

AGNOTES

energy demonstration project that has been operating off grid over 6 years and will be one of the stops during the bus tour on July 23. "The Lyons Energy Fair will be unlike any other green event that has taken place in Nebraska. This event will include instruction, workshops, exhibits and tours in a way that has not been done before."

A strong majority of Nebraska voters — 79 percent — favors requiring electric utilities to use renewable energy sources for at least 20 percent of the power they generate, according to a recent poll conducted by the Global Strategy Group.

"The goal of this fair is to provide examples of things you can do right now to reduce energy costs and make a difference in your day-to-day living," said Stephanie Fritz of the Center for Rural Affairs. The fair will feature a variety of breakout sessions that will appeal to business owners, farmers and ranchers, community leaders and homeowners. You will also have an opportunity to visit exhibit booths and observe renewable energy demonstrations throughout the day.

Other topics to be presented at the Renewable Energy Fair include: energy conservation, small and large-scale wind projects, advanced technologies, cutting crop inputs and livestock feed costs, school wind projects, energy safety and much more.

"We have the desire to do something about energy costs. Sometimes we just need to see ideas and talk to others before we put these measures into place. The fair is designed to provide that opportunity," said Fritz.

Businesses and organizations have a chance to tap into many outstanding marketing opportunities by having an exhibit booth or through a sponsorship to the Nebraska Energy Fair. For more information, contact Stephanie Fritz at 402-358-3432 or stephanief@craa.org or visit the Center's website for more details as well, www.craa.org.

Anthrax Vaccinations Recommended Before Turning Cows Out

BROOKINGS — A South Dakota Cooperative Extension veterinarian advises cattle producers to include anthrax vaccines in their programs before turning cattle out to summer pastures.

Extension Veterinarian Russ Daly said anthrax, which is caused by bacteria that can exist as spores in the soil for long periods of time, could arise this summer due to conditions that follow a wet spring.

"One of the environmental factors that may aid in making the anthrax spores available to cattle is the disruptive action of flooding on pastures," Daly said.

"Flooding can wash anthrax spores up from lower levels of the soil, and the spores can be deposited on grass and other forage cows eat."

Daly cited an SDSU survey from 2005 that found standing water on pastures as a potential risk factor for losses due to anthrax.

"While ranchers in some parts of South Dakota have made anthrax vaccine a routine part of their pasture turnout program for many years, it's important to realize that most areas within the state have, at one time or another, experienced losses due to anthrax."

Daly added that it is not always easy to predict where conditions will be right for the development of the disease. Like other veterinarians around the state, Daly encourages all producers to use anthrax vaccine, especially in areas that were previously flooded.

The vaccine is widely available, inexpensive, and effective, Daly said. One dose of vaccine at pasture turnout is generally effective for the whole grazing season.

Local veterinarians are the best source for information regarding anthrax in a specific part of South Dakota, Daly said. The South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service, including Extension Veterinary Science, and the South Dakota Animal Industry Board are other strong sources of information.

For more information, visit the SDSU Veterinary Extension Web site at this link: <http://vetsci.sdstate.edu/vetext>.

Oil Spill Gets Our Attention ... For A Little While

BY DENNIS ANDERSON
McClatchy News Service

The notion that conservation, or lack thereof, is just another problem the nation faces — no larger, and perhaps smaller, than, say, taxes and health care — is commonly held. Which explains why most Americans only periodically consider soil, water and air stewardship.

The explosion of an offshore oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico and the threat it poses to Louisiana's coastal marshes provides an example.

These marshes generally extend from Texas to Mississippi, about 250 miles, and can measure up to 40 miles wide. A quarter of North American ducks winter there and all manner of fish and crustaceans use them as nurseries.

The marshes are every bit as spectacular as Yellowstone National Park or the Grand Canyon.

But because they are unseen by most Americans and because they lack the snazzy factor of a canyon or a mountain, our nation decided long ago that it's OK

to trash them — something we've done exceedingly well for more than half a century.

Only when TV thrusts upon us a spectacle akin to an offshore explosion or an expanding oil slick do most of us dust off, and consider, "conservation."

This societal malaise represents a clear and present danger to us all — and to still other national treasures.

Consider as you read this that thousands of acres of North Dakota and South Dakota native grasslands are being plowed under — lands that throughout history have been thought to be unfit for agriculture because of poor soil type, too little moisture or too many rocks.

Traditionally, their highest value has been for grazing — benefiting not only ranchers and their livestock but birds and other wildlife and soil conservation.

Additionally, this region, known as the Missouri Coteau, is the last and best hope the United States has for duck production.

Or was.

Here's what's happening: The federal law governing farm legislation provides access to crop insurance to farmers — a good thing, obviously.

Otherwise, weather's vagaries would spell economic disaster for at least some producers each year.

But a provision in the legislation and the development of genetically modified crops are encouraging Dakota producers to bust up and plant native prairies with virtually with no possibility of financial loss.

In fact, the more native grasslands that producers plow, the more money they make, regardless of whether a planted crop — usually corn or soybeans — grows.

Why? Because bushel-per-acre crop-insurance payments often are paid on the rate producers harvest not on these newly plowed marginal lands but instead on their best lands.

It's easy money.

Your money.

"Cashing in" begins in the fall, when a typical North or South Dakota producer can spray a herbicide on as many as 800 acres in a day. In the spring, the same producer oftentimes makes a single pass over the same fields, tilling and planting in one fell swoop. Crops will grow on some of the newly planted fields. On many others, not.

Either way, the money rolls in even while other (less well-funded) government programs target the same lands for conservation.

Among the biggest losers are taxpayers. Wildlife loses, too, as do, ironically, Minnesota pheasant and duck hunters who — having sat idly by while their state's uplands and wetlands went the way of the buffalo — have long considered the Dakotas their adopted autumnal hunting grounds.

Maybe for now. But not — if the Missouri Coteau is not saved — forever.

Rep. Collin Peterson (D-Minn.), the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, knows the problem well. He's trying to remove the incentive to put beneath the plow native prairies that are every bit as valuable to this nation as Louisiana's coastal wetlands, or Yellowstone. Or the Grand Canyon.

He'd have better luck if more Americans cared.

If only TV would show us what's happening in the Dakotas, perhaps throwing in an explosion for added effect.

Maybe then we'd pay attention, if only for a while.

POLICY PENNINGS

Gates Partners With U.S. To Boost Food Production

BY DARYLL RAY
Ag Policy Analyst

The U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Timothy Geithner, and Bill Gates, Microsoft founder and co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, coauthored an April 22, 2010 Wall Street Journal opinion piece announcing the "launching [of] the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program."

The goal of the "new fund [is] to help the world's poorest farmers grow more food and earn more than they do now so they can lift themselves out of hunger and poverty." According to the World Bank, small-holder farm families make up three-quarters of the world's population that is extremely impoverished.

While the goal of eliminating hunger and poverty around the world is decades old, the means that Geithner and Gates suggest for achieving that goal stands in contrast to much of the conventional wisdom of the last decade.

During the debates over the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha trade round, it was argued that an export-oriented agriculture in poor countries would allow the farmers in these countries to capitalize on their comparative advantage by producing export crops for developing countries—flowers, fruits, vegetables, cotton, and other specialty crops. It was then asserted that the earned revenue could then be used to purchase low cost grains and seeds from industrialized farmers in developed countries.

A study by the World Bank in 2003 asserted that the adoption of a "pro-poor" scenario by WTO delegates would add more than \$500 billion a year to global incomes by 2015 and lift 144 million people out of poverty. Many, including the authors of this column, saw the expectations of the WTO as

unrealistic because, in part, they ignored the issues of food security and the need for small holder agriculturalists in developing countries to produce their own food in the absence of the rapid growth of industrial jobs in these countries.

Instead we have seen upwards of 200 million people added to the number of the world's hungry as the result of a spike in the price of bulk commodities—corn, wheat, and soybeans. At nearly the same time, we saw the meltdown of the U.S. economy and the adoption of a \$787 billion stimulus package by the U.S. Congress in an attempt to halt the slide in the U.S. economy.

The Geithner/Gates program takes the issue of food security and small holder production seriously. Their announcement builds on a pledge of \$22 billion by world leaders in 2009. So far, Canada, Spain, and the U.S. have contributed \$230 million, \$95 million, and \$67 million, respectively, toward their share of the goal.

As part of the announcement, the Obama administration will seek an additional \$408 million in the 2011 budget for this fund. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will contribute \$30 million, and South Korea will soon provide \$50 million.

Geithner and Gates point out "that there has been a sharp drop in aid for agriculture. In 1979, nearly 10 percent of all official development assistance world-wide went to agriculture. In 2008, about 5 percent did." They go on to note that "today, many Africans face food shortages in part because the average African farmer produces half the amount of crops per acre of an Indian farmer, one-fourth that of a Chinese farmer, and just one-fifth that of an American farmer."

To help overcome this African production disparity, the program "will partner

with countries that have developed sound agricultural plans and that are already using their own resources to invest in the most effective ways to boost crop production. The fund's public-sector account will invest in infrastructure that will link farmers to markets, promote sustainable water-use management, and increase access to better seeds and technologies."

In their Wall Street Journal piece, Geithner and Gates cited the example of Rwanda, which "has increased its investment in agriculture 30 percent from 2007 to 2009 and recently reported that its agricultural production was up 15 percent over the period." In a separate interview reported by New York Times writer Helene Cooper, Gates "pointed to the example of Malawi, where the government recently doubled the country's food production by putting in [place] the same sort of agricultural development programs that the global fund is pushing."

In that same New York Times report, Gates is quoted as saying, "If I had one wish, it would be for good governance in all of these countries"—the fund is focusing its investment on countries with good governance.

Lack of good governance is a major developmental stumbling block in many developing countries. Cooper writes that Gates, "specifically cited the Democratic Republic of Congo, where since 1998 fighting has raged, particularly in the east, and where the prevalence of rape and sexual violence [against women] is believed to be among the worst in the world."

Daryll E. Ray holds the Blasingame Chair of Excellence in Agricultural Policy, Institute of Agriculture, University of Tennessee, and is the Director of UT's Agricultural Policy Analysis Center (APAC).

Obama Announces National Rural Summit

Dialogue To Continue On Rebuilding And Revitalizing Rural America

WASHINGTON — Tuesday, the Obama Administration announced that Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack will host a National Summit of Rural America: A Dialogue for Renewing Promise. The day-long event will take place in Hillsboro, Mo., on June 3, 2010 on the campus of Jefferson College, near St. Louis, Mo.

"This Summit will be an opportunity for rural Americans to share their vision for creating a more prosperous and promis-

ing future for rural America," said Vilsack. "The Obama Administration is committed to strengthening rural America, and now farmers, ranchers, and foresters from throughout the country can have the opportunity to engage with key policymakers and community leaders to discuss the priorities and policies necessary to keep its future bright."

Participants at the National Summit on Rural America will take part in plenary and break-

out sessions on a multitude of issues which include rebuilding and revitalizing rural America, creating new jobs, improving infrastructure, improving farm competitiveness, and encouraging innovation in renewable energy. National policymakers will take the invaluable opinions and ideas from participants at the Summit back to Washington for implementation into future program and policy discussions.

Interested participants may register to attend the National Summit of Rural America: A Dialogue for Renewing Promise by visiting <http://www.usda.gov/ruralsummit>. Early registration is recommended as attendance will be

limited to capacity constraints of the venue and breakout sessions. Members of the media interested in attending should RSVP to liz.purchia@oc.usda.gov.

This National Summit culminates the Rural Tour Secretary Vilsack led last year and visited 22 states to begin a conversation with farmers, ranchers, and people who live in rural communities. And last week, Vilsack joined President Obama as he visited rural communities in America's heartland on the White House to Main Street tour and continued to hear stories and ideas for rebuilding our economy in the long term.

LABELS

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qualify to bear the USDA organic seal, yet may appear organic to consumers based on the prominence of the word "organic" in their brand name.

Oskri Organics sells a variety of foods, including fruit preserves, nutrition bars and tahini (sesame butter). Some of their products, however, contain no certified organic ingredients. These Oskri Organics products are therefore no different from conventional foods, yet many consumers are presumably

being led to believe they are organic based on the company name displayed on product packaging.

Organic Bistro sells frozen entrees made with organic vegetables, but uses non-organic chicken and turkey.

"There is certainly no shortage of organic chicken or organic turkey, which are obviously more expensive than conventional meats," Kastel said. "By using conventional ingredients to cut costs, yet displaying the word 'organic' so prominently on their packages, Organic Bistro is unfairly competing with truly organic companies that commit to sourcing organic meat."

Newman's Own Organics

sells some certified organic products and some that only qualify for the "made with organic" label (70 percent organic content), yet uses the term "organics" in their name — on all food packages.

Newman's Own Organics, founded by the late actor Paul Newman and his daughter Nell, is a prominent company in the natural/organic marketplace and respected for the generous donations of their profits to charity.

Newman's Own Organics Newman-O's cookies contain conventional sugar, conventional canola oil and conventional cocoa, yet the Web page displays the USDA organic seal and states: "Like our other products,

Newman-O's are certified organic by Oregon Tilth." Yet these products do not legally qualify to bear the word "organic" or the USDA organic seal on their packaging.

"Newman-O's, a product similar to Nabisco's Oreo cookies, are not organic, yet consumers are led to believe that they are," Vallaes said. "Products that contain conventional ingredients, which are freely available in organic form, would never qualify for the USDA organic seal, and we think it's time for the USDA to crack down on corporations gaming the system."

Other companies that offer both conventional and organic products have not acted deceptively, by eliminating the term

"organic" from their company name or company logo on their non-organic packaging.

Although Dean Foods' WhiteWave division took a lot of heat last year when it introduced its first non-organic dairy products under the Horizon label, for example, the giant dairy conglomerate no longer uses the term "organic" in its name or on its brand logo for its new "natural" product line.

"It seems that some corporations appear more interested in corporate profit and greenwashing than true environmental stewardship, and are doing everything they can to take advantage of this confusion among consumers," Kastel said.

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