

What's On The Label?

USDA Looks At Streamlining Label Approval Process

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

With Congress debating whether to trim the national deficit with major cuts or higher taxes, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is doing their part in easing the task by finding ways to save money in federal spending. One way is in streamlining the label evaluation process for meat and poultry products.

"It is important that we make the labeling process more effective and efficient, while still ensuring consumers have the best information available when shopping for food," said Dr. Elisabeth Hagen, Undersecretary for Food Safety at the USDA.

All labels for meat and poultry products must contain the basic information about the company and the product, including: establishment number, product name, product formulation, processing procedures and handling information, firm name and address, total available labeling space of the container, size of the principal display panel, and the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point category under which the establishment is producing the meat or poultry product.

But inspecting labels takes time, and as with any institution, time is money.

USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) has been working on easing the process of label approval since 1983, when 130,000 labels were going through the office per year. That spurred a rule change to allow a faster label approval for single-ingredient products like beef steaks.

However, this change in process didn't do much to stymie the volume of labels filtering through the FSIS office. In, 1991, there were 167,500 labels evaluated. This included 60,000 approved sketches, or drafts; 87,500 approved final labels; and 20,000 not approved. Enter generic label approval, which refers to the prior approval of labels by the FSIS without the requirement of submitting the label; in other words, certain labels can bypass the inspection process.

The system in place today was established in 1995. It includes generic label approval for:

- Single-ingredient products without special claims, such as health benefits or geographic origin;
- Products sold to the federal government under contract, when not sold to the general public;
- Shipping containers, as long as the immediate containers have full labeling;
- Products not intended for human consumption, such as pet food, inedible items, and that to be for pharmaceutical use;
- Inserts, tags and liners;
- Consumer test products not intended for sale;
- Previously approved sketch labels, or final labels with these modifications:
 - all features proportionately enlarged or



reduced if minimum size requirements are met and label is legible,

- substitution of a unit of measurement with its abbreviation and vice versa,
- a previously approved master label from which the name and address of the distributor are omitted,
- wrappers bearing pictorial designs or illustrations,
- a change in the language or arrangement of instructions pertaining to opening the con-

- deletion of the word "new,"
- addition or deletion or change of special handling statements such as "keep frozen,"
- changes in the quantity of an ingredient without a change in order of predominance,
- changes in color of the label if still legible,
- addition or deletion of the official USDA poultry grade shield,
- change in the nutritional labeling that involve quantitative adjustments except for serving sizes, deletion of a claim

— and country-of-origin labeling. Now, the FSIS is proposing even broader generic label approval terms. The proposed rule change was announced in last month, and the public comment period is open through Feb. 3, 2012. Not only would this rule change further streamline the process and provide cost savings for the Federal budget, but according to the FSIS, it would particularly benefit small food manufacturers, such as direct-market producers, by making the label process easier and would help consumers by allowing products to reach store shelves more quickly.

If adopted, the proposal would only require labels for evaluation if they are temporary labels, labels for products produced under religious exemptions, labels for export with labeling deviations, and claims or special statements intended for use on the labels such as "organic" or "gluten-free," because these types of labels are more likely to present significant policy issues that have a health or economic impact.

For more information, see <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FR-Pubs/2005-0016.pdf>.

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DR. ELISABETH HAGEN

- tainer or preparing the product,
- addition or deletion or change of a coupon or cents-off statement or packer product code information or UPC,
 - change in the name or address of the packer or manufacturer or distributor,
 - change in the net weight,
 - addition or deletion or change in recipe suggestions,
 - change in punctuation,
 - change in establishment numbers,
 - addition or deletion of open dating information,
 - change in packaging material,
 - brand-name changes if no design changes or if the brand name does not use a term that connotes a claim or affects the name of the product,

Deadline For Conservation Grants Jan. 31

HURON — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack reminds applicants that Jan. 31 is the last day to submit project pre-proposals for fiscal year 2012 Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Pre-proposals support large-scale demonstration projects that test and prove original approaches to conserving America's private lands.

For project eligibility, the proposed project or activity must encompass the development and assessment, evaluation and implementation of either of the following: conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems, including market-based systems; or promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures or activities. Landowners must meet Environmental Quality Incentives Program (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip>) eligibility requirements defined in 16 U.S.C. Section 3839aa-1 (<http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/16CS58.txt>).

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Opinion | Rita Brhel

Livestock Situation Upbeat Right Now

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

The dairy industry doesn't have much of a reputation among independent producers. Most producers got out of dairy a long time ago, as the logistics changed for profitable milk production, especially on the commercial side. There are still a number of dairy producers in the area that direct-market their milk, particularly to consumers seeking an organic source.

According to a report from *Dairy Market News*, our local trend follows — or perhaps leads — the national trend: Conventional milk sales are declining, down 3.1 percent from a year ago, while organic milk sales are improving, up 8.7 percent. This is also translating into increased milk production in some areas of the country; in fact, while production per-cow is at a seasonal low, overall milk supply is above a year ago because of expanding herds.

Ah, that means producers are optimistic. It seems that livestock producers across the board are having a rather good time. Well, perhaps not hogs quite yet, but even here, I haven't heard too much complaining about market prices. It seems most people, and the commodity markets,



Rita
BRHEL

agribusinesses such as those dealing in feed aren't going to miss out on a chunk of the profit to be had. Producers can do surprisingly well if they reduce their inputs.

Being a sheep producer, I'm particularly pleased with the market conditions right now. We fatten our lambs on pasture and, besides a tetanus vaccination, have virtually no input expenses so we're able to capture all of our profit. And, my, what a nice dollar figure that's been! I hope these \$2-per-pound prices continue for another year at least.

Experience Yoga Workshop

Whether you're a novice or a veteran, this Workshop is just for you! Avera Sacred Heart Wellness Center Yoga Instructors are coming together to introduce you to the many health benefits yoga has to offer.

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Check-In
8 a.m.

Breathing - Do You Know How?
8:30 a.m. — Jan Johnson

Yoga Flow for Well Being
9 a.m. — Gloria Pearson

Viniyoga for Wellness
9:45 a.m. — Dennis Menke

Power Vinyasa Flow
10:15 a.m. — Elizabeth Dooley



Date: Saturday, January 28
Cost: \$5.00 for non-members
FREE for Wellness Center Members
Location: Avera Sacred Heart Pavilion Atrium
Call 605-668-8357 to reserve your spot.

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AgriVisions 2012 Slated For Yankton Tuesday

First Dakota National Bank will host AgriVisions 2012 featuring Dr. Barry Flinchbaugh at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24, at the Best Western Kelly Inn, 1607 East Highway 50, Yankton. Farmers, Agri-Business professionals and business owners are invited to attend.

Flinchbaugh represents the agricultural community through his active participation in the development of U.S. agricultural policy. He has served on numerous national task forces, boards of directors, and advisory groups allowing him to provide input on domestic food and agriculture policy. Flinchbaugh chaired the Commission on 21st Century Production Agriculture authorized in the 1996 farm bill. Flinchbaugh is a professor of agricultural economics and policy at Kansas State University.

AgriVisions 2012 begins with registration from 6:30-7 p.m. and Dr. Flinchbaugh's presentation at p.m. Call 605-665-4904 or 800-657-5826, to reserve a seat.

Drainage Tile Workshops Address Key Issues

BROOKINGS — Drainage tiling is on the minds of many agriculture producers this year says Chris Hay, referencing the fact that 7,000 more landowners contacted the NRCS for wetland determination requests in 2011 than in 2010.

"Before tiling land enrolled in farm programs, a wetland determination has to be done," said Hay, noting that weather patterns are responsible for increased interest in tiling. "Recent changes in precipitation have a lot to do with landowners considering drainage tiling."

Hay says combine the long-term moisture trend with high commodity and land prices, as well as new technologies which make installing drainage tile much easier than in the past and it's no surprise that more landowners are looking at tiling as an answer to their moisture issues.

Although technology makes tiling today an easier task, Hay says landowners still need to do their homework.

"A lot can go wrong if folks don't consider the big picture of tiling before they dig," Hay said. "For a drainage system to work properly the outlet needs to be properly sized, it needs to have the correct slope — too little and sediment will build up in the pipe, too much and they could have a blow out."

In addition to technical issues, Hay adds that landowners need to be informed on the legal aspects of tiling. If the land is enrolled in a federal program, landowners need to contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service to have a certified wetland determination done before they begin. And, many counties have regulations governing drainage.

Because there are so many aspects landowners need to consider before tiling, SDSU Extension is hosting five drainage design workshops throughout the region. Workshops will be held Jan. 31-Feb. 1 in Sioux Falls at the Best Western Ramkota; Feb. 2-3 in Sioux Falls at the Best Western Ramkota; Feb. 21-22 in Wahpeton, N.D., at North Dakota State College of Science; Feb. 23-24 in Wahpeton, at North Dakota State College of Science; and Mar. 13-14 in Mankato, Minn., at the Best Western.

Topics covered during the workshop include; design fundamentals, design tools, layout considerations, pipe grades, pipe sizing, cut sheets, pump (lift) station design, managed (controlled), drainage design, soils data and tools for drainage design, yield mapping and drainage, wetland delineations, and legal considerations.

Participants need to register online by Jan. 27 for the Sioux Falls workshops.

To pre-register visit www.regonline.com/drainagewater. Registration includes course materials, lunch both days and refreshments. Registration fee does not include hotel room. For registration deadlines for other workshops, visit iGrow.org/events.

Livestock Judging Contest Set For Sioux Falls

BROOKINGS — Youth are encouraged to attend the Junior Judging Contest held Jan. 28 at 10 a.m. during the Sioux Empire Farm Show, Jan. 24-28 at the W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds in Sioux Falls.

The Sioux Empire Farm Show is host to numerous livestock shows, sales, and educational events for beef, goat, horse, sheep and swine enthusiasts. For a full schedule of events check out the Sioux Empire Farm Show website, <http://www.siouxempire-farmshow.org/>.

The Junior Judging Contest is open to students who are current 4-H and FFA members however, college or post secondary education students are not eligible. Teams will consist of four individuals; all four scores on a team will be counted toward the team score. Contestants will judge a total of 8 classes which will consist of breeding and market classes for beef, goat, sheep, and swine; classes will depend on availability of livestock selected. Winners will be announced following the contest. Awards will be given to the top ten teams and top ten individuals.

Participating in livestock judging is an excellent way to strengthen youth's knowledge of the livestock industry and develop their critical thinking and communication skills. The Sioux Empire Farm Show contest is a great way to kick off the 2012 judging year and start practicing for area and state judging contests. Contact your 4-H or FFA leader to join a livestock judging team and get involved!

Contest and registration information will be provided soon, check the Sioux Empire Farm Show website for more details.

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