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## Many agricultural issues are in the news

### Animal Antibiotics

Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (D-NY) plans to reintroduce her 2009 bill that proposed to reduce the amount of antibiotics used on animals.

“The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act” lists goals such as phasing out non-therapeutic use of antibiotics in livestock. Slaughter says she plans to work closely with the Obama administration to decrease antibiotic use on animals, which she cites as a cause for human antibiotic resistance.

### Antiquities Act

Two bills have been introduced in Congress to amend the Antiquities Act to require more oversight in the national monument designation process. Senate Bill 407 was introduced by Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) and 8 other senators, and H.R. 758 was introduced by Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) and 19 other representatives. More than 30 livestock groups recently sent letters of support for the legislation.

Designed to protect historic landmarks and objects of historical or scien-

tific interest, the Antiquities Act has more recently been used to set aside millions of acres of the West in national monuments where grazing, transportation, and natural resources development are affected.

If successful, the introduced legislation would allow the president to designate only “the smallest area essential to ensure the proper care and management of the objects to be protected.” The bills would also require the administration to gather public comments, hold public hearings, and report to Congress an outline of the designation’s impact on the local economy, national energy security, and other uses associated with the land.

### Wild Horses and Burros

Director of the Bureau of Land Management Bob Abbey has announced that following an extensive public process, the agency is accelerating fundamental reforms to how it manages wild horses and burros on public lands.

The proposed strategy includes reducing the number of wild horses removed from the range for at least

the next 2 years; reaffirming the central role that the National Academy of Sciences (NAS)’s on-going review of the program will have on science-based management decisions; increasing adoptions; significantly expanding the use of fertility control to maintain herd levels; and improving its care and handling procedures to enhance the humane treatment of the animals. The BLM will continue to oppose the killing or slaughter of wild horses or burros as a management practice.

“We’ve taken a top to bottom look at the wild horse and burro program and have come to a straightforward conclusion: we need to move ahead with reforms that build on what is working and move away from what is not,” Director Abbey said. “To achieve our goal of improving the health of the herds and America’s public lands, we need to enlist the help of partners, improve transparency and responsiveness in the program, and reaffirm science as the foundation for management decisions. It will take time to implement these reforms, but as a

first step we are aiming to increase adoptions and broaden the use of fertility control. And while we do this, we are reducing removals while NAS helps us ensure that our management is guided by the best available science.”

### All States Lose Ag Acres

The most recent National Resources Inventory, a survey of U.S. non-federal lands conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, has revealed that every state lost agricultural land to development between 1982 and 2007 — more than 23 million acres in all.

According to the survey, the five states to lose the most land were Texas, California, Florida, Arizona and North Carolina. The states that developed the largest percentage of their land were New Jersey (26.8%), Rhode Island (22.5%), Massachusetts (18.1%), Delaware (14.3%) and New Hampshire (13.2%). Further, 44% more of the land converted was considered prime agricultural land than not, raising concerns among experts.

# President's Report



By Deb Dressler  
North Dakota

## National Agriculture Day recognizes food producers

talks.

Originally the day was proposed as a national holiday, but all the proposals failed. Even though it was never named a national holiday, by 1975 Ag Day came to be celebrated annually with a national celebration in Washington, D.C., and communities across the nation.

Agriculture Week is time to thank farmers and ranchers for the safe, abundant and reasonably priced food supply most Americans take for granted. If you eat, you are involved in agriculture.

It is not too late to register for the WIFE Legislative Board of Di-

rectors meeting to be held in Washington, D.C. Contact Deb Dressler or Shana Baisch for room arrangements. WIFE will visit the United States Department of Agriculture, have Senate and House briefings, and have Hill visits. Come along and "tell your story."

Spring is just around the corner; I received the first seed catalog and saw a robin a few days ago. As I look out the window at all the snow on the ground, I say, "Green grass is coming soon!"

Happy Trails until next month, and hope to see you in Washington, D.C.

The first celebration of National Agriculture Day (also known as Ag Day) took place on March 26, 1973, with David S. Bennett of Miller Publishing Company as chairperson. To increase public awareness of American agriculture and the role that agricultural producers play in producing and delivering food to the American public was the purpose of the first Ag Day. Ag Day was formed to celebrate and recognize the many contributions agriculture makes.

Once celebrated as a single day on or around the first day of spring, Ag Day is now celebrated within an entire National Agricultural Week. The Agriculture Council of America (ACA, formed in 1973), managed by leaders in agriculture, food and fiber communities, conducts Ag Day at the national level and has done so since 1982. Early in its history, Ag Day operated with the sponsorship of National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA), but it now has a variety of sponsors each year.

The variety of activities included on Ag Day are poster displays, media and educational events, seminars, farm tours, presentations at schools and universities, and public

## In Memory of George Balsdon

George Earl Balsdon, 79, of Osnabrock, ND, died Sunday, February 27, 2011, following a short illness. He was the husband of Vernice Balsdon, North Dakota WIFE President and board member of FAED.

George was born November 13, 1931, on his grandparent's farm near Beaulieu, ND. He began a lifetime of farming at a young age with his father Earl. George was united in marriage to Vernice Lee of Walthalla on December 26, 1953. They made their home in Hay Township.

George and Vernice became the loving parents of three children. He truly loved and was dedicated to farming, especially enjoying being able to farm with his

sons and grandsons.

George is survived by his wife Vernice; one daughter: Debra of Bismarck, ND; two sons: Leland (Carolyn) of Osnabrock along with grandchildren Sally, Tyler and Nicholas, and Paul (Lana) of Osnabrock along with grandchildren Jayme and Ramsey; and one sister: Bessie Penner of Devils Lake, ND.

He was preceded in death by his parents and grandparents: Fred and Martha (Schradler) Balsdon and Andrew and Mary (McLean) Nodwell.

A funeral service was held on Thursday, March 3, 2011, at the United Methodist Church of Langdon, ND, with the Reverend Tim Vorlage officiating.



By Frances Rohla  
Nebraska

# Pork Report

## Pork checkoff funds are used for variety of purposes

### Pork Checkoff

One of the uses for pork checkoff funds is to separate nutrition facts from fiction. For example: Nutrient-rich lean pork is relatively low in calories (TRUE); The sodium nitrate in the cured pork causes cancer (FALSE). These issues have been brought up at the world's largest gathering of food and nutrition experts at the American Dietetic Association's annual conference.

"It's important for us to counter the misconception that persists about pork," said Adria Sheil-Brown, manager of nutrition communication and research.

The International PRRS Symposium was sponsored by U.S. Pork Checkoff money. The annual meeting drew 275 researchers and pork industry participants from 22 countries. The porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) is one of the most costly diseases for American pork producers, costing nearly \$600 million annually.

### Swine Premises

U.S. swine premises have surpassed 92 percent of USDA data, which represents 65,907 premises. Nearly half of these farms were registered over the last three years in conjunction with a cooperative agreement signed between the pork industry and the U.S.

### Manure Pit Research

Problems in deep manure pits at some pork production facilities were identified in Nebraska in 2010, but problems were also identified in 2009 in the states of Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. Rick Stowell, a University of Nebraska-

Lincoln extension agriculture engineer and associate professor of biological systems engineering, described the manure foam as dark gray with a greasy consistency. The foam is likely to be six inches to two feet. A well ventilated structure is of the most importance in a barn.

Universities in Nebraska, Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa are cooperating

to find ways to prevent the foaming. The risk is greatest when the barns are empty and ventilation is shut off. All ignition sources should be shut off when the pits are agitated. When a producer starts to agitate the manure foam, it will release methane gas into the barn. When pits release methane gas, flash fires may occur.

*(Information from Farm Progress)*



By Gwen Cassel  
New York

# Sheep and Goats Report

## Feed can be too good

Generally, sheep and goats are bred and have their young easily. However, in a year of different and difficult weather throughout our country, there seems to be a rise in questions related to pregnancy management of our animals. On several sheep and goat lists, there has been a distinct rise in questions about animals diagnosed with ketosis and/or after post-mortem, being discovered to be extremely fat, often carrying triplets!

For most of the years I have owned sheep, I have lambed in the "spring," May in upstate New York. I supplement medium quality hay with corn only in the last month of pregnancy for most of my ewes, as they were out on grass by the time lambs were being born and ready to graze themselves. For about seven years I helped manage a ewe flock of over 300 ewes lambing three times a year.

With rising grain prices and other inputs going higher as the winter goes on, I am surprised when the individuals posting on these lists explain their feed-

ing practices. Usually it is a diet heavy in grain products and/or extremely high quality hay (before lambing or kidding), or a very convoluted mixture of feeds. Ruminants are a simple animal; they need an ADEQUATE diet of adequate ROUGHAGE (for multiple stomachs and "ruminating"), well handled ENERGY and PROTEIN, and well-balanced MINERALS (including the correct amount of Selenium according to where you are located), throughout the pregnancy and during lactation. In my flocks over the years, needs BEFORE and AFTER lambing or kidding were accommodated.

I have always used a MEDIUM QUALITY hay. In our dairy cow area it is known as "heifer hay," but will make up for it in feed. . . . Horses ARE NOT ruminants. They need much less roughage and a higher quality base diet when working, pregnant or lactating. Sheep and goats ARE RUMINANTS, and the hay fed is the ROUGHAGE part of the diet which should also provide a degree of dietary protein.

Cured baleage has a higher protein content and may need to be supplemented with some calories (corn) toward the

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By Mary Ellen Cammack  
South Dakota

# Beef Report

## New studies examine heifer growth and pregnancy rates

Research conducted during the late 1960s and into the early 1980s established that puberty in heifers occurs at a genetically predetermined size. Only when heifers reach their “target” weight can high pregnancy rates be obtained. With these studies and information, guidelines were established to indicate replacement heifers should achieve 60-65 percent of their expected mature body weight by breeding.

Cattle genetics and economics have substantially changed this traditional approach, and caused re-evaluation to occur. Intensive heifer development systems may maximize pregnancy rates but may not optimize profit or sustainability. Nearly all studies on heifer development over the last half century have focused on production to first calving, with little information concerning effects of heifer development systems on lifetime productivity.

Altering rate and timing of gain can result in periods of compensatory growth and/or allow producers to limit supplementation to critical periods of heifer development, providing an opportunity to decrease feed costs. Delaying heifer gain until 47 or 56 days prior to the breeding season did not negatively influence reproductive performance, but reduced the amount of feed needed. In the first year of this study, puberty was delayed to achieve lower early gains. Conception rate in these heifers tended to be improved. Delayed gain, until the later part of the post weaning period, reduced total energy intake, but calving

rate, age at calving, postpartum interval, and second year pregnancy rate were not impacted. These studies indicated that total energy intake, and possibly heifer development costs, may be reduced by limiting heifer gain early in the post weaning period followed by accelerated gains before the breeding season.

Substantial research contributed to the guidelines of developing heifers to 60-65 percent of mature body weight at time of breeding. Since that time, scrotal circumference has been used as an indicator trait for puberty. From 1985 to the present, substantial progress has been made through selection for this trait, thus the inability of heifers to attain puberty prior to breeding may not be as problematic as heifers reaching puberty before weaning.

In the first 45 days of the breeding period, pregnancy rates were 89.8 percent for heifers fed to 57 percent of their mature body weight, and 77.9 percent for heifers fed to 51 percent of mature body weight. One major finding is that a heifer’s ability to conceive during her first breeding season is the age she reaches puberty. Heifers calving early during their first calving season have greater lifetime calf production that those calving late and are more likely to become pregnant sooner as a two year old. When heifer development is restricted, age at the beginning of the breeding season is more critical than body weight.

The recent studies summarized that over the last seven years, heifer pregnancy rates were 3.5 percent less in heifers developed under restricted feeding, but reduced harvested feed inputs by 22 percent. Also, restricted heifers remained lighter but had greater ADG. Restricted feeding also improved biological and economical efficiency dur-

ing and after the feeding period.

*Source: Modern Heifer Development & Fetal Programming course, South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service, SDSU, February 17, 2011*

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# Peas, Lentils, and Oilseeds Report



By Phyllis Howatt  
North Dakota

Lentil is a pulse (grain legume) crop. In North America, much of the acreage is in eastern Washington, northern Idaho, and western Canada, where drier growing season conditions prevail. It has been grown in that area since the 1930s as a rotation crop with wheat. Most of the lentil production in the United States is exported, but domestic consumption is increasing.

Lentil is adapted to cool growing conditions, and the young plants are tolerant of spring frosts. This allows for early spring planting dates. They have been grown extensively in the semi-arid parts of the world, where they have slightly lower yields but good seed quality. High humidity and excessive rainfall during the season encourages vegetative growth, prevents good yield, and can reduce seed quality.

Ten to 12 inches of annual rainfall will produce high yields of good quality seed. Excessive drought and/or high temperatures during the flowering and pod-fill period also reduce yields.

Lentil is adapted to all soil types, from sand to clay loam, if there is good internal drainage. Lentil does not tolerate flooded or waterlogged soils and does best on deep sandy loam soils high in phosphorus and potassium. Good drainage is required because even short periods of exposure to waterlogged or flooded field conditions kill plants. Good quality lentil seed does not need to be treated with insecticides or fungicides because it germinates rapidly and seedlings emerge quickly. Seed treatment compounds can interfere with the nodulation process. A firm smooth seedbed with most of the previous crop residue incorporated is best for lentil. Uneven

## Lentils prefer cool, dry conditions

surfaces, large clods, rocks, or protruding crop residue can interfere with seed placement and complicate later swathing and combining.

Lentil should be seeded in late April to early May when small grain is being planted. Later seeding dates produce shorter plants and late maturing pods which increase harvest losses. Lentil should be planted 1 ½ inches deep, but this can be increased to 2 ½ inches when the upper layers of soil are excessively dry at planting time. Because of the small seed size of some varieties, lentil cannot emerge if planted too deep or if the soil has crusted extensively.

Lentil has hypogeal emergence, which means that the growing point emerges but the cotyledons remain in the soil. Seeding rates vary depending upon seed size, but a target population of 400,000 plants per acre should be reason-

able. This could require between 30 and 80 pounds per acre of seed, depending upon variety and seed size. This would provide about 20 plants per square foot.

Because of the fragile growth habit of lentil, the best yields are from fields planted with a grain drill, which can ensure proper depth and distribution as well as good seed-soil contact. Because of seed size variation, care must be taken to calibrate the drill properly. Growers should consider maturity, growth habit, seed size, and color as well as yield potential when selecting a variety of lentil. Currently buyers prefer lentils with larger seeds that are light in color and without mottling on the seed coat.

Lentil seedlings are not very competitive with many of the grasses and/or broadleaf weed species that infest farm fields, so weed control before planting and early in the growing season is critical.

## Overfeeding animals is detrimental

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last six weeks to month of pregnancy. Hays high in alfalfa content are not necessary for sheep and goats during maintenance or the first four months of pregnancy. During the last four to six weeks of pregnancy, extra CALORIES are needed (not necessarily too much extra PROTEIN!). We use dried whole corn to accomplish this need. After lambing we make a five day switch between whole corn and a mixed pellet with a corn base. The pellets have more PROTEIN in them and meet both the calorie and protein needs of lactating sheep and meat goats. If you having milking does, you will need to determine the amount of feed needed to produce the volume of milk you seek and keep decent body condition on your dairy doe.

Free choice hay is available for our ewes throughout the day, and lambs have free choice pellets available and can also pick at the hay. Feed for ewes is decreased as weaning is anticipated, and hay offered moves from a medium quality hay to a less-

er quality as weaning is accomplished. We had only one case of "ketosis" in our 300+ ewe flock in seven years. I have never had a case in my smaller flocks over the years. We have had healthy ewes and lambs (including "litters" of three and four!), good milking properties in both our ewes and the goats in the past, and had years of enjoyment raising sheep and goats! Our ewes raising lambs out on grass are rotated in such a way that nursing mothers and weaned lambs always get the best of the grasses. They do not need all of the other feeding and supplements.

More and more people are making barnyard animals into pets. Even our dogs and cats suffer from too severe of a "pet" or "pseudo-child" syndrome. We are feeding our animals the way WE WOULD LIKE to be fed, whether or not it is good for the animal. Looking at things from the animal's point of view and from its nutritional NEEDS, not wants, is helpful when developing an adequate but not excessive diet. Excessive and/or unbalanced diets can make the animals we love sick rather than keep them healthy for many years to come.



By Klodette Stroh  
Wyoming

# Sugar Report

## Production of farmers helps ensure security of the nation

This year we will celebrate Agriculture Day on March 15. It falls during National Ag Week March 13-19. I thoroughly believe America's ability to feed and clothe its people is at the center of our national security. We have a good reason to celebrate and thank American farmers. More than 21 million U.S. jobs are generated by agriculture. In comparison, that's more than the U.S. automotive manufacturing, sales, and service sectors combined. The sugar industry alone provides over 146,000 jobs.

This year, farmers and ranchers will produce \$332 billion worth of goods for this country. Over \$187 billion will be the cost of crop production such as fertilizer, seed, fuel, tires, and parts to operate farms. More input costs will be \$62 billion in rent payments, \$26.2 billion in wages to employees, and \$14 billion in interest and financing. According to the report from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), this year farm commodity exports will be at an all-time record high of \$126.5 billion.

My mother always said history is the best teacher. The history of agriculture goes back to the birth of America. Agriculture was the foundation our nation was built on. In 1790, tobacco exports

were 44 percent of the total exports at a total of \$4,355,176. In 1800, the average annual value of agriculture exports was \$23 million, or 75 percent of total exports.

George Washington, the father of our nation, suggested to Congress the establishment of a National Board of Agriculture in 1799.

Thomas Jefferson and his vision for the United State said it all: "A nation of landowning farmers living under as little government as possible."

When President Abraham Lincoln took office, the value of agriculture exports and their economic benefit to America had increased to \$182 million dollars, or 75 percent of the total exports. Farming was the occupation of 90 percent of the American people who were in need of seed and information to grow crops. For this reason, Abraham Lincoln founded U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1862, and he named it the "People's Department." In 1870, the Department of Agriculture was raised to Cabinet status.

Today, less than 2 percent of the

U.S. population is engaged in production agriculture. One farmer supplies food and fiber for 129 people in the U.S. and abroad. Forty-two percent of the U.S. total land area is farmland (945.5 million acres).

Another fascinating historical fact is "The Sugar Program." With the expiration of the

40-years-old U.S. Sugar Act in 1974, world prices for sugar skyrocketed to more than 60 cents a pound, and American consumers suffered. When prices plunged to less than three cents a pound, many American sugar farmers were forced out of business,

while U.S. consumers didn't get lower prices for their food.

In 1981, Congress included a sugar title in the Farm Bill. Since then, sugar has been included in all Farm Bills with the stipulation that sugar policy operates at no cost to the taxpayers.

The fact is that U.S. consumers get a great deal on sugar. We pay 28 percent below what consumers in other developed countries pay. This policy was part of the 2002 and 2008 Farm Bills and is projected to work the same through 2020.

I salute American farmers and ranchers for their contribution of \$126.5 billion in farm exports this year. Our bean, corn, barley, soybean, wheat, sugar, cotton, peanut and livestock ranchers and farmers are doing their part to offset the country's staggering trade deficit.

We have a good reason to celebrate and thank American farmers. More than 21 million U.S. jobs are generated by agriculture. In comparison, that's more than the U.S. automotive manufacturing, sales, and service sectors combined.



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**By Pat Torgerson  
Montana**

*Written By Brian Wallheimer  
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The United States doesn't have the infrastructure to meet the federal mandate for renewable fuel use with ethanol but could meet the standard with significant increases in cellulosic and next-generation biofuels, according to a Purdue University study.

Wally Tyner, the James and Lois Ackerman Professor of Agricultural Economics, and co-authors Frank Dooley, a Purdue professor of agricultural economics, and Daniela Viteri, a former Purdue graduate student, used U.S. Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency data to determine that the United States is at the "blending wall," the saturation point for ethanol use. Without new technology or a significant increase in infrastructure, Tyner predicts that the country will not be able to consume more ethanol than is being currently produced.

The federal Renewable Fuel Standard requires an increase of renewable fuel production to 36 billion gallons per year by 2022. About 13 billion gallons of renewable fuel was required for 2010, the same amount Tyner predicts is the threshold for U.S. infrastructure and consumption ability.

"You can't get there with ethanol," said Tyner, whose findings were published in the December issue of the American Journal of Agricultural Economics. Tyner said there simply aren't enough flex-fuel vehicles, which use an 85 percent ethanol blend, or E85 stations to distribute more biofuels. According to EPA estimates, flex-fuel vehicles make up 7.3 million of

# Transportation Report

## U.S. lacks ethanol infrastructure

the 240 million vehicles on the nation's roads. Of those, about 3 million of flex-fuel vehicle owners aren't even aware they can use E85 fuel.

There are only about 2,000 E85 fuel pumps in the United States, and it took more than 20 years to install them.

"Even if you could produce a whole bunch of E85, there is no way to distribute it," Tyner said. "We would need to install about 2,000 pumps per year through 2022 to do it. You're not going to go from 100 per year to 2,000 per year overnight. It's just not going to happen."

And even if the fuel could be distributed, E85 would have to be substantially cheaper than gasoline to entice consumers to use it because E85 gets lower mileage, Tyner said. If gasoline were \$3 per gallon, E85 would have to be \$2.34 per gallon to break even on mileage.

There is talk of increasing the maximum amount of ethanol that can be blended with gasoline for regular vehicles from

10 percent to 15 percent. But Tyner said that even if the EPA does allow it, the blending wall would be reached again in about four years.

Tyner said advances in the production of thermo-chemical biofuels, which are created by using heat to chemically alter biomass and create fuels, would be necessary to meet the Renewable Fuel Standard. He said those fuels would be similar enough to gasoline to allow unlimited blending and would increase the amount of biofuel that could be used.

"Producing the hydrocarbons directly doesn't have the infrastructure problems of ethanol, and there is no blend wall because you're producing gasoline," Tyner said.

"If that comes on and works, then we get there. There is significant potential to produce drop-in hydrocarbons from cellulosic feedstocks."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture funded Tyner's research.

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**By Marlene Kouba  
North Dakota**

# Energy Report

## Shrinking supplies and rising cost of corn intensify fuel or food debate

A recent USDA report indicating a smaller year-end corn surplus, combined with rising corn costs, has intensified the food vs. fuel debate. Critics of biofuels claim that the increases in ethanol production and corn prices have driven an increase in food costs.

The February 2011 USDA World Agriculture Supply and Demand Estimate shows ending stocks for the U.S. corn marketing year at 675 million bushels, down 70 million bushels and the lowest since 1995. The department says the change comes from slight increases in the estimates of corn for ethanol use and of the use of corn in sweeteners and starches. USDA is estimating a world grain supply (wheat, rice, corn, etc.) less than one percent smaller than last year's record amount of more than 2.7 billion metric tons.

Corn prices have risen from \$3.50 per bushel in July 2010 to \$6.10 in January 2011. The use of corn for ethanol has increased and is expected to take 39 percent of this year's field corn crop.

USDA says that corn used for seed and food has risen from 5.9 billion bushels in May 2010 to a projected 6.2 billion bushels in January 2011, with the amount of corn used for feed increasing by 60 million bushels, despite a reduction in U.S. livestock herds.

U.S. corn exports have grown by nearly 434 million bushels as extreme weather events, such as drought in Russia and Ukraine and flooding in Australia, plus rising demand in developing countries like India and China.

A 2009 Congressional Budget Office report said that ethanol production contributed a very small amount to the

significant 5.1 percent increase in food prices and said that higher energy costs, including oil, had at least twice the impact on the cost of food.

A World Bank report released in August 2010 concluded that energy costs and some commodity market speculation were principle instigators of the spike in food prices in 2008. Another study showed the use of agricultural products for energy has no more than a minor impact on retail food prices because less than 5 percent of the cost of corn flakes or corn syrup, for example, is derived from the price of corn. In many cases, a farmer could give his product away and it wouldn't affect the final price of food.

U.S. ethanol production utilizes just three percent of the world's grain supply. Ethanol production uses strictly coarse grains, not food grains like rice, wheat, and sweet corn. The World Bank confirms that biofuels do not represent a large percentage of worldwide grain and oilseed use.

Advancing technology is expected to make dried distillers grain (DDG), a byproduct of ethanol now fed to cattle, a more useful substitute for pork and poultry. About one-third of every bushel of corn used to make ethanol is returned to the feed market as DDG. As a result, of the 39 percent of last year's corn crop used for ethanol, 15 percent of that crop is being returned to feed for livestock.

Corn-based ethanol is blended in 90 percent of America's gasoline supply. The National Corn Growers Association says that as much as 15 to 20 billion gallons of ethanol can come from corn without disrupting other markets. A study by the Department of Energy found that the U.S. could displace more than one-third of its current oil consumption with biofuels while continuing to meet demands for food, feed, and export.

Experts say that diesel fuel only makes up 30 percent of the total energy used on a grain and oilseed farm. They

say 50 percent is used to manufacture and transport nitrogen fertilizer. Nearly 80 percent of the energy needed to put dinner on the table is consumed by other parts of the food sector after a product has left the farm.

Cornell University researchers say that consumers burn about 2,700 British thermal units (Btu), a standard measure of heat energy, transporting any product home from the supermarket. Processing 2.2 pounds of chocolate or coffee requires energy equal to a half gallon of gasoline.

The University of Michigan found that primary agricultural production was responsible for 21.4 percent of the total energy used by the food system. Transportation made up 14 percent, food processing accounted for 16 percent, packaging for seven percent, food retailers and wholesalers for four percent, and restaurants and the food services industry used seven percent. Home use was responsible for 32 percent by inefficient or more refrigerators and freezers, blenders, mixers and food processors instead of knives and chopping blocks.

The total amount of energy used by the U.S. food system was 2.6 quadrillion Btu more in 2002 than in 1997. Population growth accounted for 25 percent (now about 210,000 more a day in the world), consumers buying more increased 6.6 percent, and technology has replaced human labor. About 40 percent more energy is used to produce an egg and egg products, such as liquid, frozen, and dried, for food products.

Increased grain prices in 2008 were mostly based on the corresponding jump in oil prices. The food sector is very sensitive to rising fossil fuel costs.

Oil prices are about \$100 a barrel in late February due to the growing crisis in Libya as Gadhafi starts destroying oil pipelines. Libya produces about two per-

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# Rural Health, Farm Finance, and Communications **Report**



**By Donna Bolz  
Nebraska**

## **Communities need local grocers**

A small grocery store anchors one end of Main Street in many small rural communities. If you live in a rural community, you understand that a grocery store is one of the most important businesses in town. Rural grocery stores provide jobs and generate tax revenue. Without a local grocery, the money that is spent on food goes elsewhere.

Similar to a school, a post office, restaurants, and churches, a grocery store makes a community a more attractive place to live. Grocery stores can also be social places where you run into neighbors in the produce aisle, introduce yourself to someone new in town, or catch up on local happenings.

Not all small towns are lucky enough to have a grocery store. The lack of a grocery store means the elderly and others without reliable transportation will tend to buy their food at convenience stores with more limited selections and higher prices or go for longer periods of time between visits to the store. Rural America's expanding waistline shows us we could all eat more healthily. Eating more fresh fruits and vegetables and fewer cupcakes requires easy access to healthy food, and not all grocery stores are created equal.

Local ownership of a grocery store is critical for several reasons. Economically, food dollars spent at any locally-owned business continue to stay within the community as the grocer spends money at other local businesses. A locally-owned grocery store is more likely to purchase from a local farmer than a store owned by a multi-national corpo-

ration. Loyalty to a store would likely be stronger if you coach baseball with the grocer or sit next to her family at the school play. Local business owners are more likely to sponsor a soccer team or participate in the Memorial Day parade, which is part of what makes a small town feel like a tight community.

To have more local grocers, we need to teach young people entrepreneurship in addition to community pride and loyalty. One example of a small town investing in their young residents in this way is Cody, Nebraska, population 149. Cody students are building a student-run, straw-bale construction grocery store with the help of some federal grants and the support of their community. The students are learning marketing and writing a business plan, and they've worked together to overcome challenges.

Federal policy is beginning to see the connections between rural food access and the health of our rural communities. President Obama announced plans in February of 2010 for a Healthy Food Financing Initiative to help communities who struggle with food access. Two members of Congress, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand from New York and Rep. Allyson Schwartz from Pennsylvania, have introduced bills establishing the same idea. No food retailer is successful without customers who care. Without an involved community of people who believe in the importance and convenience of a healthy food outlet, none of the food retailers will last very long.

Following is a list of programs that can be used to support, expand, and update rural grocery stores to help them compete in today's marketplace. Existing loan and grant programs are available to help grocery stores save money on energy, start or expand cooperatives or receive loan guarantees to start or expand rural businesses. Even First Lady Michelle Obama is in on the action with

her Let's Move! campaign.

**Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG)** - This grant is available to non-profit organizations, tribal, and public entities in towns with populations less than 50,000. The program supports development of small and new private rural businesses. Grants can be used for a wide range of things, from buying land and building construction to equipment purchase or technical assistance. Preference is given to a business in communities with a population less than 25,000 or with a high percentage of unemployed or low-income residents. A rural grocery store could use this grant to purchase a building, coolers, shelving, or to teach business skills to the people who will own or manage the store.

**Community Food Projects (CFP)** - This program allows low-income communities to identify their own food insecurity and hunger problems as well as identify the solutions that will be most successful within their community, benefiting both farmers and consumers. Only private nonprofit organizations are eligible to receive CFP funds directly, but working with public and private, for-profit entities are recommended. Though popular, this grant is flexible, so be creative!

**Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) and Small Business Innovation and Research** - One of the major challenges that grocery stores face is the high cost of utilities to power various coolers and freezers needed for a full-service grocery store. The Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) and the USDA/NIFA Small Business Innovation and Research (SBIR) program can both help to overcome this challenge. REAP has grants for businesses to perform energy audits or to purchase and install more energy efficient or renewable energy systems.

Grocery stores in small towns need our support. Don't forget to buy local.



By Lisa Goodheart  
Kansas

# Cereal Grains Report

## Technological advances throughout the centuries have improved grain production

The early American colonists used water mills and windmills to power huge stones to crush cereal grains, which limited where that process could be accomplished. In 1769, the steamroller was introduced, which powered metal mills and could be built almost anywhere. The steamroller mill made it possible to process wheat before it decayed which encouraged the colonists to grow more wheat.

By the time the Republic was formed, cereal grains had become cash crops, meaning farmers had enough left over to sell after providing for themselves. In western Pennsylvania, farmers distilled corn and rye into whiskey, which was a valuable product to ship east to cities.

The federal government placed a high tax on whiskey, forcing the Pennsylvania farmers to either ship their grain to the east through hill country at high expense or give up making whiskey. The farmers rebelled in 1794, and President George Washington raised and led an army to put down the rebellion.

Rice became a major export crop, first for Georgia and South Carolina, then for Louisiana and Texas. Wheat was being grown in New York, Pennsylvania and the Midwest. The Swedish immigrants settling in the Midwest brought their traditional methods of growing wheat, eventually turning Nebraska into a major wheat producer. Turkey Red Wheat was brought to Kansas in 1874 by Russian immigrants. This dwarf wheat was drought resistant, and many varieties of dwarf wheat grown in America have been developed from that early wheat. The mechanical revolution came to farming in 1834 when Cyrus McCormick presented the mechanical reaper. His reaper

allowed two people to do the work that usually took five to do. The reapers that followed needed either people or horses to pull them and worked well on maize, wheat and rye. The farmers in the Great Plains found the mechanical reaper to be ideal, and it encouraged them to plant large fields of cereal grains. Native Americans in the Midwest also began cultivating wheat in the 1830s.

McCormick patented another important farm implement, a disk plow, in 1847, which allowed farmers to plant even rows of grains. By 1874, mechanical planters followed mechanical reapers, allowing farmers to plant in a day what had taken a week to do previously. Combine harvesters were introduced in the 1890s, which could harvest wheat and sort ears of maize.

The first combines were pulled by teams of horses but soon were powered by internal combustion engines. This meant that a single farmer could harvest almost 20 times as much land as could have been harvested at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Cereal grains have been promoted as the basis of a healthy diet throughout the twentieth century, remaining the foundation of the many versions of "food pyramids."

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## Food or fuel debate heats up

*Continued from Page 8*

cent of the world's supply of oil, but about 85 percent goes to Europe with about one-third of that going to Italy. Only a fraction comes to the United States, but markets are reacting.

Some companies are already trying to fool the public rather than increase prices by making boxes thinner, packages smaller (such as sugar and

coffee), and bottles with a deeper dent on the bottom or with a more slender profile, and narrower toilet paper.

News in mid-February claims that bad weather is causing prices of some fruits and vegetables to double and triple, and this will last at least a month. The supply is decreased and there is difficulty in getting them to the markets. Will the prices then go down? It makes you wonder.

*Source: 25x'25 Energy Alliance*



By Ruth Laribee  
New York

# Trade Report

## FDA requests more funding to implement food safety act

The Food Safety Modernization Act was signed into law late in 2010. To begin implementation of the new food safety law, which mandates inspection of foreign food processing sites, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has requested \$324 million. Congress is looking to slash funding for the FDA and deny funding needed to implement the law even with intensified public food safety concerns.

A recent government report identified enforcement gaps in food safety. With massive amounts of food entering the United States and only 15 inspectors covering three states and the nation's capitol, this is a serious problem. A Government Accountability Office report reviewing the safety of the nation's food supply, compiled at the request of Congress, pointed out the overwhelming task of inspecting tons of food that enter the United States from more than 150 countries. The GAO report concluded that FDA's responsibilities surpass their resources. Dean Cook, a supervisory consumer safety officer for FDA in Dundalk, said, "We only look at one and a half to two percent of what comes in; the workload is tremendous."

### Wisconsin cheese from Europe

Imported cheeses from Denmark, France, and the European Union nation are carrying a "Wisconsin Cheese" label, which is in violation of the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board rules restricting such labels to cheeses produced in Wisconsin.

Some of the European Union cheeses have the ingredient casein listed, which is in violation of FDA natural cheese standards of identity. Officials at the Wisconsin

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, are taking action to enforce the labeling law against a Wisconsin firm distributing the cheeses.

### US urged to adopt free trade with Korea

The International Foods Association (IDFA), with a membership of 550 companies, is pressing hard for Congress to approve Free Trade Agreements with Korea. The Association testified that it would be a huge opportunity for the dairy industry with approximately 10,000 jobs throughout the industry. In 2010, South Korea, the United States' sixth largest export market, imported over \$115 million in U.S. dairy products. Its estimated dairy exports to Korea could reach an increase of 478 percent.

### China considers construction of railway through Columbia

China is considering a rail connection through Columbia, helping the economic thrust into Latin America. The railway would carry export products and raw materials such as coal. Some say it's a dream, but others say it's a real proposal and the plan is quite advanced.

The Chinese have studied investment and transportation, and there is little doubt that they could finish a project. For example, China built a difficult and long railway to Tibet. The United States in building the Panama Canal finished in 1914, a feat that changed global trade.

Questions abound. Would the Panama Canal or the railway be cheaper or faster?



By Jacquelyn Sistrunk  
Alabama

# Specialty Crops Report

## Celebrate nutritious peanuts in March

"Sometimes You Feel Like a Nut; Sometimes You Don't!"

March is National Peanut Month, a time to celebrate America's favorite food, PB&J sandwiches. Roasted peanuts in the shell are sold at ballparks for a snack. They are ground into peanut butter. They can find their way into salads and stir fry. They can be found in everything from breakfast to dessert.

March is also National Nutrition Month. Peanuts are a great source of protein, Vitamin E, Niacin, Folate, Phosphorus, and Magnesium. They are naturally cholesterol free and low in saturated fat.

While peanut butter is a good nutritious investment for those who aren't allergic, it is also a culinary treat.

So, in March and all year, be nutritiously minded and treat yourself to an awesome taste: Eat Peanuts!



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# Membership

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If you have a change of address or will be having your mail forwarded, please notify Shana.

Please remember to pay your 2011 National WIFE dues if you have not already done so. The March issue of WIFeline will only be sent out to current members. If you have any questions, please contact:

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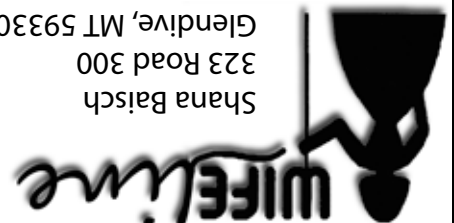
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