

## NIFA in the News – Week of May 2, 2011

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### In the News

**ISU To Coordinate Multi-State Soybean Project (Wallaces Farmer 4/7).** Iowa State University is part of a team that was awarded a U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) grant to create new disease management technologies to improve the sustainability of soybean production. Virginia Bioinformatics Institute and Virginia Tech's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences are the lead institutions for the \$9.28 million grant. [Link](#)

**Illinois Daybook (Washington Examiner 4/26).** Nearly 2,000 military personnel, Cooperative Extension educators and others serving military families gather for the "2011 Family Resiliency Conference: Forging Partnerships." The opening session, featuring Sesame Street star Elmo along with Robert L. Gordon III, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military community and family policy, and Cathie Woteki, USDA undersecretary for research, education and economics. [Link](#)

**USDA Announces Support of Research to Confront Childhood Obesity (South Dakota Ag Connection 4/27).** Responding to the growing obesity epidemic that threatens our nation's health and economic well-being, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) announced research, education and extension grants to 24 institutions aimed at reducing the prevalence of childhood obesity across the nation. [Link](#)

**DoD, USDA team for family resiliency conference (Fort Leavenworth Lamp 4/28).** Nearly 2,000 helping professionals from around the world are gathering in Chicago this week to share the latest family-related information and research and to hear from some of the nation's most renowned military family experts. The Defense and Agriculture departments are hosting this family-focused conference together for the first time. Officials hope the joint effort will build on a working relationship that spans 25 years and encompasses numerous partnerships. [Link](#)

**USDA, DOD Officially Launch Military Extension Partnership (Garden News 4/28).** USDA AND (DoD) officially launched the USDA/DoD Military Extension Partnership today to support military service members and their families in their communities. [Link](#)

**Military Families Needs Will Be Addressed by USDA, DoD (Farm Futures 4/28).** USDA and the Department of Defense have launched a partnership to support military service members and their families. It's the USDA/DoD Military Extension Partnership and according to Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics Catherine Woteki, it will give the established civilian network of extension offices a greater ability to help service members and their loved ones. [Link](#)

**Congress cuts \$87M in earmarked research funds (Capital Press 4/28).** When Congress voted to remove earmarks in its budget reconciliation bill, it also eliminated \$87 million for agricultural research projects across the nation, researchers say. Todd Weiner, director of communications for Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash., said the budget deal reduced allocated funds for earmarked noncompetitive special agriculture grant programs by \$87 million. However, it increased the competitive portion of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture-administered research grants by \$3 million to \$265 million, he said. [Link](#)

**National Institute of Food and Agriculture chief stepping down (The Great Beyond, Nature 4/29).** Roger Beachy, the director of the US National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), has resigned his position effective 20 May. In a memo sent today to NIFA staff, US Department of Agriculture (USDA) undersecretary Catherine Woteki announced that the famous plant biologist would be following a time-honoured political tradition by leaving the institute to "to spend more time with his wife, his children and his grandchildren." [Link](#)

**Beachy to Leave Key Agriculture Research Post in Washington (Science Magazine 4/29).** Roger Beachy, the director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is leaving his post next month after serving less than 2 years. "What a huge loss," says Karl Glasener, director of science policy for the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America. [Link](#)

**Monsanto-tied scientist abruptly quits key USDA research post (Grist 4/29).** On a slow Friday afternoon, a surprising bit of news came down the pike: Roger Beachy, head of National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), the main research arm of the USDA, has officially resigned his post, effective May 20. [Link](#)

**Dr. Beachy Resigns from USDA's NIFA Agency (AgriMarketing 4/29).** Dr. Roger Beachy, who took the helm of USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) in October 2009 and led the reorganization which transformed the agency into the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) in 2010, has resigned, effective May 20, 2011, according to Research, Education and Economics Under Secretary Cathie Woteki. [Link](#)

**NIFA Director Beachy Resigns (Farm Progress 5/2).** Dr. Roger Beachy has tendered his resignation as head of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. As of May 20, 2011 Beachy will be replaced by Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young, who will serve as acting director. Jacobs-Young is currently director of the Office of the Chief Scientist at USDA. Research,

Education and Economics Under Secretary Cathie Woteki says they understand that Dr. Beachy's first priority must be to the needs of his family, and he will be returning to St. Louis, Missouri, to spend more time with his wife, his children and his grandchildren. [Link](#)

**Beachy to leave National Institute of Food and Agriculture (AgraNet 5/3).** Roger Beachy, the first director of the USDA's newly-created National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), is leaving his post May 20 after serving less than two years. He said in a memo distributed to NIFA staff on Friday that he wants to spend more time with his wife, children and grandchildren. Past statements, however, indicate other reasons might be behind the change of venues. "I don't intend to preside over a flat budget, Beachy said last June in a lecture, in Washington, D.C. [Link](#)

**US farm-science head quits (Nature 5/3).** A nascent revolution in US agricultural science lost its leader last week. Roger Beachy, director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) in Washington DC, resigned his post, effective on 20 May, saying that he wants to spend more time with his family in St Louis, Missouri. His departure from the agency, part of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), after less than two years in the job has left researchers wondering what will become of Beachy's pet project: the controversial overhaul of NIFA's flagship competitive grants programme, the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). [Link](#)

**OSU Shares \$9M Late Blight Management Grant (Western Farmer-Stockman 5/4).** Oregon State University is part of a 17-institution consortium that will share a grant of \$9 million to study late blight, one of the world's most significant plant diseases, which hits potatoes and tomatoes. The grant, funded by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, is designed to develop diagnostic tools, grow disease-resistant plants through breeding and biotechnology, and improve management strategies for producers. [Link](#)

**Penn State Researchers to Focus on Obesity Prevention Training (Gant Daily 5/4).** Sustainable, comprehensive and problem-based training to prevent childhood obesity will now be possible thanks to a \$4.5 million, five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Penn State's grant is one of only two major training grants awarded this year from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, which was established under the 2008 Farm Bill. The long-term goal of these grants is to reduce the percentage of children and adolescents who are overweight or obese. [Link](#)

**Grant at UI to help fund obesity fight (Champaign Urbana News Gazette 5/4).** The University of Illinois has received a five-year, \$4.5 million grant to train future leaders in the war on childhood obesity. The grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture will pay for the creation of the new I-TOPP -- Illinois Transdisciplinary Obesity Prevention Program -- at the UI, which will combine a doctorate with a master's in public health, with a focus on childhood obesity. The UI's Urbana-Champaign campus was one of 24 institutions to receive grant money from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture to help fight childhood obesity. The UI Chicago also received a \$950,000 grant for an obesity prevention program being called "Hip Hop to Health." [Link](#)

**Research to examine sustainability options (Capital Press 5/4).** University of Idaho

researchers are asking Pacific Northwest farmers what they need to stay in business and grow. The USDA has awarded the university a \$438,000 grant for two years of research into production, transportation, processing, marketing and sales. The goal is to identify how best to develop an integrated system that brings economic benefit to small producers and the local community. [Link](#)

**Study shows corn gene provides resistance to multiple diseases (Science Blog 5/4).** Study shows corn gene provides resistance to multiple diseases. Researchers at North Carolina State University have found a specific gene in corn that appears to be associated with resistance to three important plant leaf diseases. In a paper published this week in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, NC State plant pathologists and crop scientists pinpoint the gene — glutathione S-transferase — that seems to confer resistance to Southern leaf blight, gray leaf spot and Northern leaf blight, a trio of diseases that cripple corn plants worldwide. The research was funded by USDA-ARS, the National Science Foundation, CGIAR Generation Challenge Program, the N.C. Corn Growers Association, and USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture. [Link](#)

**SDSU awarded \$4.1 million grant (Brookings Register 5/4).** The College of Education and Human Sciences at South Dakota State University has been awarded a \$4.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to implement a graduate program aimed at preventing childhood obesity. The competitive grant, administered by the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), was received in partnership with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. [Link](#)

**Penn State gets \$5M federal grant for food availability study (AP 5/4).** Penn State University is receiving a five-year, \$5 million federal grant to study ways of making fresh and affordable food available to people who don't have access to it. The grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture will allow Penn State to research food availability in nine urban and rural areas from Vermont to West Virginia. Penn State researchers will ask people about their buying habits and what kind of access they have to healthy foods. Then they'll look at how to best connect those communities with food from regional farmers. [Link](#)

**Grants fund sustainable food systems study (UPI 5/5).** Grants have been awarded to several universities to study ways to improve sustainable food systems, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said Thursday. All awards will fund programs that will examine ways to establish, organize, increase and promote food security, Deputy Agriculture Secretary Kathleen Merrigan said in a release. Through this program, the Agriculture Department hopes to "win the future by understanding the needs of low-income communities in order to better meet their food and nutrition needs," Merrigan said. [Link](#)

**Biomass Grants Awarded by USDA and DOE (Domestic Fuel 5/5).** "The projects that we are announcing today will spur innovation in bioenergy by developing renewable resources that produce energy more efficiently and do so in a sustainable way," said Vilsack. "Advances made through this research will help boost rural economies by developing and testing new processing facilities and profitable, energy-rich crops that U.S. farmers and foresters will grow." The biomass research and development grants have been awarded for projects in Florida, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, and South Carolina with feedstocks ranging from algae to sweet sorghum, paper mill waste products and energy

crops like switchgrass. [Link](#)

**USDA and DOE Award Biomass Research and Development Grants (Agri-Pulse 5/5).** U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu today announced a total of \$47 million to fund eight research and development projects that will support the production of biofuels, bioenergy and high-value biobased products from a variety of biomass sources. These investments in clean, sustainable transportation fuels will help reduce U.S. oil imports, support economic development in rural America, create clean energy jobs for U.S. workers, and protect American families and businesses from future spikes in gas prices. The advanced biofuels produced through these projects are also expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 percent compared to fossil fuels. [Link](#)

**Exelus Inc. of Livingston receives \$5.1 million federal grant for biomass research (NJ Newsroom 5/5).** As part of the Obama administration's effort to address gasoline costs, the federal government Thursday announced that Exelus Inc. of Livingston has received \$5,185,004 to work on two green energy projects. Exelus scientists will use the money in an attempt to improve the tolerance of crops to drought and salt stress, as well as redesign a process to convert biomass feedstocks into biofuels, thereby improving its cost-competitiveness. U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced the award in Washington. [Link](#)

**Metabolix fueled by \$6M DOE, USDA grant (Mass High Tech 5/5).** Cambridge-based Metabolix Inc. (Nasdaq: MBLX) will receive a \$6 million federal grant for a research and development project on producing bio-based products and fuels from switchgrass. The funding will come from the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is part of a \$47 million national grant program aimed at reducing the country's reliance on imported oil, the federal organizations announced jointly. Metabolix, which has developed biodegradable plastics technology and products with agri-giant Archer Daniels Midland, will work under the grant to enhance the yield of bio-based products and fuels from switchgrass. [Link](#)

**DoD, USDA partner to help military families (Federal News Radio 5/4).** The Pentagon and the Agriculture Department have teamed up on a new initiative to meet the needs of military families. With longer deployments, more single parents, and more families living off base, the challenges that military families face is changing. Brent Elrod, the national program leader of military and veterans programs at USDA, talked to Federal News Radio about some of the programs that will be offered through the initiative. [Link](#)

**USDA, DOE grant \$47M to eight new biorefining projects (Biofuels Digest 5/6).** Eight new projects in advanced biorefining feedstocks, processing, and logistics: who won, why they're important In Washington, US Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and US Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced a total of \$47 million in grants to fund eight research and development projects that will support the production of biofuels, bioenergy and high-value biobased products from a variety of biomass sources. Approximately 300 applications were received for this solicitation. [Link](#)

**UK gets \$6.9 million federal grant to help reduce reliance on imported oil (Lexington**

**Herald-Leader 5/6).** The University of Kentucky has received a \$6.9 million federal grant to help reduce America's reliance on imported oil, one of eight awards in the country. "It's going to be big," said UK's principal investigator, Sue Nokes, a professor in the department of biosystems and agricultural engineering. Her department will be working with other UK colleges and outside groups including the University of Wisconsin, Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Agricultural Research Services. U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced Thursday that UK will receive the grant.  
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