



## Pheasants Forever To Sponsor CRP Meetings For S.D. Landowners

Pheasants Forever is hosting informational meetings across South Dakota for landowners and agricultural producers in advance of the USDA Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general sign-up that runs May 20-June 14.

Led by Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Wildlife Biologists, landowners can learn how to increase their farm or ranch income while creating wildlife habitat in the process. "It is Pheasants Forever's belief that there is room for conservation on every farm and ranch in the country," says Dave Nomsen, Pheasants Forever's Vice President of Government Affairs, "Just a look at recent history — from a wet cycle to a historic drought last year — showcases this need for conservation. Programs like CRP provide stability for producers on lower-yielding, tougher-to-farm acres, while simultaneously serving as America's top habitat tool for pheasants and quail."

At CRP informational meetings, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill wildlife biologists will discuss how the Conservation Reserve Program works, and provide landowners with expertise on increasing the chances of their acreage qualifying for the program. While a majority of meetings are occurring prior to the opening of CRP General Sign-Up 45, in some areas meetings extend into the first few weeks of the open sign-up period. Nomsen encourages landowners to attend the meetings and to not assume there's no room for conservation practices in an era of

record crop production and prices.

"CRP rental rates may be significantly higher in some areas than in years past, some CRP practices allow for haying and grazing, others encourage pollinator habitat, and those pollinating insects are also necessary for agricultural production," Nomsen said. "Every farm in the country, whether it's 200 acres or 2,000 acres, has a percentage of acreage in production that annually loses money. So we're looking to work together with landowners to identify these areas and help their bottom line, and also help Pheasants Forever's bottom line of conserving wildlife habitat."

The CRP informational meetings are organized by Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever, the Farm Service Agency and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Landowners who can't make a CRP informational meeting are encouraged to make an appointment with their local Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist or visit their local FSA office. Pheasants Forever, including its quail conservation division, Quail Forever, is the nation's largest non-profit organization dedicated to upland habitat conservation. Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever have more than 135,000 members and 730 local chapters across the United States and Canada. Chapters are empowered to determine how 100 percent of their locally raised conservation funds are spent, the only national conservation organization that operates through this truly grassroots structure.

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DAVE NOMSEN

### Opinion

## Spring Brings Drought Hangover And Sky-High Hay Prices

BY RITA BRHEL  
P&D Correspondent

The U.S. Drought Monitor shows that the area's drought is steadily improving with this year's extra long winter and frequent weather events, but we're still a long way from normal. After all, it doesn't take too much to improve when we're at the most serious drought level there is. But, yeah, we're still a long way from not being in any drought situation. My pastures look pretty good, but we also greatly reduced our stocking density last year to almost absurd numbers. Many pastures around here look bad — really bad. Many ranchers don't even report a green-up this spring; they clipped their pastures too short last fall and they're feeding hay more than a month past when they should've been able to turn out onto lush, green pastures. I was approached last week

about renting out our pastures. We are on a rotation system, and we still have a few ewes with lambs out there, but it appears right now that we have more grass out there than we have animals. The rancher dropped off his sheep this past weekend. I like that we're finding ways to help one another. My parents, who own a ranch nearby, were saying that hay prices are astronomical. A lot of people are saying that this is going to be a bad year for alfalfa, that a lot of alfalfa stands didn't survive last year's drought and that the ones that did survive probably aren't going to be that productive. We still have a few square bales stored up that we bought a few years ago. They're full of weeds, but they'd probably go for a good amount of money today if we wanted to sell them. The USDA reports that the average price for a ton of alfalfa in April was \$215, just \$5 more than a year

ago, but its real dependent on the area of the country you're buying in. In California, farmers are paying \$207 per ton, down \$28 from last April. In Idaho, hay is \$10 cheaper than a year ago. Arizona is down \$60, and New Mexico is down \$64. Move east and north into the heart of the drought, the Midwest, and it's quite a different story: A ton of alfalfa hay in Iowa averaged \$251,

up \$108 from last April. Wisconsin hay is up \$120. Michigan's hay is up \$125. Minnesota is up \$105, and South Dakota's alfalfa hay is up \$101 to \$236 per ton. Holy cow! Or sheep, or horse, or goat, or llama, or whatever you're feeding! That's quite the leap in prices! So, not only do many Midwestern livestock producers not have

any pastures but they also do not have any quality hay to feed their animals at one of the most critical times-when babies are being born and moms are lactating. Soon, it will be the next critical time, breeding back. These are the times when animals need the best nutrition, when they are the most expensive to feed. And there isn't really any con-

solation to be given. We all know that hay prices depend on what the weather's doing, and we all know that drought recovery is going to take a long time and that hay prices are directly linked to drought recovery. We just have to hang in there and wait it out.

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Pictured from back left clockwise: Kari Kaiser, PT Aide; Samantha Schnabel, PT, DPT; Connie Casanova, PT, DPT; Lisa Huber, PT; Amanda Adamson, PT, DPT; Erica Stanley, PT, DPT.

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# A Need To Be Filled

### Consumers Not Enjoying As Much Fish As Is Recommended, U.S. Fish Farms Can Help With That

BY RITA BRHEL  
P&D Correspondent

Fish and shellfish are touted as much a cornerstone to dietary health as fruits and vegetables, but aside from Lent and restaurant entrees, they are an unlikely contender in consumers' picks of protein in the United States.

"Almost everyone agrees that if we ate more fish in the U.S., we'd be healthier," said Linda O'Dierno, outreach specialist for the National Aquaculture Association in Pine Bluff, Ark. "The USDA recommends two seafood meals per week. If we were to do that, we'd have to more than double our consumption."

At 15 pounds per capita per year, Americans only consume 44 percent of the fish and shellfish they should be eating, she says.

"But America has always been a beef-consuming nation," she said. "And pork and poultry. Seafood is flatlining at the bottom. We're down there with turkey, and we don't even have our own holiday."

By comparison, Americans consume an average of 110 pounds of red meats per year, 75 pounds of poultry, 600 pounds of dairy products, 400 pounds of vegetables, 250 pounds of fruits, and 200 pounds of cereal products, according to Seafood Health Facts, a joint project of the Community Seafood Initiative and several universities. Statistics show that Americans eat twice as much cheese and an equal amount of apples, watermelon, and turkey as they do fish and shellfish annually.

Health experts show that eating more fish and shellfish help reduce the risk of obesity, heart disease, and stroke, O'Dierno says. Fish and shellfish contains high omega-3 fatty acids, high good cholesterol, and low bad cholesterol. They are also considered a high-quality protein in that they are low in calories, saturated fat, and sodium, high in vitamins and minerals, and are easily digestible.

"Not all proteins are created equal," Dierno said. "Everyone loves peanut butter, but there are an awful lot of calories for the amount of protein you're getting."

One of the major marketing barriers for fish and shellfish is with children. Historically, kids don't like eating fish and shellfish, O'Dierno says. Even breaded fish sticks are a hard sell. More emphasis needs to be placed on developing products that appeal to children. It's harder to connect adults when they've grown up eating other protein selections.

"Obesity affects one in three Americans. As a society, we really need to change our dietary patterns," she added. However, "the average American isn't really motivated by these kinds of issues."

#### CONSUMERS WANT VARIETY

Surveys show that consumers want variety in their foods, O'Dierno says. For how much variety there is among fish and shellfish worldwide — 500 species — Americans' consumption is very narrow, she says. By and far, the top five most popular fish and shellfish are:

1. Shrimp
  2. Canned tuna
  3. Salmon
  4. Pollock, which is also used to make imitation crab
  5. Tilapia
  6. Catfish
  7. Crab
  8. Cod
  9. Swai
  10. Clams.
- According to Seafood Health Facts, more than half of all fish and shellfish eaten each year



PHOTO: RITA BRHEL  
**Americans need to eat more fish products, according to the USDA, but we lag behind the recommended servings. Fish farms could be the answer.**

is limited to shrimp, canned tuna, and salmon. This list has remained the same for the past decade except for the appearance of tilapia. Three-fourths of the fish and shellfish eaten in the U.S. are fresh or frozen, the remaining one-quarter being canned. Canned tuna represents two-thirds of all canned fish or shellfish.

#### CONSUMERS WANT SAFETY

Another hurdle for consumers in choosing fish and shellfish is the perceived health risk from food-borne illnesses, O'Dierno says. As with other types of protein, such as beef and pork and poultry, the fault often lies with incorrect handling by consumers. Fish and shellfish purchased through an eatery or a market is sold according to guidelines that help ensure consumer safety. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, food-borne illness in fish and shellfish are most reported in recreational fishing circumstances.

"Different fish have to be maintained at specific temperatures," O'Dierno said. "Other protein types, like beef, don't have consumers who go out and hunt and process their own animals. So, for example, an individual went out and collected clams in a place that wasn't safe, and took them home and fed them to his family. Everyone became ill, and those statistics were included for all of fish and shellfish in the U.S."

In addition, any raw or partially cooked fish or shellfish as in sushi can be potentially deadly to anyone with a compromised immune system, such as people with diabetes or cancer, she says. This is because of a common bacteria present on many fish and shellfish that doesn't harm to consumers with healthy immune systems. This bacteria is most often present on imported fish and shellfish as opposed to U.S.-raised fish. Of the total U.S. consumption of fish and shellfish, 88 percent is imported.

Also, there has been a lot of scare the past few years about high levels of mercury in fish and shellfish as a result of pollution, O'Dierno says. In actuality, very few fish carry dangerous levels of mercury and none of them are high on Americans' lists of preferred fish and shellfish: mackerel, golden bass, shark, and swordfish. The warning to pregnant and breastfeeding women, and small children, about avoiding tuna to reduce mercury exposure is based on one species of tuna that tends to have an elevated mercury level — albacore — however, because there are a lot of different species of tuna, it's

easy for the at-risk population to limit that specific tuna intake.

And as far as blaming pollution, this is another misnomer, Dierno says. Research has shown that there was as much mercury in the oceans a century ago as today and that the main environmental source is actually volcanic ash.

However, because of misleading media reports, pregnant women are largely avoiding fish and shellfish, which have been linked to a reduced risk of preterm labor and postpartum depression, as well as improved neurodevelopment of unborn babies as well as breastfed babies, O'Dierno says.

#### CONSUMERS WANT STEWARDSHIP

U.S.-grown and imported fish and shellfish are virtually the same when it comes to nutrition, O'Dierno says. However, they are not equal in their food safety or impact on the environment. In addition, U.S. fish farms provide for sustainability of traditionally wild-caught species by taking the pressure off of oceans and in some cases, even replenishing wild species' low numbers. But much more than that, the imported fish and shellfish often come from countries with very few environmental or food safety regulations.

About 6.5 billion pounds of fish and shellfish come from U.S. commercial fisheries each year and 725 million pounds come from U.S. fish farms. Plus, more than 10 million anglers make 71 million freshwater or marine recreational fishing trips to U.S. each year, as well, catching almost 200 million pounds of fish.

U.S. laws are superior in producing a healthful food with minimal impact on the environment. Because fish and shellfish are mostly grown integrated with or harvested wild from natural water ways, aquaculture is heavily regulated in the U.S. Five federal agencies, including the USDA, EPA, NOAA, USFWS, and the FDA, oversee the aquaculture systems. In addition, many states have established extra management practices that deal with water quality, wetlands protection, wastewater treatment, water supply, non-native species, and fish health programs.

"All of these programs help to ensure that U.S. farm-raised fish and shellfish area safe and should be a regular part of a healthy diet," O'Dierno said.