



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Broadcasters Letter

Office of Communications

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BROADCASTERS LETTER

#3688.2012

Friday, October 19, 2012

(October 18)

FOOD PRICES UPDATE

Food price inflation is slowing to a crawl. Corn prices don't seem to be as high as many people expected. Ricky Volpe, USDA economist, said that there was a drop in meat prices in September. They are still much higher than last year, but are at least falling somewhat. Volpe said that fruit and vegetable prices are costing less than last year.

Radio Info: [Food Prices Barely Moving Up At All](#)
[Corn Prices Not Meeting Expectations](#)
[ACTUALITY: Meat Prices Fell A Little From August To September](#)
[ACTUALITY: Fruit And Veggie Prices Actually Lower Than Last Year](#)

COULD ELEPHANT GRASS BE A POTENTIAL BIOFUEL SOURCE

A tropical livestock feedstock is now being studied as a potential source to produce biofuels. William Anderson of USDA's Agricultural Research Service gave some background on napier grass, also known as elephant grass, and how it could become a potential biofuel feedstock. Anderson discussed areas of research conducted on napier grass, a.k.a. elephant grass, as a potential biofuel feedstock.

Radio Info: [Elephant Grass As A Potential Biofuel Source](#)
[ACTUALITY: What Is Elephant Grass?](#)
[ACTUALITY: Aspects Of Elephant Grass Research](#)

(October 17)

**RECORD AG EXPORTS HELPING TO GROW
PENNSYLVANIA SMALL BUSINESSES**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack traveled to Pennsylvania to highlight the country's agricultural exports which have been at record levels since 2008. While in York, the Secretary visited Nuts About Granola, a small mother/daughter business that sells breakfast and snack items to regional farmers markets, online and to international buyers. During his visit to Philadelphia, Mr. Vilsack met with producers and businesses who have worked with Food Export – Northeast, with funding support from USDA's Market Access Program (MAP), to develop strategies for growing their businesses through increased exports.

Agricultural exports from Northeast states have grown from \$9.2 billion in 2008 to \$11.6 billion in 2011, while U.S. exports over the same period have expanded by more than \$20 billion, supporting more than 1 million good-paying American jobs in industries such as processing, packaging, transportation and sales.

"Since 2009, the President has signed into law important trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Panama, keeping good-paying jobs here at home," said Vilsack. "At the same time, USDA has acted to remove hundreds of unfair barriers to trade for American companies and provide businesses with the resources they need to reach new markets. These efforts have resulted in the most successful period in the history of American agriculture and a boon for America's rural economies. Congress needs to help ensure that this success continues by passing a comprehensive, multi-year Food, Farm and Jobs Bill that provides greater certainty for farmers, ranchers and businesses."

The Secretary stressed that with USDA's chief export assistance programs having expired October 1, it has put resources even further out of reach for small and medium-sized businesses hoping to sell their products to international buyers. He added that only 1 percent of U.S. companies export, and yet 95 percent of the world's consumers live outside the borders of the United States, creating significant opportunities for U.S. food and agriculture.

The latest export forecast sees U.S. farm exports at their second highest level ever in 2012, while the forecast for 2013 is a record \$143.5 billion. Vilsack said new trade agreements with South Korea, Panama and the European Union will deliver even greater returns for Pennsylvania-based and other U.S. businesses.

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-3088

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

**USDA ANNOUNCES PROJECTS TO CREATE
RURAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN 39 STATES**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the selection of 112 recipients in 39 states, Washington, DC, and the Western Pacific for loans and grants to help spur rural economic development and create or save jobs. "These awards illustrate the important impact that economic development assistance can have on small towns and rural communities," Vilsack said. "Whether the funding is given directly to individuals or businesses, or indirectly through utilities and other intermediaries, the results are the same: new jobs, stronger economies and more vibrant communities."

USDA is providing assistance through several Rural Development programs. In one, the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program, utilities receive zero-interest loans that they pass through to local businesses for projects to create and retain jobs in rural areas. For more information about the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program visit http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_redlg.html.

Contact: Jay Fletcher (202) 690-0498
Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

**RURAL COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS
FOR 30 PLUS ORGANIZATIONS**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the selection of 35 organizations for Rural Cooperative Development grants to provide technical and business development assistance in rural areas. The Rocky Mountain Farmers Union Education and Charitable Foundation, Inc. has been selected for a \$175,000 grant to support a business development center for newly formed cooperatives in Colorado. In Dennison, Minnesota the Food Co-op Initiative has been selected for a grant, also \$175,000, to support a center that will help create businesses and establish new markets for local producers. For more information about the Rural Cooperative Development Grant program visit http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_RCDG.html.

Contact: Jay Fletcher (202) 690-0498
Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

**USDA SCIENTISTS COLLABORATE WITH GLOBAL RESEARCHERS
TO ADVANCE THE MAPPING OF THE BARLEY GENOME**

U.S. Department of Agriculture is part of a major advance that will unlock the benefits of the mapping of the barley genome, one of the world's most important cereal crops. The work conducted and supported by USDA in collaboration with researchers from around the world has resulted in the most advanced sequencing of the barley genome to date. It is reported in the journal [Nature](#). For more information on the International Barley Sequencing Consortium (IBSC) visit www.barleygenome.org.

The advance will give researchers the tools to produce higher yields, improve pest and disease resistance, and enhance nutritional value of barley. Past genomic research supported by USDA has provided similar benefits to crops such as tomato and corn, and helped improve cattle breeding and enhance the productivity of dairy cows.

"USDA supports innovative genomics research that is really moving us forward to meeting the many challenges we face in food, fuel and agriculture production," said Catherine Woteki, USDA's Chief Scientist and Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics. "This important step toward full barley genome sequencing offers enormous potential for global food security. Using the tools of genetics and genomics, we are keeping farmers profitable and our food supply safe and abundant."

Nearly twice as large as the human or maize genomes, the barley genome was a challenge to sequence, due to its complexity and its large proportion of repetitive regions, which are difficult to piece together into a true linear order. By developing and applying a series of innovative strategies that allowed them to circumvent these difficulties, the IBSC created a high-resolution assembly that places the majority of barley genes in order. This new resource provides the sequences of nearly all genes and associated regulatory regions, which will offer new direction to researchers seeking to improve barley yield and quality through functional genomics (determining the functions of important barley genes) and genomics-assisted breeding.

Along with project investigators Timothy Close and Stefano Lonardi at the University of California, Riverside (UCR) and Gary Muehlbauer at the University of Minnesota, supported by grants from USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists Roger Wise and Jesse Poland, together with scientists from 19 other organizations around the world, make up the International Barley Sequencing Consortium (IBSC).

The success of the barley genome sequencing, and other grass family crops including wheat and rye, will allow breeders and scientists to effectively address the challenge of feeding the world's growing population living in an environment that increasingly challenges farmers and ranchers with extreme weather events.

Contact: Mary Conley (202) 720-1375

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

Radio Story: [Advancing Barley Genome Sequencing And Its Impacts](#)

[ACTUALITY: International Work To Sequence Barley Genome](#)

(October 16)

USDA ANNOUNCES THE NATION'S SIXTH REGIONAL BIOFUELS SYSTEM, MEANT TO SPUR INNOVATION AND JOB CREATION IN THE NORTHEAST

Pennsylvania State University was awarded \$10 million to develop next-generation biofuels. The five-year research grant is to develop biomass supply chains for the production of liquid transportation and aviation biofuels in the Northeast. This is the sixth such award made through USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), aimed at developing regional, renewable energy markets, generating rural jobs, and decreasing America's dependence on foreign oil. In September 2011, the Secretary announced five major AFRI grants for the formation of five regional systems in the Pacific Northwest, the Northwest, Northern states, Southern states, and the Southeast. The announcement highlights USDA's support for public and private research in building the framework for a competitively-priced, American-made biofuels industry in every major American region.

"The creation of this biofuel system will significantly contribute to improving rural prosperity and job creation in the Northeast by funding effective public and private sector partnerships," Vilsack said. "Overall, the six regional systems supported by USDA represent an opportunity to create thousands of new jobs and drive economic development in rural communities across America by building the framework for a competitively-priced, American-made biofuels industry."

The grants came through USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The NEWBio Consortium will focus on the non-food biomass sources of willow, miscanthus and switchgrass, which can be grown on former strip mines and marginal floodplains. Through an integrated research, education and Extension approach, the consortium will address the entire biofuel production spectrum, including crop genetic development, harvesting, storage and processing techniques and sustainable production systems. The biomass research will develop sustainable production practices to improve yield by 25 percent and reduce costs by 20 percent.

By partnering with industry, the research will enable private-sector partners to produce advanced ready-to-use liquid transportation and aviation biofuels. The team aims to provide business support to generate at least 100 supply contracts and support more than 50 new supply chain businesses to harvest, transport and preprocess biomass.

The project will also address education and outreach to students, citizens, landowners and policymakers to increase their understanding of biomass alternatives – including the social, economic and environmental impacts of sustainable bioenergy in the Northeast.

USDA is working with federal partners like the Department of Energy (DOE), the U.S. Navy and the Federal Aviation Administration to improve America's energy security and provide sustainable jobs in communities across the country. Currently, USDA, DOE and Navy are partnering with the private sector to produce advanced drop-in aviation and marine biofuels to power military and commercial transportation.

USDA is working to develop the national biofuels industry producing energy from non-food sources in every region of the country. Working with private and government partners, USDA is supporting research into innovative energy technologies and processes, helping companies build biorefineries - including the first ever commercial-scale cellulosic ethanol facilities - and supporting farmers, ranchers, and businesses taking risks to pursue new opportunities in biofuels.

Contact: Jennifer Martin (202) 720-8188

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

Radio Info: [USDA Announces Grant For Northeastern Biofuels System Research](#)

[ACTUALITY: More About The Northeast Biofuels Project](#)

[ACTUALITY: Northeastern Biofuels Project Fits Into National Plan](#)

**THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE IMPACT FROM
THE SEASON'S EARLY COLD WEATHER**

Thankfully the impact of a few early season freezes has been minor.

Radio Info: [Little Impact From Early Season Cold Weather](#)

**THE LATEST ON THIS YEAR'S
TROPICAL STORMS AND HURRICANES**

We're near the usual secondary peak of the tropical storm-hurricane season.

Radio Info: [Tropical Storms And Hurricanes](#)

October 15)

**USDA ANALYSTS LOWERED THE CORN EXPORT FORECAST
IN LATEST CROP REPORT ESTIMATES**

USDA adjusted its supply and demand estimate balance sheet this month with the biggest change in the exports category. World Agricultural Outlook Board Chair Gerry Bange compared the totals in corn production between the September stocks report and this month's crop production estimates.

Radio Info: [Corn Export Forecast Lowered In Latest USDA Estimates](#)
[ACTUALITY: On Corn Production Numbers](#)

**THE U.S. ISN'T THE ONLY NATION AFFECTING
THE WORLD'S CORN PRODUCTION**

While our nation is far and away the world's leading corn producer, other nations are reporting lower production this season.

Radio Info: [It's Not Just The U.S. Affecting World Corn Production Estimates](#)

**THE WORLD WHEAT PRODUCTION ESTIMATES
ARE LOWERED AGAIN**

Lower production forecasts in some major wheat producing countries continue to impact the overall world wheat production estimates. USDA World Agricultural Outlook Board Chair Gerry Bange shared the highlights from the October US Wheat Supply And Demand Estimate.

Radio Info: [World Wheat Production Estimates Lowered Again](#)
[ACTUALITY: On U.S. Wheat Supply And Demand Estimate](#)

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**Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's
WEEKLY RADIO ADDRESS**

[TV #41 Ag Sec Weekly Address - Strengthening Homegrown Energy](#)



[USDA Celebrates 150 Years](#)

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

(Feature Line-Up Subject To Change Prior to Update On October 23, 2012)

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 43.12 – A recently established network of USDA Agricultural Research Service watershed research and experimental range stations hopes to improve problem solving in rangelands and watersheds. Rod Bain looks at this network and its purpose in this edition of "Agriculture USA".

CONSUMER TIME CD # 43.12 – Boosting The Nutrition Of Food Aid Products, The Dynamics Of Parents Supporting Older Children, It's Time For Pumpkin Power, The Origins Of Our Halloween Traditions, The Alternatives To Sweet Halloween Treats.

AG UPDATE CD # 43.12 – A Biofuels Research Effort Expands. What's Going On With The Nation's Corn Supply? A New Value-Added For Algae Co-Product. Raising Small Ruminants On A Suburban Farm. Goats As Invasive Weed and Plant Remover.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – October 23 - Crop Weather Report (WAOB). October 25 – Food Price Outlook (ERS). October 29 – 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.**

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

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Then click on Daily Radio News Service or Weekly Radio Feature Service.

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FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

USDA Helps Young Innovators

USDA assisted young students involved in a competition
to find new ways to prevent foodborne illness

YouTube: [USDA Helps Young Innovators](#)



Healthier Soils For Healthier Farms

USDA is advising farmers on ways to make soils healthier
for the long-term success of their operations

FTP Download instructions:

The host: <ftp://ocbmtcmedia.download.akamai.com>

User name: usdanews

Password: Newscontent1

Filename for **TV Feature**: Indiana Soil Health

The new file is in QuickTime Movie (H.264)

YouTube: [Soil Health Youtube](#)

Video Podcast: [Soil Health iTunes](#)

RSS Page: [Soil Health RSS](#)

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>

***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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