

NIFA in the News – Week of May 9, 2011

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In the News

Monsanto's Stacked Deck (Green Chip Stocks 5/6). Last week, the head of the USDA's main research department resigned. Roger Beachy, who took over at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture in 2009, was a prime example of the revolving door between Big-Agro and government policy. Beachy is a major proponent of genetically modified foods, and had previously presided as president of "Monsanto's nonprofit arm" — the Danforth Plant Science Center. While Beachy may have moved on, Monsanto's fingerprints are still all over important governmental positions. [Link](#)

USDA and DOE Award Biomass Research and Development Grants to Reduce America's Reliance on Imported Oil (The Paper Index Times 5/7). As part of the Obama Administration's comprehensive plan to address rising gas prices, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu today announced a total of \$42 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. [Link](#)

NMSU announces Endowed Dairy Chair (High Plains Journal 5/9). Last year, New Mexico State University's College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences recently announced the selection of its own Robert Hagevoort as the recipient of the Endowed Dairy Chair. Because of the visibility the Endowed Dairy Chair will have and the attention it will draw, it can create unique funding opportunities, especially in today's competitive grant-funding environment, Hagevoort said. For example, NMSU's Southern Great Plains Dairy Consortium, co-coordinated by Hagevoort, is being utilized as the wraparound tool for the research and teaching component of a recently-announced \$9.2 million USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Bovine Respiratory Disease grant. [Link](#)

Study to focus on feed efficiency of beef cattle (High Plains Journal 5/9). Iowa State University animal scientists are on a team of researchers and Extension specialists focusing on nutrition and genetics to improve cattle feeding efficiency. The University of Missouri is

leading the study, which is funded by a \$5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. [Link](#)

USDA, DOE team up to fund more advanced biofuels projects (Ethanol Producer Magazine 5/9). The USDA and U.S. DOE announced May 5 that they are jointly providing \$47 million to eight early stage research and development (R&D) projects focused on the production of biofuels, bioenergy and high-value biobased products. Selected projects will be funded through the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the DOE's Biomass Program via the Biomass Research and Development Initiative. [Link](#)

USDA Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program Accepting Applications (Veterinary Practice news 5/9). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today that applications are being taken for the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP). The National Veterinary Medical Services Act (NVMSA) helps qualified veterinarians offset a significant portion of debt they incurred while pursuing their veterinary medicine degrees in return for their service in designated high-priority veterinary shortage situations for an allotted period of time. If a qualified veterinarian commits to at least three years in providing veterinary services in a designated veterinary shortage area, USDA's National Institute of Food & Agriculture (NIFA) may repay up to \$25,000 of their student loan debt annually. [Link](#)

Teaching agriculture in the classroom (Knoxville News Sentinel 5/10). Tanna Nicely, vice principal of Dogwood Elementary School in South Knoxville, has been nominated as a finalist for the 2011 Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award, given by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the National Agriculture in the Classroom Consortium. [Link](#)

USDA and DoE grant \$47m in R&D funding (Biofuels International 5/10). The 5 May 2011 saw the US Department of Energy (DoE) and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) expose a new \$47 million (€32.7 million) grant programme. The new R&D grants, which are part of the Obama Administration's aim to address the rising costs of fuel, will support the generation of energy from biomass. The projects are funded through the Biomass Research and Development Initiative. The USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the DoE's Biomass Program are providing the funding. [Link](#)

Silver Springs Elementary School Garden: Planting Seeds of Knowledge (Carson Now 5/10). Silver Springs children have a new school garden, thanks to a grant received by Healthy Communities Coalition through the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). In a unique partnership, Community Roots, a nonprofit part of The Healthy Communities Coalition, is partnering with SSES and SS Boys and Girls Club to develop and maintain the new garden this spring and summer. [Link](#)

Silver Springs Elementary School Garden: Planting Seeds of Knowledge (Reno Gazette Journal 5/10). Silver Springs children have a new school garden, thanks to a grant received by Healthy Communities Coalition through the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). In a unique partnership, Community Roots, a nonprofit part of The Healthy Communities Coalition, is partnering with SSES and SS Boys and Girls Club to develop and maintain the new garden this spring and summer. [Link](#)

Smile, kids! You're on calorie camera (MSNBC.com 5/11). Health officials trying to reduce obesity and improve eating habits at five San Antonio elementary schools unveiled a \$2 million research project Wednesday that will photograph students' lunch trays before they sit down to eat and later take a snapshot of the leftovers. The project, funded by a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant, is the first of its kind in the nation. The cameras, about the size of pocket flashlights, point only toward the trays and don't photograph the students. Researchers say about 90 percent of parents gave permission to record every morsel of food their child eats. [Link](#)

Schools Criticized for Methods to Fight Obesity (ABC World News 5/11). 17 percent of American children are obese; families struggle to change. Video on AFRI Obesity Prevention grant to the Social Health and Research Center in San Antonio. [Link](#)

USDA Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program currently accepting applications (North Texas e-News 5/11). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that applications are now being taken for the USDA's Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP.) Authorized by the National Veterinary Medical Services Act (NVMSA,) the program helps qualified veterinarians offset a significant portion of debt they incurred while pursuing their veterinary medicine degrees in return for their service in designated high-priority veterinary shortage situations for an allotted period of time. If a qualified veterinarian commits to at least three years in providing veterinary services in a designated veterinary shortage area, USDA's National Institute of Food & Agriculture (NIFA) may repay up to \$25,000 of their student loan debt per year. [Link](#)

Biofuels study to promote on-farm feedstock production (Southeast Farm Press 5/11). The University of Kentucky College of Agriculture has several research projects under way related to biofuels and reducing the United States' dependence on imported oil. Recently the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Energy put more faith in the college by awarding a multi-year, \$6.9 million grant to improve the economics for biorefineries by using on-farm processing to convert biomass to a mixture of butanol, ethanol, acetone and organic acids. [Link](#)

Alarm Over Rural Veterinarian Shortage (ABC News 5/12). Today, more than 1,500 counties in the U.S. are without a single veterinarian to treat animals, estimated by the AVMA. Gary Sherman of the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) said rural veterinarians are the eyes and ears of today's farms. "Ultimately, to keep the food supply healthy and safe, it must begin with healthy animals." he said. . . . This shortage of rural vets, in turn, "contributes to a lack of rural vitality because without veterinary support, the needs of animal health operations, ranches and farms oftentimes can't be profitable," Sherman said. The federal government has stepped in, making available millions of dollars in incentives to encourage new veterinarians to work in rural practices. One solution has been the introduction of a variety of loan-repayment programs. The Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP), sponsored by the USDA, offers graduates who have pledged to work in designated shortage areas for three years \$25,000 a year in veterinary school loan repayment. [Link](#)

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