



### Biomass Crop Assistance Program Back

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced that incentives will resume this summer for farmers, ranchers and forest landowners interested in growing and harvesting biomass for renewable energy. The support comes through the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP), which was reauthorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. BCAP provides financial assistance to establish and maintain new crops of energy biomass, or who harvest and deliver forest or agricultural residues to a qualifying energy facility.

Financial assistance is available through BCAP for costs associated with harvesting and transporting agriculture or forest residues to facilities that convert biomass crops into energy. Eligible crops may include corn residue, diseased or insect infested wood materials, or orchard waste. The energy facility must first be approved by USDA to accept the biomass crop. Facilities can apply for, or renew, their BCAP qualification status beginning today. \$11.5 million of federal funds will be allocated to support the delivery of biomass materials through December 2015. Last year, more than 200,000 tons of dead or diseased trees from National Forests and Bureau of Land Management lands were removed and used to produce renewable energy, while reducing the risk of forest fire. Nineteen energy facilities in 10 states participated in the program.

Farmers, ranchers and forest landowners can also receive financial assistance to grow biomass crops that will be converted into energy in selected BCAP project areas. New BCAP project area proposals will be solicited beginning this summer and accepted through fall 2015, with new project area announcements and enrollments taking place in early spring 2016. The extended proposal submission period allows project sponsors time to complete any needed environmental assessments and allows producers enough lead time to make informed decisions on whether or not to pursue the BCAP project area enrollment opportunity. This fiscal year USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will allocate up to \$8 million for producer enrollment to expand and enhance existing BCAP project areas. Additionally, in accordance with the 2014 Farm Bill, underserved farmers are eligible for a higher establishment cost share. BCAP projects have supported more than 50,000 acres across 74 counties in 11 different project areas.

### Grants Offered To Food Entrepreneurs

WASHINGTON — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced that USDA is making \$30 million available to farmers, ranchers and food entrepreneurs to develop new product lines. Funding will be made available through USDA's Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program.

"Farmers and ranchers are creative people who, with a little help, can put that creativity to work and improve the bottom line for their operations," Vilsack said. "Value-Added Producer Grants enable them to develop new product lines to grow their businesses and expand their contributions to our nation's economy. This support is especially important for beginning farmers, military veterans engaging in farming and smaller farm operations participating in the local and regional food system."

More information on how to apply is on page 26528 of the May 8 Federal Register. The deadline to submit paper applications is July 7. Electronic applications submitted through grants.gov are due July 2.

VAPG grants can be used to develop new product lines from raw agricultural products or additional uses for already developed product lines. Military veterans, socially disadvantaged, and beginning farmers and ranchers; operators of small- and medium-sized family farms and ranches; farmer and rancher cooperatives; and applicants that propose mid-tier value chain projects are given special priority in applying for VAPGs. Additional priority is given to group applicants who seek funding for projects that "best contribute" to creating or increasing marketing opportunities for these type of operators.

### SDSU Extension Hosts Feedlot Tour

BROOKINGS — SDSU Extension teams up with the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association - Cattle Feeder Council to host a feedlot tour July 14.

"Cattle producers often wonder what they can do to improve efficiencies and practices, this tour may give them the answers they are looking for," said Reid McDaniel, SDSU Extension Beef Feedlot Specialist.

This tour provides attendees with a first-hand look at feedlot operations as well as an opportunity to visit with the feedlot owner/managers as well as SDSU and SDSU Extension staff.

The event begins at 7 a.m. with a bus departing from the South Dakota State University motor pool lot (corner of 13th St. and Medary Ave, Brookings) at 7:30 a.m. To attend the tour, you may either join the bus, or meet at the specific locations.

#### TOUR SCHEDULE

- 8:30-10 a.m. — Redstone Feeders (21139 425th Ave, Iroquois). Refreshments served courtesy of Corn Belt Livestock Services.
- 11-1:30 p.m. — Warkentien Feedyard (17515 424th Ave, Clark). Lunch served courtesy of Dakotaland Feeds.
- 2:15-3:45 p.m. — Moe's Feedlot (16319 445th Ave, Florence). Refreshments served courtesy of Purina Land O'Lakes.
- 5-6:30 p.m. — J&J Farms (19736 465th Ave, Bruce). Refreshments served courtesy of CHS.
- 7 p.m. — Arrive in Brookings.

The registration deadline is July 7. To register for this free event, visit [iGrow.org/events](http://iGrow.org/events) and search for this July 14 event. Contact McDaniel with questions: 605-688-5452 or Reid.McDaniel@sdstate.edu.

### Agricultural Summit Set For Deadwood

PIERRE — The sixth annual South Dakota Governor's Agricultural Summit hosted by the South Dakota Department of Agriculture (SDDA) will be held on July 9-10 at the Lodge in Deadwood. Pre-registration is required at [www.sdagsummit.com/](http://www.sdagsummit.com/).

The Governor's Ag Summit is an opportunity for producers, agribusiness leaders, legislators and other policy decision makers to hear and discuss the challenges and accomplishments of agriculture in South Dakota, the nation and the world," said SD Secretary of Agriculture Lucas Lentsch.

A Black Hills Agricultural Tour will kick off the event on Thursday afternoon with events including:

- a demonstration from the SDDA Wildland Fire division,
- a tour of Black Hills Forest Products sawmill,
- a tour of the Belle Fourche Irrigation District and
- a tour of the Crow Peak Brewery in Spearfish.

Friday morning will begin with a "State of Ag Address" from SD Secretary of Agriculture Lucas Lentsch and Gov. Dennis Daugaard will present the 2015 Ag Ambassador Award.

Pre-registration is required and space is limited. For more information about the Summit, visit <http://sdstate.gov/office-of-the-secretary/ag-summit/> or contact Dani Hanson at [dani.hanson@state.sd.us](mailto:dani.hanson@state.sd.us). This event is free and open to the public.

### From The FSA

# Acres Reporting Deadline Looms

BY DAVID CHARLES  
Farm Service Agency

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by July 15. Your local county FSA office is currently taking appointments. Producers may also pick up their maps from the local office.

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) also reminds producers to report prevented planting and failed acres in order to establish or retain FSA program eligibility.

Producers must report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were prevented from planting. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form FSA-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

If a producer is unable to report the prevented planting acreage within the 15 calendar days following the final planting date, a late-filed report can be

submitted. Late-filed reports will only be accepted if FSA conducts a farm visit to assess the eligible disaster condition that prevented the crop from being planted. A measurement service fee will be charged.

Additionally, producers with failed acres should also use form FSA-576, Notice of Loss, to report failed acres.

For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and crop insurance, producers must file a Notice of Loss within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent. Producers must timely file a Notice of Loss for failed acres on all crops including grasses.

#### LIVESTOCK INDEMNITY PROGRAM (LIP)

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather. Eligible adverse weather events include floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For 2015, eligible losses must occur on or after Jan. 1, 2015, and before

Dec. 31, 2015. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 30 calendar days after the end of the calendar year for which benefits are requested:

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of growers contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5 percent and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 5 percent. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions.

For more information on FSA, please contact your local USDA Service Center or visit us online at [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

David Charles is the Yankton County Executive Director of the Farm Service Agency

### Opinion

# EPA Puts Oil Industry's Agenda Ahead Of American Farmers

BY BECKY PITZ  
POET

It hasn't always been easy for the average American farmer.

Farmers have had to work tirelessly to stay afloat amid fluctuating crop demand and a tumultuous environmental and political climate. Despite the chaos, hope springs from domestic biofuel production, which has bolstered rural

America while simultaneously decreasing our dependency on foreign oil.

However, on May 29 the Obama administration made a ruling on Renewable Volume Obligations under the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) that undermines these efforts. In its announcement, the Environmental Protection Agency stated that "real-world limitations" have prevented the U.S. from reaching its delineated goals for 2014-2016.

While the EPA is correct in recognizing the intent of Congress to continue expanding growth in biofuels, the established targets greatly fall short of rural America's ability to produce low-cost, clean-burning ethanol, and this must be changed.

Rural America has shown incredible advancements in recent years, utilizing innovative, efficient technologies to increase yield and output. Nationally, the RFS has supported 825,000 jobs, many of these in agriculture, while the ethanol industry added 44 billion dollars to the U.S. GDP in 2013. In South Dakota alone, the ethanol industry generates \$6.9 billion of total economic output annually and supports nearly 27,000 jobs.

As ethanol grew over the last decade, so did prosperity in rural America. As ethanol production has plateaued the last couple years, farm income and land value have plateaued or dropped. There's no doubt that the fates of these industries are tied together. By not allowing U.S. farmers to reach their potential for renewable fuel production, we are missing an enormous opportunity for continued prosperity. It seems the government has lost sight of the initial purpose of the RFS, which was designed in 2007 to keep gas prices low, to spur domestic jobs and investment, and to set a path for a more sustainable future. The government knew that the only way



IMAGE: METRO GRAPHICS

to put America's future in our own hands was to promote more fuel choices at the pump.

Thankfully, some key players in Washington haven't forgotten their commitment to rural America. In response to the ruling, United States Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced that the USDA will provide funding for flex pump infrastructure to increase access to domestic biofuel at the pump. While increased access is welcome, this program is needed because oil companies have refused to make the investments necessary to meet the law. Why are oil companies exempt from making the same investments farmers did?

It's essential that local farmers and community members follow Vilsack's lead and speak out to make biofuels a priority. The EPA has opened a 60-day comment period that allows anyone to express their opinion on the ruling before July

27. Now is the time to make your voices heard and stop the federal government from putting the oil industry's agenda ahead of American farmers.

Why? Because America has long been dependent on foreign oil, and though oil prices have dipped, it's imperative to remember the volatility of the market and stay proactive in our ability to be autonomous.

To preserve the advances made in agriculture over the last eight years, the EPA needs to recommit to its initial goals and continue to allow a strong market for first and second-generation renewable fuels, until 2022 and beyond.

To get involved, please visit [growth-energy.org/action](http://growth-energy.org/action) today to submit your comments to the EPA!

Becky Pitz is the General Manager of POET Biorefining in Mitchell.

## Program

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creation of improved, more affordable mixes that will yield better results for the targeted species. He says landowners who have less productive crop ground, land that may not qualify for the Conservation Reserve Program (or other federal or state conservation programs), or small acreages looking for a boost in diverse wildlife habitat may find the program suits them well.

#### LANDOWNER ENROLLMENT NOW AVAILABLE

Funding for program enrollment is now available to landowners thanks to \$300,000 in support from a broad coalition of commercial beekeepers, the honey packing industry, agricultural industry and Pheasants Forever. Program guidelines include, but are not limited to the following:

- Pollinator habitat seeding mixtures will be provided in the program at no cost to landowners
- Annual rental payments are available at a rate of \$50.00 per acre

- Planting incentive payments are available at a rate of \$15.00 per acre
  - Landowners have the option of enrolling eligible acres for 3, 4, 5 or 6-year contracts
  - Funding and enrollment is ranked on a first-come, first-served basis with location emphasis
  - There is no official sign-up date, landowners are encouraged to apply now while funding is available
- For more information about the Honey Bee and Monarch Butterfly Partnership, contact Pete Berthelsen at (308) 390-0848 / [pberthelsen@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:pberthelsen@pheasantsforever.org).

## Chamber Ag Gala June 30

The Yankton Area Chamber of Commerce Agri-Business Committee is holding the 10th annual Ag Gala on June 30 at the Pine Acres Kiwanis/4H Ice Arena at 709 Whiting Drive. The Farm Family of the Year Award will be announced along with the eight P.A.Y. Scholarship recipients for 2015 from Crofton, Gayville-Volin, Hartington, Irene/Wakonda, Menno and Yankton.

Lt. Gov. Matt Michels is the master of ceremonies and South Dakota Secretary of Agriculture Lucas Lentsch is a speaker.

The Ag Gala begins at 5 p.m. and features a social hour, a Prime Rib dinner catered by Rollin's Smoke BBQ, a raffle, and a musical program by Vern Kaul, the East River Cowboy.

Sponsorships for this event are still available.

To register for tickets and/or tables of eight or if you are interested in a sponsorship, contact Carmen Bodden at [Chamber@yanktonsd.com](mailto:Chamber@yanktonsd.com) or 665-3636.

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