowed for emergency grazing lasts through Sept. 30. The extension applies to general CRP practices (details below) and producers must submit a request to their Farm Service Agency county office indicating the acreage to be grazed. USDA's continuing efforts to add feed to the marketplace benefits all livestock producers, including dairy, during this drought. Expanded haying and grazing on CRP acres, along with usage of cover crops as outlined last week by the Secretary, has begun providing much needed feed to benefit all livestock, including dairy.

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. Visit USDA Newsroom for details the Department has announced to help farmers and ranchers over the past seven weeks.

The U.S. Drought Monitor indicates that 63 percent of the nation's hay acreage is in an area experiencing drought, while approximately 72 percent of the nation's cattle acreage is in an area experiencing drought. Approximately 86 percent of the U.S. corn is within an area experiencing drought, down from a peak of 89 percent on July 24, and 83 percent of the U.S. soybeans are in a drought area, down from a high of 88 percent on July 24. During the week ending August 26, USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service reported that 52 percent of U.S. corn and 38 percent of the soybeans were rated in very poor to poor condition, while rangeland and pastures rated very poor to poor remained at 59 percent for the fourth consecutive week. Visit USDA Newsroom for the latest primary counties and corresponding states designated as disaster areas for drought and other reasons.

Visit www.usda.gov/drought for the latest information regarding USDA's drought response and assistance.

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

LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS AFFECTED BY DISASTERS URGED TO KEEP GOOD RECORDS; THERE COULD BE POTENTIAL ASSISTANCE DEPENDING ON ACCURATE, TIMELY DATA FOR EXPEDITED HELP

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Administrator Juan M. Garcia urged livestock producers affected by natural disasters such as Hurricane Isaac to keep thorough records of their livestock and feed losses, including additional expenses for such things as feed purchases because of lost supplies.

"There are extraordinary circumstances caused by a variety of disasters from fires in the west, floods in Florida, Hurricane Isaac in the Gulf region, storms in the Mid-Atlantic and drought and heat affecting the heartland," said Garcia. "Each of these events is causing economic consequences for ranchers and producers including cattle, sheep and dairy operations, bee keepers and farm-raised fish, and poultry producers."

FSA recommends that owners and producers record all pertinent information of natural disaster consequences, including:

- Documentation of the number and kind of livestock that have died, supplemented if possible by photographs or video records of ownership and losses;
- Dates of death supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts;
- Costs of transporting livestock to safer grounds or to move animals to new pastures; and
- Feed purchases if supplies or grazing pastures are destroyed.

Secretary Vilsack also reminds producers that the department's authority to operate the five disaster assistance programs authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill expired on Sept. 30, 2011. This includes SURE; the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP); the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish (ELAP); the Livestock Forage Disaster Program

(LFP); and the Tree Assistance Program (TAP). Production losses due to disasters occurring after Sept. 30, 2011, are not eligible for disaster program coverage.

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

(August 29)

GREAT NEWS FOR AGRICULTURE:
USDA NOW FORECASTING RECORD FARM INCOME THIS YEAR

The Department of Agriculture made a big change in its farm income forecast for this year compared to its projection made back in February. USDA Chief Economist Joe Glauber gave some of the highlights of the new USDA farm income forecast for calendar year 2012.

Radio Story: USDA Now Forecasting Record Farm Income This Year
ACTUALITY: Highlights Of The USDA Farm Income Forecast
A New Forecast For Farm Household Income

AS SCHOOL GETS BACK IN SESSION THE FIRST PHASE OF THE NEW SCHOOL MEALS STANDARDS IS IMPLEMENTED

2012 marks the first of the three-year phase-in of the new school meals standards. The new standards ensure students are offered healthier, more nutritious foods in the lunch line. The new nutrition standards for school meals, implemented as a result of the historic Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, will help to combat child hunger and obesity and improve the health and nutrition of the nation's children.

"Improving the nutrition of school meals is an important investment in the future of America's children," said Agriculture Under Secretary for Food and Nutrition Services Kevin Concannon. "We know that healthy food plays a vital role in strengthening a child's body and mind and the healthier school meals will help to ensure our children can learn, grow, and reach their full potential."
Starting this school year, schools will phase in the nutrition standards over a three-year period. Schools will focus on changes in the lunches in the first year, with most changes in breakfast to take place in future years. The new meal standards:

- Ensure students are offered both fruits and vegetables every day of the week;
- Substantially increase offerings of whole grain-rich foods and low-fat milk or fat-free milk varieties;
- Limit calories based on the age of children being served to ensure proper portion size; and
- Focus on reducing the amounts of saturated fat, trans fats and sodium.

The new meal requirements are raising standards for the first time in more than fifteen years and improving the health and nutrition of nearly 32 million kids that participate in school meal programs every school day. The healthier school meals are a key component of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, which was championed by the First Lady as part of her Let's Move! campaign and signed into law by President Obama. First Lady Michelle Obama Welcomes Students Back To School.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) oversees the administration of 15 nutrition assistance programs, including school meals programs, that touch the lives of one in four Americans over the course of a year. These programs work in concert to form a national safety net against hunger. Visit www.fns.usda.gov for information about FNS and nutrition assistance programs. To learn about the meal standards, go to www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday.

Contact: Office of Communication (202) 720-4623
Story Info:
Radio Story: First Phase Of New School Meals Standards Is Implemented

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IT SEEMS THERE'S SOME RELIEF FOR DROUGHT STRICKEN ORGANIC LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS

The Agriculture Department is temporarily easing up on some of the grazing rules for organic livestock producers in drought disaster counties.

Radio Story: Some Relief For Drought Stricken Organic Livestock Producers

(August 28)

DUE TO THE LINGERING DROUGHT, MUCH OF AMERICA'S PASTURE AND RANGELAND REMAINS IN POOR CONDITION

U.S. Pasture And Rangeland Conditions Remain At A High Percentage In The Poor Category.

Radio Story: Much Pasture And Rangeland Remains In Poor Condition

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DESPITE ISAAC'S DOWNGRADE CONCERNS STILL ABOUND

Isaac could still cause problems for several states in its slow moving path. USDA meteorologist, Brad Rippey, explained the numerous kinds of potential flooding expected to occur in the next few day as a result of Isaac.

Radio Story: Concerns Still Abound, Despite Isaac's Downgrade
ACTUALITY: Types Of Flooding Caused By Isaac

WHEN FLOODING IS A POSSIBILITY, HOW DO YOU CARE FOR LIVESTOCK

In the wake of a rain storm like Hurricane Isaac there are various precautionary measures a producer may take to ensure the safety and well-being of their livestock.

Radio Story: Caring For Livestock When Flooding Is A Possibility

(August 27)

TROPICAL STORM ISAAC SHARES SIMILARITIES TO THE GULF'S HURRICANE KATRINA THAT HIT 7 YEARS AGO

Tropical Storm Isaac is strong and coming with major force along the same path as predecessor Hurricane Katrina. USDA Meteorologist Brad Rippey explained what Tropical Storm Isaac is anticipated to do. Rippey also talked about the ways that Isaac could damage cotton and rice crops and how the two could be in harms way from Isaac.

Radio Story: Tropical Storm Isaac Has Similarities Of The Gulf's Hurricane Katrina
ACTUALITY: The Expected Strength Of Tropical Storm Isaac
ACTUALITY: Why Isaac Could Hurt Cotton And Rice Crop
Delta Cotton And Rice In The Path Of Isaac

A WAIVER TO THE RENEWABLE FUELS STANDARD FROM THE EPA COULD BE TOTAL OR PARTIAL

What would be the outcome if the Environmental Protection Agency were to issue a waiver of the Renewable Fuels Standard? Matt Roberts, Ohio State University agricultural economist, saying there is a precedent for granting waivers to the Renewable Fuels Standard. There are several reasons why supporters of renewable fuels might oppose any waivers of the ethanol production mandates in the Renewable Fuels Standards.

Radio Story: Waiver To Renewable Fuels Standard Could Be Total Or Partial
ACTUALITY: There Is A Precedent For Granting RFS Waivers
Some Reasons Ethanol Industry Worries About Possible RFS Waiver

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AS STUDENTS RETURN TO SCHOOL THEY'RE FACED WITH HAVING TO DEAL WITH MOSQUITOES

Some parts of the country not only have the first day of school underway, but also efforts to curb a growing mosquito population and threat of West Nile Virus. Janet Hurley of Texas AgriLife Extension explained the potential cause behind a recent outbreak of West Nile Virus in parts of the U.S. Hurley gave preventative tips on keeping mosquitoes away from schools and illness away from students and adults.

Radio Story: Dealing With Mosquitoes To Start The School Year
ACTUALITY: Mosquitoes And Recent West Nile Virus Outbreak
Preventing Mosquito Related Illnesses At Schools

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's Weekly Radio Address

#34 Ag Sec Weekly Address – A Labor Day Thanks To Farmers And Workers

Learn more about President Lincoln's agricultural legacy here.

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FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

(Feature Line-Up Subject To Change Prior to Update On September 4, 2012)

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 36.12 – A decades long partnership continues to benefit the US Forest Service, NASA, and all citizens in new and exciting ways, thanks in part to a decade's long friendship. Rod Bain looks at this latest chapter of this partnership in this edition of "Agriculture USA".

CONSUMER TIME CD # 36.12 – Small Towns Impacted Big By USDA Funded Water Quality Projects. USDA At The Call When Emergencies Strike. Food Banks As A Global Food Security Tool. Dealing With Stink Bugs In Homes. Tips To Raising Sheep And Goats In Suburban Areas.

AG UPDATE CD # 36.12 – Conservation Innovation Grants For Water Quality Trading Markets. EPA Has A Hot Potato On Its Hands With Renewable Fuels Standard. DNA Barcording Deciphers Beneficial Insects. Food Banks As A Global Food Security Tool. Considering Goats For Getting Rid Of Invasive Weeds And Plants.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – September 4 – Crop Progress Report (NASS). September 5 - Crop Weather Report (WAOB). September 10 –Crop Progress Report (NASS). September 12 – Crop Production Reports (NASS) and World Agricultural Supply And Demand Estimates (ERS – WAOB). **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

School Meal Changes For New School Year

Healthier schools meals to improve childhood health is a
U.S. Department of Agriculture goal for the new school year

USDA YouTube: School Meal Changes For New School Year

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

THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

FIRST WINNER OF NEW NORMAN BORLAUG AWARD FOR FIELD RESEARCH AND APPLICATION – The award is endowed by the Rockefeller Foundation. The annual award recognizes researchers under 40 in the early stages of their work who emulate the scientific innovation and dedication demonstrated by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr. Norman Borlaug.

The winner is a young Indian social scientist whose research on groundwater resources in agriculture led to major policy changes benefiting thousands of farmers in West Bengal. **Dr. Aditi Mukherji**, a senior researcher at the International Water Management Institute's New Delhi office, has been named the winner of the new award. **Mukherji** will be formally presented with a $10,000 award on October 17, 2012, in Des Moines, Iowa, as part of this year's World Food Prize international symposium.

Mukherji's study included a her intense fieldwork surveying more than 4,000 groundwater users where she discovered that smallholder farmers in water-abundant eastern India were being prevented by certain policy restrictions from gaining access to the water resources needed for irrigating their crops. She then worked closely with the farmers and village residents to ensure that their concerns were fully recorded and that their collective voice was heard by the policy makers.

"Dr. Mukherji has demonstrated qualities that emulate Dr. Borlaug's ingenuity and perseverance in transferring his scientific breakthroughs to farmers and hungry people around the world through the gateway of government policy and action," said **Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn**, president of the World Food Prize Foundation. "Like Dr. Borlaug, she has shown persistence, innovation, effective communication, contribution to science, and application of that science for policy change to improve lives and livelihoods."

"Access to reliable, affordable and timely irrigation are very powerful tools of poverty alleviation," said **Mukherji**. "What truly inspires me is the impact that one's research can make on the lives of the poor by providing more food on their table – something that Dr. Borlaug showed us years ago through his pioneering work in Mexico, India and elsewhere. He is my ultimate role model."

Mukherji has a Ph.D degree in Human Geography from the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. She was also educated at Presidency College, Calcutta; Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi; and the Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai.

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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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