



Letter No. 3634
Friday, September 16, 2011
Creative Media & Broadcast Center
202-215-3931

BROADCASTERS LETTER

#3634

Friday, September 16, 2011

(September 15)

USDA TO PROVIDE FUNDING TO CREATE JOBS, IMPROVE RURAL ELECTRIC INFRASTRUCTURE

There are 27 rural electric cooperative utilities that will receive funding for generation and transmission projects, distribution facilities and smart grid technologies. These loans are designed to create jobs and finance rural electric utility improvements benefiting more than 28,000 rural customers in 18 states.

The \$603 million in loans are being provided by USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to help electric utilities upgrade, expand, maintain and replace rural America's electric infrastructure. RUS funding will help build or improve nearly 5,000 miles of distribution line and more than 100 miles of transmission line. USDA Rural Development also funds energy conservation and renewable energy projects.

"Improving the electric infrastructure in rural areas creates jobs by ensuring that businesses have reliable and affordable power supplies," says Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Electric cooperatives are leaders in rural economic development by helping rural areas retain existing jobs and attract new ones."

USDA Rural Development is providing more than \$35 million to finance smart grid technologies for advanced metering infrastructure and utilities use to better manage electric supply and demand. A project example: Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association in Minnesota receiving an \$8.6 million loan to build or improve 42 miles of line. It will use \$1.1 million for smart grid projects, including automated metering infrastructure and a geographic information system to increase mapping data accuracy. Also in Minnesota, Freeborn-Mower is receiving a \$3 million loan invest in more 80 miles of new or improved line and implement smart grid technologies, including automated metering infrastructure and load management systems.

September 8th, President Obama presented the [American Jobs Act](#) in an address to Congress for the purpose of putting more people back to work and putting more money in the pockets of working Americans. The American Jobs Act is specific in that it is aimed at putting people back to work right now, and doing so by not adding to the deficit. Through a combination of direct spending, such as infrastructure investments, and tax relief, such as an extension of the payroll tax cuts, it would lead to new American jobs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports, 21 direct or indirect jobs are created for each \$1

million invested in infrastructure. For a list of rural utilities that were selected to receive USDA funding visit <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications 202-720-4623
For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

USDA LAUNCHES A STUDENT VIDEO CONTEST TO HIGHLIGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF ENDING CHILDHOOD HUNGER

USDA Under Secretary Kevin Concannon invites children nationwide to enter the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) [Ending Childhood Hunger Video Contest](#). The students' original video presentations should show the country what they or their peers are doing to help end childhood hunger in their school or community. The winning videos will be showcased online and will serve to inspire students across the country to take action on the issue of childhood hunger.

"If we want to build our nation for the future then we need to make sure our kids are healthy and strong today," says Concannon. "We can start by ending childhood hunger and working to make sure all of our kids have the nutrition they need. We are excited to learn what valuable ideas kids across America have to contribute to addressing this need that touches the nation's most important resource – our children."

The contest is open to students from first through twelfth grade. FNS judges will determine the top 12 finalists in three categories: elementary, middle/junior high, and high schools. The public will vote on the finalists to determine the top two winners in each category. Winners will be promoted through various FNS channels including the FNS website, the USDA blog, local and national press releases, Facebook, Twitter, a national webinar, and the FNS Outreach Coalition annual meeting.

Videos must be submitted no later than October 21, 2011. For additional information and details on contest rules, please visit the contest webpage at <http://endhunger.challenge.gov>. The video contest is part of Hunger Action Month and is another way for communities to engage in the issue and inspire others around the country to act.

Contact: FNS Communications (703) 305-2281
For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

AG EXPORTS FALLING MONTHLY, BUT STILL HEADED FOR A RECORD

Despite a bit of a slowdown over the last four months, U.S. agricultural exports are still headed for a record. Nora Brooks, USDA economist, gives a rundown of how various commodities have been doing in the export market during the first ten months of this fiscal year compared to the same period in 2010.

For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>
For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16214>
<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16212>

OFFICIAL I.D. EAR TAGS AND ANIMAL DISEASE TRACEABILITY

Part of the framework for a proposed national animal disease traceability system involves official identification ear tags. One of the goals of a proposed animal disease traceability program is faster discovery of the source of an animal disease or the source of a food related illness outbreak.

For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16210>

<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16216>

(September 14)

THE USDA OFFERS SUPPORT FOR JOB CREATION AND BOOSTING SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The funding is being provided to producers and development organizations in 40 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to promote job creation and business development. "The Obama Administration and USDA are committed to helping rural small businesses grow, and to providing the technical support needed to spark sustainable job creation," says Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "The funds being provided today will foster an environment to create jobs in every part of the country."

The funding will be part of a coordinated effort to support job creation and business expansion. For example, in Newport, Vermont, the monies will expand a local food distribution system to provide local food to schools, hospitals and senior meal sites. The project is expected to support or create 56 jobs in Orleans County. The Intermediary Relending Program provides working capital and other support to local businesses through qualified intermediaries. In all, 69 awards totaling more than \$14.7 million were announced today to promote economic development efforts. A portion of the RBEG funding is intended to support Rural Economic Area Partnership efforts. Grants and loans are subject to the conditions outlined in the agreement. For a complete listing of the awards, [click here](#).

Contact: USDA Office of Communications 202-720-4623

For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16198>

<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16197>

PILOT PROJECTS IN ARKANSAS AND MISSISSIPPI PROVEN HELPFUL IN REDUCING FOOD INSECURITY FOR KIDS DURING SUMMER

The study found that the innovative pilot programs were associated with an increased average participation rate among kids in the Summer Food Service Programs by 35 percent in Arkansas and 19 percent in Mississippi. The program report assesses the impact of two 2010 Enhanced Summer Food Service Program demonstrations designed to prevent food insecurity and hunger among children during the summer months when school is out. The Arkansas demonstration offered per-lunch incentives to encourage SFSP providers or sponsors to operate for a greater portion of the summer. The Mississippi demonstration offered new recreational or educational activities at SFSP feeding sites to foster higher levels of participation. While a number of other factors in these states, including some additional funding used by Arkansas to enhance the program, may have influenced the results, the changes observed are consistent with generally positive impacts from the demonstrations.

"Hunger doesn't take a summer vacation, and the Summer Food Service Program helps to ensure that disadvantaged children receive the wholesome, nutritious meals they need when school is out," says Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services Kevin Concannon. "Through these

demonstration projects, we hope to find innovative ways to increase access to and participation in this valuable program, to help fill the summer nutrition gap."

USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services Janey Thornton said, "Summer Food Service Programs offer opportunities to continue a child's physical and social development while providing nutritious meals during long vacation periods. It helps children return to school prepared to achieve at their highest academic potential."

Contact: USDA Office of Communications 202-720-4623

For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

(September 13)

THE USDA WIDENS THE SCOPE OF ITS FIGHT AGAINST E. COLI IN MEAT

The Agriculture Department is widening the scope of its testing program for various types of E. coli bacteria in meat. The purpose says top USDA officials, is to protect the safety of the American food supply. Six additional serogroups of pathogenic E. coli will be declared adulterants in non-intact raw beef. Raw ground beef, its components, and tenderized steaks found to contain these bacteria will be prohibited from sale to consumers. The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) will launch a testing program to detect these dangerous pathogens and prevent them from reaching consumers.

As a result of this latest action, if the E. coli serogroups O26, O103, O45, O111, O121 and O145 are found in raw ground beef or its precursors, those products will be prohibited from entering commerce. Like E.coli O157:H7, these serogroups can cause severe illness and even death, and young children and the elderly are at highest risk. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identifies these particular serogroups of non-O157:H7 Shiga-toxin producing E.coli, or non-O157 STEC, as those responsible for the greatest numbers of non-O157 STEC illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths in the United States.

"The impact of foodborne illness on a family can be devastating," says Under Secretary Elisabeth Hagen. "Consumers deserve a modernized food safety system that focuses on prevention and protects them and their families from emerging threats. As non-O157 STEC bacteria have emerged and evolved, so too must our regulatory policies to protect the public health and ensure the safety of our food supply."

Today's action is an important part of the government-wide commitment to dealing with emerging microbial threats. Through the President's Food Safety Working Group, USDA and its federal partners have been working on a new, public health-focused approach to food safety based on the principles of prevention, strengthening surveillance and enforcement, and improving response.

"The Food and Drug Administration applauds USDA for taking this action to better protect consumers," says FDA Deputy Commissioner for Foods Mike Taylor. "We are committed to working with FSIS to prevent disease causing non-O157 STEC bacteria in all foods. Through implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act, FDA will continue to place prevention at the core of the efforts to improve the food safety system."

FSIS will begin testing for these six serogroups of STEC and enforcing the new policy on March 5, 2012. The Agency invites interested persons to submit comments within 60 days of publication in the Federal Register. As part of its multi-faceted approach to prevent foodborne illness, USDA also launched Food Safe Families, a consumer education campaign with the Ad Council, the [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). It is the first joint public service campaign to empower families to further reduce their risk of foodborne illness at home by checking their key food safety steps: clean, separate, cook, and chill. For more information, go to <http://www.foodsafety.gov>.

Contact: Office of Communications 202-720-4623 or FSIS Press Office 202-720-9113

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16189>

FIRST FREEZE EVENT OF THE SEASON ON THE WAY

Many far Northern states will see freeze events throughout the week, causing concerns about crops. USDA Meteorologist Brad Rippey discusses the concern about immature corn and soybeans being hit by a freeze event this week in the Northern-most reaches of the Corn Belt.

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16190>
<http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16191>

AG SEC VILSACK SAYS DAIRY PROGRAM REFORM NEEDED AND NEEDED QUICKLY

Another dairy industry crisis could be just "around the corner" says Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16175>

(September 12)

DIFFICULT BUDGET DECISIONS COMING FOR THE USDA AND FARMERS

The Agriculture Secretary says budget cuts will mean difficult decisions will need to be made as USDA tries to maintain services and a financial safety net for farmers.

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16178>

THE FATE OF USDA'S "SURE" DISASTER PROGRAM IS UNSURE

Farmers and USDA officials have complained about the long waiting period for farmers to get payments from the SURE disaster program, but after October second, there will be no SURE program at all.

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16177>

AG SEC VILSACK Says TO FARMERS: TELL THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE GOOD THINGS YOU DO

The administration agricultural official says farmers can do something about the eroding public and political attention being paid to rural and agricultural issues.

For Radio Story: <http://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/radnewsdetail.asp?ID=16174>

THE USDA AND FDA ARE WORKING TO PROVIDE AID FOR FARMERS WITH FLOOD-DAMAGED CROPS

The assistance will be available to farmers whose crops were damaged by severe flooding from Tropical Storms Irene and Lee. The USDA and FDA are working closely together to ensure that farmers with flood-damaged crops that can't be marketed are compensated for their losses. FDA considers ready-to-eat crops whose edible portion has been in contact with flood waters to be adulterated due to potential exposure to sewage, animal waste, heavy metals, pathogenic microorganisms, or other contaminants. Therefore, these crops should not enter the food or animal feed supply. Crops insured by federal crop insurance or by the Noninsured Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) are covered when floodwaters have rendered them valueless.

"We are working closely with FDA to protect people and livestock from damaged crops, while not penalizing the farmer whose crops are affected," says Michael Scuse, Acting Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services. "I want to assure insured farmers that they are covered under the federal crop insurance program for crops not harvested due to flood damage. America's farmers and rural communities are vitally important to our nation's economy, producing the food, feed, fiber and fuel that continue to help us grow and out-compete the rest of the world."

FDA Deputy Commissioner for Foods Michael R. Taylor says, "We empathize with the farmers who are dealing with the loss of crops due to recent flooding. We all share the goal of protecting the food supply. We are working directly with USDA on damage response and will consult with them on assistance for farmers following our guidance to keep damaged crops out of the food supply."

Also, disposition of crops in proximity to, or exposed to a lesser degree of flooding, where the edible portion of the crop has not come in contact with flood waters, may need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. FDA experts are available for these through local FDA district offices. Meantime, the USDA is encouraging farmers and ranchers to contact their crop insurance companies and local USDA Farm Service Agency Service Centers, as applicable, to report damages to crops or livestock loss. More information about federal crop insurance may be found at www.rma.usda.gov. Additional resources to help farmers and ranchers deal with flooding may be found at <http://www.usda.gov/disaster>.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications 202-720-4623

For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

THE USDA EXPANDS EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR AMERICAN CHERRY PRODUCERS

Cherries are the first U.S. fresh fruit to gain access to the Western Australia market after 10 years of negotiations. The opening of the market positions Australia as the seventh most valuable export market for U.S. cherries.

"The market opening in Western Australia is great news for American sweet cherry producers of the Northwest and even better news for American agricultural exports, which are forecast to set records this year and next thanks to the dedication of American producers," says Michael Scuse, Acting Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services. "In fact, U.S. horticultural exports are expected to surge going into 2012 thanks to the high-quality of American-grown fruits and vegetables."

The Australian market is a rapidly growing market for U.S. cherries. U.S. cherries from California have had access to the eastern states of Australia since the late 1990s and Washington and Oregon have been allowed to export to the eastern Australian states since 2001. A final push by importers in Western Australia resulted in the first cherry import into that Australian State last month. The Washington State Fruit Commission/Northwest Cherry Growers used the USDA Market Access Program funds to showcase the products as they arrived in Perth, in Western Australia.

In 2009, a record 2,334 metric tons of cherries valued at \$15.6 million were shipped to the Australian market, compared with \$1.4 million in 1999 when the market first opened. Over the years, the USDA and the California and Pacific Northwest cherry industries have worked together to develop the scientific

research needed to support the phytosanitary negotiations between the USDA and Biosecurity Australia. These efforts, along with strong industry market development, have nurtured and maintained exports to this market.

The USDA recently forecast fiscal year 2011 and 2012 exports will reach a record \$137 billion, \$22 billion higher than the previous record set in 2008 and \$28 billion above 2010. Strong agricultural exports contribute to the positive U.S. trade balance, create jobs, boost economic growth and support President Obama's National Export Initiative goal of doubling all U.S. exports by the end of 2014.

Contact: Katie Gorscak 202-720-0555

For More Story Info: <http://www.usda.gov/newsroom>

For more agriculture news go to www.usda.gov and click Newsroom on the toolbar. Also, check out the [USDA Blog](#)



FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 38.11 – A USDA advisory committee has been revived with the specific purpose of finding answers to long studied questions on agricultural biotechnology and coexistence among various types of ag producers. Rod Bain looks at the drivers behind this effort in this edition of "Agriculture USA".

CONSUMER TIME CD # 38.11 – USDA Taking More Steps Against E.Coli Bacteria In Meat. When Flooding Affects Well Water And Septic Systems. Weather And Why Leaves Change Color. Preparing Vegetables For The Frost. Consideration Key In Graveside Plantings.

AG UPDATE CD # 38.11 – The Tough And Complex Job Of Making Dairy Policy. USDA Keeps Working On New Rules For Livestock Trading Behavior. Lower Corn Yields, But It's No Surprise. The September Crop Report Is Pretty Much As Expected. Texas Braces For The Return Of La Nina.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – September 20 – Crop Weather (WAOB). September 23 – Cattle On Feed Report (NASS). September 26 - Crop Progress (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.**

USDA Radio Newsline, 202-720-6776, 5:00pm ET

Or go to www.usda.gov, click on Newsroom at top of the page, scroll down on right side of page until you see Radio and TV. Then click on Daily Radio News Service or Weekly Radio Feature Service. For questions about USDA Radio's Features, fax name, station, and address to 202-690-2165.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

SECRETARY VILSACK ADDRESSES FARMERS

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack addressed members of the National Farmers Union and answered their questions during a meeting at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C. (9-12-11)

New TV actualities are available on the USDA FTP site

**Filenames: vilsack nfu bite 1
vilsack nfu bite 2**

Download instructions:

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The new file is in QuickTime Movie (H.264), MPEG 4, MPEG2 and HDV
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>



USDA GUARANTEES LOAN FOR FLORIDA BIOFUEL PLANT

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued a loan guarantee to support construction of a waste to energy bio-processing facility in Florida

YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqLAMxTptXw&feature=channel_video_title

Video Podcast: <http://downtoearth.usda.libsynpro.com/rss>

A new TV feature is available on the USDA FTP site

Filename: florida biofuel

Download instructions:

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The new file is in QuickTime Movie (H.264), MPEG 4, MPEG2 and HDV
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

GRANTS TO GROW SCHOOL GARDENS – The Western Growers Foundation awarded grants to nine schools in California and Arizona to help make that happen. Part of the goal is to have classrooms where students witness the lifecycle of a plant instead of just reading about it. **Paula Olson** of the Western Growers Foundation says, “Western Growers Foundation is supporting school gardens that not only teach our kids where their food comes from, they also teach children the joys and benefits of eating healthy fresh fruits and vegetables. In the face of an ongoing battle with childhood obesity and unhealthy diets, those lessons are what will really change our world.”

Grants have been awarded to the following schools:

California – Dingle Elementary in Woodland; Bahia Vista School in San Rafael; Bret Harte Elementary School in Sacramento; Point Fermin Marine Science Magnet in San Pedro; Marblehead Middle School in San Clemente

Arizona – Brunson-Lee Elementary in Phoenix; Lawrence E. Jones Middle School in Rohnert Park; Tucson Village Farm in Tucson; W.F. Killip Elementary and Community Learning Center in Flagstaff.

***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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