

'Made In Rural America' Report Released

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced a new state-by-state "Made in Rural America" report illustrating the impact of USDA investments in rural communities.

Each state factsheet highlights specific USDA investments in rural businesses, manufacturing, energy, water and other infrastructure development. They also outline how USDA is helping rural communities attract businesses and families by investing in housing and broadband.

The report's state by state fact sheets are available at www.usda.gov/opportunities/.

SD Local Foods Conference Set

HURON — The dates for the fourth annual South Dakota Local Foods Conference have been set for Nov. 14-15 to be held at the SDSU Extension Sioux Falls Regional Center at 2001 E. 8th Street, Sioux Falls.

The Local Foods Conference is sponsored by a collaboration of partners such as SDSU Extension, South Dakota USDA Rural Development, South Dakota Specialty Producers Association, Dakota Rural Action, National Relief Charities and the North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education. The conference is meant to continue the dialogue on local foods among producers, growers, consumers, school nutrition programs, grocers, restaurants and resource providers.

The local foods movement is gaining momentum around the nation and this conference offers timely information on topics such as the future of organic food production, selling to institutions, food product labeling, raising backyard poultry and backyard gardening techniques to name a few.

Registration information can be obtained by visiting <https://igrow.org/events/south-dakota-local-foods-conference/> or call Christina Zdorovtsov at 605-782-3290 for more information.

Honey Bee Habitat Funding Available

RAPID CITY — The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced that more than \$4 million in technical and financial assistance is available to Midwest farmers and ranchers to improve honey bee habitat.

This funding provides producers guidance and support to implement conservation practices that will create safe and diverse food sources for honey bees.

"Honey bees play a vital role in South Dakota crop production," said Bob Reiners, South Dakota Department of Agriculture (SDDA) apiary specialist. "Our state is home to 324,682 colonies maintained by 228 beekeepers on 6,748 locations across the state. In 2013, these colonies produced 14,840,000 pounds of honey with a value of \$30,570,000. In recent years, we have run into decreasing numbers due to colony collapse disorder. This USDA initiative will also provide additional benefits to native pollinators."

Local staff and technical specialists with the NRCS can help develop a plan to address resource concerns. Now is the time to contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office to begin developing a good conservation plan on your farm or ranch or, visit www.sd.nrcs.usda.gov/. Funding is provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and applications are due Friday, Nov. 21.



Things To Come?

Climate Change A Certainty, Though Details Are Still Fuzzy

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

The majority of scientists now agree that climate change is a very real phenomenon, and that production agriculture is a key industry to be impacted by global warming.

But what continues to remain a bit fuzzy are the details of what exactly is to be expected in how weather patterns will shift during the next several decades.

As many farmers and ranchers might have guessed, much of the Midwest already got a taste of the future — during the historic drought of 2012. Climatologist Don Wilhite, with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Neb. (UNL), said the worst drought in the region's history could be just a typical summer by the end of the 21st Century.

Wilhite and other UNL scientists gathered in September to discuss the implications of climate change on Midwest weather.

Though the Earth has periodically cycled through ice ages and warm periods since the beginning of time, the current global warming is happening at a faster rate than likely has ever happened before. Scientists blame shifting land use patterns, burning of fossil fuels and other activities leading to increased greenhouse gas emissions for the current sudden shift in climate, Wilhite said.

He referenced indicators worldwide, from ocean and land temperatures to snow cover, that point to unequivocal evidence that global warming is no longer just a theory. To put the data in perspec-

ive, the month of July was the 353rd consecutive month with a global temperature above the 20th century average.

While there is no question among researchers that climate change is happening, global warming continues to be hotly debated on the political scene and among other public sectors, Wilhite said. Better time would be spent in preparing consumers and vulnerable industries, such as production agriculture, for what could be their reality in a few decades: the 2012 drought, year after year.

"[Year] 2012 would be an average summer," Wilhite said.

Wilhite acknowledged that projections are not certain, particularly because it's unknown how human behavior might continue to change in the coming decades to contend with, or add to, climate change. However, he foresees average temperatures in the Great Plains to increase from 4 to 9 degrees by 2071. Days of 100-degree temperatures could increase by 13 to 16 per year. The frost-free season, having already increased by 5 to 25 days, could increase by another two weeks.

Comparatively, during the 2012 summer, two locations in Nebraska — McCook and Lincoln — experienced 11 and 5 days, respectively, of 100-degree days more than normal. This brought total 100-degree days to 37, more than a month for McCook, and 17 for Lincoln.

While projected climate change results aren't disappointing for all regions in the United States, farmers and ranchers here need to brace for weather patterns that will significantly challenge crop and livestock production. The Great Plains, the Southwest and the Southeast

all have troubling projections.

Other UNL climatologists are urging the nation's leaders to be proactive in mitigating the effects of climate change. Robert Oglesby of UNL is concerned about politicians waiting for other countries, such as India and China, to make the first move in responding to global warming.

"We used to think of ourselves as leaders," he said. "Waiting to see how other countries act is not leading. Do we have the will or do we not have the will?"

UNL's Deborah Bathke also encourages politicians to step up and focus on a positive, solutions-oriented plan rather than a reactive, doom-and-gloom approach.

Wilhite, Oglesby and Bathke are among authors of a new report, "Understanding and Assessing Climate Change: Implications for Nebraska," available at <http://go.unl.edu/climatechange>.

While overall warming for the state of Nebraska has only been 1 degree since 1895, when separated out into daytime highs and overnight lows, the nighttime temperatures have been warming greater than daytime temperatures. Also, more warming has occurred during winter than summer.

Unlike temperature, however, the trend is less certain for average annual precipitation in Nebraska.

"Early adapters will be better able to cope with changes as they occur," according to the report's executive summary. "Action now is preferable and most cost-effective than reaction later."

Commentary

The Farming Life: Shock And The Change Of Seasons

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

Most of the farmers around here have their crops out of the fields, and the lush sprouts of winter wheat stand in stark contrast to the ever-graying sky of late fall-early winter. The air is cooling and the afternoon sun is shining more directly in my south-facing windows, an ever-present awareness that even if there are still comfortable, jacket-free days here and there, the icy grip of winter is merely around the corner.

While I intuitively know the change in seasons from fall to winter really is a gradual thing, it always seems to shock my system when the autumn time change occurs and it is suddenly pitch black at 5:30 p.m., only an hour after my kids get off the school bus and even before my husband is home from work.

I am not a fan of cold in general, but I do like that the shorter, colder days encourage more time together with the family at home. It's a nice

change from a busy summer schedule that scatters the family members from activity to activity, from dawn to dusk only a couple hours shy of midnight, from softball in one town to the 4-H county fair in another, from swimming lessons here to youth camps there.

From the time the pilgrims first set foot on the East Coast, the fall harvest heralded a time to coming together to recognize the seasons. And I see it in the relief of area farmers who, all of summer, tended to their crops and prayed against severe weather and volatile markets that they would not only have a crop to harvest in the fall but a also crop worth harvesting.

Now is the time for farmers to celebrate the end to the growing season, for overcoming challenges and worries, to be able to pay off bills and bank notes and to enjoy a relatively calm winter, even if maybe a little boring to some.

Growing up on a ranch, I didn't have the same reaction to the fall that so many of my

friends who grew up on crop farms did. The fall wasn't a time to celebrate as much as dread the upcoming cold weather. My yearly observance of the seasons rose and fell with the lambing season.

I looked forward to when bundling up in winter coveralls, scarves, boots, gloves and stocking caps — a process that could take ages for a kid — would be rewarded with seeing a new life born in the barn, a ewe giving birth to one or two or three lambs on the newly bedded-down fresh straw. Little tails wiggled with delight as the lambs nuzzled and found their mama's milk, and little bleats would be exchanged between ewe and lamb in the otherwise bleak cold that seemed to suck the air from the lungs as soon as I stepped outside.

That was my season of celebration.

Lambing happened in mid-winter, and even with the holidays, my recollection of late fall rarely sparked feelings of relief. It was more like a season to get through until lamb-

ing season begun.

That was, except for what we called Indian summers, when after a killing freeze, the days would warm back up and jacket-free days would extend sometimes into December.

Now grown up, I don't dread this time of year like I did as a kid. I see each season as having its own purpose and own joys and challenges. I welcome November, even the shorter, colder days, for bringing my kids and family indoors to spend time together. I celebrate with the area farmers — even though I do not raise

crops myself — the fall harvest, acknowledging the hard work, faith and anxieties that have been poured into them.

And my seasons of every year rise and fall with the season of the crops. Spring planting spurs our excitement coming up in the summer months. Quickly growing corn and soybean crops mean that the long, activity-packed days of summer are upon us. Harvest signals a time to come together and reflect back on all that was accomplished during the year so far. And the barren fields of winter remind us to take time to

rest and relax in preparation for another cycle of life.

I know that the change in seasons really is a gradual thing, but doesn't it seem to move really quickly once the time changes from Daylight Savings Time to, well, normal time?

Unlike the spring time change, which takes my body a couple weeks to adjust to "losing an hour," adding an hour of sleep during the fall change is not only restorative but offers a bright spot to an otherwise seasonal plunge into darkness.


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