

NIFA in the News – Week of November 14, 2011

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In the News

USDA awards \$19 million in organic grants (The Packer 11/05). Officials in late October announced \$19 million in grants from two U.S. Department of Agriculture organic programs. The money will fund 23 research projects and program development in 18 states. Following are the 14 grants related to organic produce. Additional projects related to organic dairy, chicken and beef operations were also awarded. Money for the grants comes from two programs within the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. [Link](#)

Critical issues for agricultural cooperatives (Pork Network 11/05). Cooperatives are user owned businesses that are an important part of the U.S. economy and particularly prevalent in the agricultural sector. Cooperatives were included as a part of the mission of the Cooperative Extension Service in 1926 and the USDA has maintained research and statistical staff focusing on cooperatives for over 50 years. A National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA; formerly CSREES) Regional Research and Extension Committee for cooperatives has been active since 1993, making it one of the longest running such committees in the United States. [Link](#)

USDA shells out for organic projects (FruitNet 11/07). Officials for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) have revealed that some US\$19m is being set aside to fund a number of organic research projects across the country. According to the USDA, the money will fund 23 different research projects and programme development in 23 states, covering organic produce, meat and dairy. The Packer reported that money for the grants is coming from two programmes within the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. [Link](#)

U of M scientists, master gardeners to analyze biofuels' impacts (Hutchison Leader 11/07). Can a single biofuel production system reduce water and nutrient runoff from farm fields, cut down on soil erosion and turn a profit for the farmers who grow it? University of Minnesota scientists and Extension master gardeners will explore this possibility as part of a new, five-year, \$25 million multi-state grant.

Funded by the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, nationwide research will focus on harvesting perennial grasses—mostly native species such as bluestem and switchgrass—and using the biomass as a feedstock for a biofuel process known as pyrolysis. [Link](#)

U of M biofuels researchers team with gardeners (AP/Canadian Business 11/8).

University of Minnesota biofuels researchers are teaming up with master gardeners in the school's extension service. They're seeking to find out whether biofuel production can reduce water and nutrient runoff from farm fields, cut down on erosion and turn a profit for farmers who grow it. They'll explore that possibility under a five-year, \$25 million multistate grant from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The nationwide research will focus on using perennial grasses as a feedstock for biofuels. The Minnesota research will test biochar -- a nutrient-rich leftover from using heat to convert the biomass into fuel -- as a soil amendment. The master gardeners will test biochar's ability to increase productivity in vegetable and flower gardens, and determine its viability as a commercial product for home gardeners. [Link](#)

UCR researchers make progress in understanding flood-resistant crops

(Highlander News 11/8). UC Riverside Professor Julia Bailey-Serres' research has provided valuable insight into the mechanisms used by plants to survive floods. The findings may assist researchers in the complex science of combining beneficial plant genes to create flood-resistant crops. The United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and the United States National Science Foundation were able to provide funding to the UC Riverside team. [Link](#)

NCSU to help ramp up Southeast biofuels effort (Southeast Farm Press 11/09).

North Carolina State University will use a \$4 million grant to study the most efficient, cost-effective and environmentally friendly ways of producing biofuels from trees and from forest harvesting residue. North Carolina State is part of the Southeast Partnership for Integrated Biomass Supply Systems, a collaboration of several universities and industry partners who will work on all aspects of the "biofuels pipeline" between the forests where the trees — the biomass feedstock — are grown and the "biorefineries" where the biofuels are produced. The partnership is funded for five years with a \$15 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. [Link](#)

U of M biofuels researchers team with gardeners (Crookston Times-MN 11/9).

University of Minnesota biofuels researchers are teaming up with master gardeners in the school's extension service. They're seeking to find out whether biofuel production can reduce water and nutrient runoff from farm fields, cut down on erosion and turn a profit for farmers who grow it. They'll explore that possibility under a five-year, \$25 million multistate grant from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. [Link](#)

People's Gardens sprouting from Maryland to Hawaii (AP/WTRF/Sacramento Bee/San Jose Mercury News/CBS News/Boston Globe/Modesto Bee/Fresno

Bee/San Francisco Chronicle 11/10). A garden in Baltimore's Cherry Hill neighborhood is 1 of more than 150 nationwide that are receiving grants to help bring fruits and vegetables to what federal agriculture officials say are "food deserts." Those are underserved areas that lack access to fresh and nutritious foods. Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan is visiting Baltimore's Eat Healthy, Live Healthy Urban Garden on Thursday to announce the grants, the first awards given under the People's Garden program. In addition to Maryland, the grants totaling \$725,000 are going to projects in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Michigan and Ohio. The USDA says there are more than 1,400 People's Gardens across the country in and in three U.S. territories and nine foreign countries. [Link](#)

Towson U. receives \$60,000 from USDA for Cherry Hill gardens (Baltimore Sun 11/10). A \$60,000 federal grant announced Thursday will allow the South Baltimore neighborhood of Cherry Hill to grow several new community gardens. Three-quarters of the U.S. Department of Agriculture money will be divided among community groups that will create and run the gardens, said grant administrator Nadine Braunstein, an assistant professor in Towson University's College of Health Professions. The remaining \$15,000 will go to Towson to manage the program, she said. "Why were we inspired to do this in Cherry Hill? Because the community was in need," she said. The gardens are intended to improve the neighborhood's access to fresh, healthful food, she said. The Cherry Hill People's Garden project will conduct information sessions in January for groups interested in applying for funds to start a garden, Braunstein said. To improve each garden's odds for success, she said, at least two collaborating groups will need to be part of every application. [Link](#)

USDA expands People's Garden project (Sustainable Food News 11/10). The U.S. Department of Agriculture Thursday announced 10 grants totaling \$725,000 to support 155 People's Gardens in neighborhoods from Maryland to Hawaii, giving residents direct access to fresh fruits and vegetables in underserved neighborhoods. The agency's People's Garden Grant Program (PGGP) had received over 360 proposals requesting more than \$4 million. PGGP was designed to invest in urban and rural areas identified as food deserts or food insecure areas, particularly those with persistent poverty. [Link](#)

\$70,000 USDA grant to Denver Urban Garden will continue work to slake city's food deserts (Denver Post 11/10). In a fierce national competition, Denver Urban Gardens was one of 10 programs to win People's Garden grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The program is intended to boost the number of community gardens in underserved neighborhoods. USDA this afternoon awarded \$725,000 to create 155 gardens in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Ohio, Maryland, Michigan and Ohio. [Link](#)

USDA expands People's Garden initiative (Garden Center Magazine 11/11). Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan visited a community garden in Baltimore on Nov. 10 to announce 10 grants to support 155 People's Gardens in neighborhoods from Maryland to Hawaii, continuing the U.S. Department of

Agriculture's (USDA) efforts to combat malnutrition while supporting local and regional food systems. These sustainable community gardens will give residents direct access to fresh fruits and vegetables in underserved neighborhoods. A lack of access to fresh and nutritious food fuels obesity and domestic food insecurity—a condition where households experience limited or uncertain access to adequate food. "The simple act of planting a garden can help unite neighborhoods around a common effort and inspire communities to find solutions to challenges facing our country—from hunger to the environment," said Merrigan. "The People's Garden Initiative has demonstrated that one direct and effective way of improving food access is to plant a garden. Since establishing our People's Garden Initiative, we're excited to see more and more people working together to create nurturing communities around these sources of nutritious food." [Link](#)

USDA digs the way Denver Urban Gardens grows, awards it \$70,000 grant (Denver Post 11/11). More than 25 years' experience with community gardens helped Denver Urban Gardens win a \$70,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's People's Garden Grant Program. "There is expertise here that few communities in the country have," said Harris Sherman, the USDA undersecretary for natural resources and the environment. The USDA received 360 proposals but selected only 10, awarding a total of \$725,000 to create 155 gardens. In Denver, the money will be used to develop 14 new gardens in the next two years, adding to Denver Urban Gardens' network of 114 community gardens, which produce more than 294 tons of food each year. [Link](#)

Denver Urban Gardens Awarded \$70,000 Grant From USDA People's Garden Grant Program (Huffington Post 11/11). When Denver Urban Gardens started in 1985, few would have predicted its astonishing growth. In 26 years, the project has sprouted from just three gardens to 114. More than 4,500 volunteers now help cultivate upwards of 294 tons of fresh produce annually, not to mention the strengthened community bonds formed in the process. And the group seems poised to keep growing. On November 10, The United States Department of Agriculture announced Denver Urban Gardens would receive \$70,000 via the People's Garden Grant Program (PGGP). [Link](#)

Young Farmers Find Huge Obstacles to Getting Started (New York Times 11/11). Emily Oakley, who had worked on an organic farm in California, moved with her husband, Mike Appel, to Oaks, Okla., in pursuit of cheap farmland. But even though they had \$25,000 saved, the couple could not get a bank loan. When they applied for a government loan, the loan officer threw back his head and laughed... Ms. Shute said she hoped that the survey results, released on Wednesday, would demonstrate to the United States Department of Agriculture and to Congress that young farmers, although passionate, have needs that must be addressed... Tom Vilsack, the agriculture secretary, appears to have championed their cause. The 2008 Farm Bill included a program for beginning farmers and ranchers, and over the past year, the Agriculture Department has allotted \$18 million to universities and extension programs to educate beginning farmers. [Link](#)

Veterinarians who work in rural areas can get student-debt help (San Angelo Standard-Times 11/12). Last year Congress passed the Veterinary Services Investment Act, which established a competitive grant program to address a nationwide shortage of rural large-animal veterinarians. The USDA's award incentives entice new veterinary graduates to practice in underserved areas for a minimum of three years in exchange for part of their student loans to be paid by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. [Link](#)

USDA Working to Promote Pre-Harvest Meat Safety (Food Safety News 11/14). The National Institute of Food and Agriculture also plays a key part on the pre-harvest initiative, making competitive grants available universities and labs conducting cutting-edge food safety research, some of which looks at pre-harvest. From 2005 to 2010 NIFA provided approximately \$26 million to fund research projects and a broad variety of topics -- from mastitis in dairy production to the survival of pathogens in manure and biosolids. [Link](#)

Beginning Farmer Bill introduced in Congress (AgriView 11/14). House and Senate members recently announced the introduction of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act of 2011 [H.R. 3236], a comprehensive bill intended for inclusion in the 2012 Farm Bill that highlights federal programs that help support economic opportunities for young and beginning farmers and ranchers. One of the most important provisions in this bill is a proposal to reauthorize and increase mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)-a highly successful program first authorized in the 2008 farm bill, which provides competitive grants to a wide range of community-based training and education programs for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. A final research provision in the bill would authorize research, education, and extension, projects to be funded under USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative that are related to beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged and immigrant farmers, farm transition, farm transfer, farm entry, new marketing and farm viability alternatives, and related issues. [Link](#)

Earmark moratorium slashes small fruits research funding (Capital Press 11/14). When Congress voted for a two-year moratorium on earmarks in its budget reconciliation bill this year, it put a halt to new projects at the Northwest Center for Small Fruits Research. Philip Gutt, the center's program coordinator, said Congress cut \$307,000 from the center's 2010 funding when it initiated the earmark moratorium. The money had been funneled to the center through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and pooled with \$700,000 the center receives annually from ARS for research projects. [Link](#)

Dr. Catherine Woteki Visits 4-H Clubs at Fort Shafter (Hawaii 4-H Military Partnership 11/14). Chief Scientist Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics at the US Department of Agriculture visits the Health, Cooking and Cloverbud 4-H clubs at Fort Shafter Youth Center. Dr. Woteki was visiting Hawaii as

part APEC and requested a visit with a military 4-H program. [Link](#)

Should Iowa cattlemen feed the world? (Cattle Network 11/15). Last month during the World Food Prize events in Des Moines, the Global Agricultural Productivity (GAP) report was released by the Global Harvest Initiative. This document can be viewed as a report card on how the world's farmers are doing in making progress toward doubling food production by 2050 in order to feed the anticipated population of 9 billion people. The fact is Iowa cattlemen are doing their part to "feed with world." In 2010, Iowa exported more value in red meat and live animals than any other state. Iowa State University is part of an 11-institution team that received a \$5 million, 5-year grant to improve feed efficiency in beef cattle from USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) last year. The grant is part of NIFA's Global Food Security initiative and is led by Dr. Jerry Taylor from the University of Missouri. [Link](#)

Getting Innovation Down to a Science (Chem Info 11/16). The National Center for Food Safety and Technology (NCFST) at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) has functioned as a scientific collaboration between the university, the food industry and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Realizing NCFST's expanded focus, Dr. Robert E. Brackett, IIT Vice President and Director of IFSH, opened discussions with the center's board and university administration to determine how best to utilize NCFST's expanded research tools. After gathering input from the Executive Advisory Board, FDA partners and lead staff, the new entity was named the Institute for Food Safety and Health. The institute has already launched a new research project thanks to a \$25 million collaborative grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The grant will fund a research team led by North Carolina University that will establish the USDA-NIFA Food Virology Collaborative. The collaborative will study human noroviruses across the food supply chain in an effort to help reduce the number of virus-related food-borne illnesses. [Link](#)

Economists help cool-climate wine growers (R&D Magazine 11/16). What gives an upstart wine region the traction to develop into a world-renowned producer of wine? Miguel Gómez, assistant professor at the Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, is working to identify the keys to success for the newest cool-climate wine regions in the eastern United States. The four-year project, funded by a \$498,000 grant from the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative of the USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture, is a joint effort among Gómez, Michigan State University professor Brent Ross and project director Fabio Chaddad from the University of Missouri. [Link](#)

Want to study relative risks of GE? (Biofortified 11/16). Last Thursday, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) posted a new grant – one that readers of Biofortified might be interested to read about. Called the Biotechnology Risk Assessment Grants Program, this grant for up to \$1 million for each project is for scientists who want to study the environmental risks of genetic engineering in agriculture. [Link](#)

USDA Awards \$8.8 Million in Grants to HSIs (Hispanic Business 11/16). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has awarded 20 competitive grants to Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) in six states and Puerto Rico, according to a news release from the USDA. The grants are intended to enhance the ability of colleges and universities to support underserved students and develop a skilled American workforce. The grants totaled \$8.8 million and are intended to support programs that address issues such as global food security and hunger, climate change, bio-based energy development childhood obesity and food security. [Link](#)

Pasture poultry production the focus of research grant (MeatingPlace 11/17). The Center for Food Safety at the University of Arkansas has reported that it is partnering with the University of Georgia in a \$272,684 grant project designed to determine the food safety risk of small on-farm poultry processing systems (known as pasture poultry production) and evaluate other aspects of their operations. Funded by the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) agency, the project is designed to determine the food safety risks associated with mobile processing units as compared to the risks at small USDA facilities. [Email for full story](#)

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