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## Horse slaughter discussed at Nevada summit

By Erin Slivka

The "Summit of the Horse" was held at Southpoint Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Jan. 3-6, 2011. According to event organizer and Vice President of the United Horsemen Sue Wallis, about 200 people gathered at the summit to discuss the issues surrounding the management, sustainability, and economic viability of horses and horseback cultures.

"Our primary objective as organizers was to create a forum where the voices of the horse world, and those deeply concerned about the health of lands where horses both wild and domestic are managed, could be heard by a misinformed and emotionally manipulated American public," said Wallis.

"We hoped that out of the event would arise a broad based coalition with the capacity and the resources to drive forward the legislative and regulatory changes necessary for a restoration of a viable, sustain-

able equine industry, an end to the unnecessary suffering of horses, and protections for the ecological balances so necessary on not only federal, but tribal, state, and private lands for free-roaming horses and native wildlife and forage to thrive sustainably."

Among the featured speakers at the event was Bob Abbey, Director of the Bureau of Land Management, whose appearance at what some groups called the "Slaughter Summit" created controversy.

"While we can debate whether modern day horses are native to the West, there is no mistake they are part of our nation's heritage and deserve to be protected," said Abbey. "Having recently met with wild horse advocates in Sacramento, California, I have demonstrated a willingness to discuss the BLM's management of wild horses and burros with any organization that is committed to ensuring the health and welfare of these iconic animals, both on and off the range."

Abbey reiterated that the Interior Department has no intention of sending wild horses to slaughter.

"Secretary Salazar and I have consistently stated since taking on our current roles that we do not support nor are we willing to incorporate into any wild horse or burro strategy that we pursue, the euthanasia of healthy wild horses and the unlimited sale of older horses, even though these legal authorities exist under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, as amended," said Abbey.

"Having taken the position that slaughter is not a viable or acceptable management option for America's wild horses or burros which are removed from BLM managed land, then we must be willing to pursue other alternatives that address the challenges we have when managing wild horses and burros."

The BLM plans to implement fertility control measures to address the overpopulation of feral

horses on public lands, an effort that has been encouraged by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). According to Abbey, the on-the-range herd population of 38,400 horses exceeds by nearly 12,000 the number that the BLM considers feasible to sustain on its current rangeland.

Meanwhile, the closing of slaughter plants in the U.S. has resulted in the transport of horses to Mexico and Canada for slaughter, a practice that concerns many due to questions about slaughter procedures in those countries as well as the stress caused by the transportation itself.

Others are concerned that unwanted horses are now simply neglected rather than being humanely slaughtered since some owners cannot afford to euthanize them.

The United Horseman organization hopes that its summit has brought these issues to light and will lead to feasible solutions for the equine industry.

# President's Report



By Deb Dressler  
North Dakota

Greetings from southwestern North Dakota. I encourage every member to attend the WIFE Legislative Meeting to be held in Washington, D.C., on March 12-15. If you are unable to attend, please contact your senators and representatives with WIFE priorities. This meeting is WIFE'S opportunity to let our issues be known. Every member is important, and I challenge everyone to attend or contact your legislators.

The Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency (RMA) announced this month that it has published a proposed rule in the Federal Register that would reward farmer participation in the federal crop insurance program for good performance.

"This proposed Good Performance Refund will benefit qualifying farmers and ranchers across rural America and strengthen the Federal crop insurance program," said RMA Administrator William J. Murphy. "It encourages producers to use the best available management practices in order to qualify for the refund in future years and rewards good performance by returning a portion of the out-of-pocket costs paid for crop insurance premiums back to those who have paid into the program and have had limited or no losses."

Under the proposed program, payment amounts would vary by pro-

## Proposed rule will reward good performance by farmers

ducer and will be based on each qualified producer's history in the crop insurance program. The plan will cost about \$75 million, but the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation said the benefits will outweigh the costs by promoting sound farming practices that reduce losses, discouraging the filing of small claims, and encouraging producers to keep using crop insurance.

To be eligible, farmers already must be in the crop insurance program at the "buy-up" level -- a step above the lower cost catastrophic risk protection.

The final rule may be issued in mid February with the checks sent out shortly after that. The awards un-

der the Good Performance Refund plan would average about \$1,000 per eligible farmer. Approximately 67,000 farmers would be eligible.

On Monday, January 31, 2011, the USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will hold a joint press conference at George Washington University Jack Morton Auditorium to release 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius will discuss guidelines and provide key insights into the new recommendations. Copies of the Guidelines will be available immediately following the press conference at [www.DietaryGuidelines.gov](http://www.DietaryGuidelines.gov).

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**By Frances Rohla  
Nebraska**

# Pork Report

## Oregano supplements show potential in livestock rations

it is expensive.

There are 40 different oregano plants. There is tremendous variability in these plants. The ingredients in oregano are carvacrol, geraniol, and thymol that can be produced synthetically and more economically, so more research funding is needed.

### Pork recipes go high tech

Pork recipes are now available on Japanese iPhones through Apple's Japanese language app store. The app is entitled "American Meat Recipe 100," and it offers Japanese consumers 40 American pork recipes, covering everything from dinner parties to lunch boxes. The recipes were developed by the U.S. Meat Export Federation with support from the USDA Market Access Program. The iPhone shows photos, detailed cooking methods, and "Today's Recommendation."

Dietitian Sylvia Melendez-Klinger conducted media interviews during Hispanic Heritage Month with television stations, radio stations, and print publications in San Antonio, Dallas, and Chicago. Hispanic consumers have concerns about nutritional values. Through the use of pork checkoff dollars, Melendez-Klinger provided information about the many cuts of pork products, comparing the vitamins and minerals that are similar to those of lean chicken meat.

### Pork Producers celebrate 50 years

The Nebraska Pork Producers will be celebrating 50 years of being an organization. Two celebrations will be held, the first on Feb. 23, 2011, at Pork Industry Day in Lincoln, Nebraska, at the Cornhusker Hotel. The second

will be Sept. 24, 2011, at Stone Creek in McCool Junction, Nebraska.

*Information from Dr. Alex Hriston of Penn State University and the Nebraska Farmer, January 2011.*

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**By Mary Ellen Cammack**  
South Dakota

# Beef Report

## Rising prices and shrinking inventory cause industry concern

Mark said if the long run trend toward fewer cattle continues, there will likely be fewer feed yards as well as fewer beef packers and processors. He said that could have a significant impact on the communities where those businesses are

located.

The January 1, 2011, cattle and calves on feed for slaughter report was 5 percent above January 1, 2010. Heifers and heifer calves accounted for 4.26 million head, up 5 percent from 2010.

January 2011 saw cattle futures hit a record high upon speculation that the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in South Korea will boost demand for U.S. beef. Wholesale beef prices were at some of the highest levels since July 2008, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture reports. On January 20, February live cattle futures reached an all-time high for a closest-to-expiration contract since the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) launched cattle futures in 1964. That price was \$112.375, and it then settled to \$109.20 per hundred pounds.

High cattle prices have led to growing losses for meatpackers and may prompt them to reduce slaughter. Futures may be over priced \$4-\$5, according to Phil Stanley, and independent cattle trader at CME.

University of Nebraska Livestock Marketing Economist Darrell Mark is concerned about the impact on the overall cattle market structure. More females are being harvested, including cull cows and bred heifers, to meet the short run demand for beef, with a smaller cattle inventory. Mark says the female-to-steer slaughter ratio has been increasing for the past five years and was near 100 percent in 2010.

“What I have noted, historically, over the last two to three decades is when you have that female-to-male slaughter ratio near 100 percent, you continue to see declines in beef cow numbers for at least the next two to three years,” he said, “and you never tend to see much growth in cattle numbers until you see that ratio drop below about 90 percent. We haven’t been below 90 percent since 2006.”



**By Gwen Cassel**  
New York

# Sheep and Goats Report

## Prices remain high

As I mentioned in my January WIFeline article, the sale price of sheep, lambs, and goats is almost at an all time high! Even after the holiday needs were met, demand is still high and prices remain above average for this time of year. Lamb is selling at all time highs, but so are cull ewe prices! We used to be glad to get \$30 to \$45 for an older ewe, but a friend from Ohio recently reported receiving \$1 a pound at market for 140 to 160 pound cull ewes. My thought is that cull ewe is

replacing “lamb” as the product used in the ever growing demand for better dog foods that are sold as “lamb and rice” products. The term “lamb” is interchangeable for both true lamb product (young animals under one year of age), and “old ewe.”

More and more lambs (and old ewes) are going into “ethnic markets.” These markets are for those individuals and communities where lamb, sheep and goat are considered a staple food. Some of these buyers use lamb and lamb broth in almost every meal they prepare for their families. Many of these sales are private sales made directly at the farm gate. Some farms (according to local regulations) are set up for individuals to come to the farm, pick out their animal, and humanely slaughter and process the lamb on-farm.

The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service released its current sheep and lamb inventory in the U.S. on Jan. 1. A total of 5.53 million head, down 2 percent from 2010, were counted. Recent research states that over a million lambs per year have not been counted in USDA reports. Margaret Soulen-Hinson, president of the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI), said, “We believe that with recent shifts in industry dynamics, where new producers entering the business are marketing their lambs to nontraditional market sectors, it will take some time before these numbers are reflected in the national inventory reports. With all sheep products performing at record high prices, the reported \$1.8 billion economic impact provided by the sheep industry is projected to be even larger this year.”

Higher prices mean more individuals and farms are looking into sheep/lamb production, which means buying in at a high in the industry. As more lambs are produced, prices will probably level as demand is met. Raising sheep and goats can be a fairly low-cost investment, but individuals who do not understand this small ruminant production can make big mistakes in the setup, care and direction of production. Be sure to research the field completely before investing in it.

# Peas, Lentils, and Oilseeds Report



By Phyllis Howatt  
North Dakota

## Lentils provide nutritional value and versatility in any diet

Lentils are believed to have originated in central Asia and have been consumed since prehistoric times. They are one of the first foods to have ever been cultivated. Lentils have been eaten with barley and wheat. These three foods originated in the same regions and spread throughout Africa and Europe.

They were introduced into India, where traditional cuisine includes the spiced lentil dish known as dal. The leading commercial producers of lentils include India, Turkey, Canada, China and Syria.

Lentils are legumes along with other types of beans. They are the seeds of a plant and grow in pods that contain either one or two seeds. They are classified according whether they are large or small in size with dozens of varieties of each being cultivated. The most common types in the United States are either green or brown. Lentils are also available in black, yellow, red, and orange colors.

The round, oval, or heart-shaped disks are small in size, oftentimes smaller than the tip of a pencil eraser. They are sold whole or split into halves. The different types offer varying consistencies, with the brown and green ones better retaining their shape after cooking, while the others generally become soft and mushy.

While the flavor differs slightly among varieties, they generally fea-

ture a hearty, dense, and somewhat nutty flavor. They are quick and easy to prepare, absorbing a variety of flavors from other foods and seasonings. Lentils are high in nutritional value and are available throughout the year.

Lentils are available in prepackaged containers as well as bulk bins. When purchasing lentils from a bin, be sure it is covered and the store has a good product turnover so as to ensure maximal freshness. When purchasing lentils in bulk or in a packaged container, make sure there is no evidence of moisture or insect damage and the lentils are whole and not cracked.

Canned lentils can be found in some grocery stores and most natural food markets. Unlike canned vegetables, which lose much of their nutritional value, there is little difference in the nutritional value of canned lentils and those you cook yourself. They take a long time to cook whether canned or cooked at home. Enjoy them whichever way is more convenient for you. Also look for those that do not contain extra salt or additives.

Lentils should be stored in an airtight container in a cool, dry, and dark place. They will keep up to 12 months. If you purchase them at dif-

ferent times, store them separately since they may be in varying stages of drying and require different cooking times. Cooked lentils will keep fresh in the refrigerator in a covered container for three days.

Lentils are a good source of cholesterol-lowering fiber and help to manage blood sugar disorders since their high fiber content prevents blood sugar levels from rising rapidly after a meal. They are good providers of important minerals, B-vitamins, and protein, all with virtually no fat.

There are just 230 calories for a whole cup of cooked lentils.

Lentils do not need to be presoaked before cooking. Before washing, spread them out on a light colored plate to check for stones or debris. Rinse well in a strainer under cool running water.

Place in boiling water using three cups of water for one cup of lentils, bring back to boiling, turn heat down, and cover. These lentils will be easier to digest then if they were boiled together from the start. Cooking time will vary as to how you are planning to use them. A firmer texture is used for salads, and softer lentils are used for soups and other dishes.

This tiny nutritional giant fills you up—not out.

While the flavor differs slightly among varieties, they generally feature a hearty, dense, and somewhat nutty flavor. They are quick and easy to prepare, absorbing a variety of flavors from other foods and seasonings. Lentils are high in nutritional value and are available throughout the year.



By Klodette Stroh  
Wyoming

# Sugar Report

## Sugar beet seed restrictions could have negative impact

My mother use to tell me that life is like a game of tennis; the player who serves well seldom loses. American farmers have been dedicated to serve our nation since the birth of this blessed country. I pray and hope that this coming year of 2011 brings good commodity prices for our nation's farmers so that they will be able to sustain their farming practices.

Commodity reports have been indicating the bears will be hibernating for another three to six months and bulls will be rallying future commodities prices. January's positive stock market prices for corn, wheat, soybeans, rice, coffee, cotton, and sugar is good news for farmers. This positive economic situation will give better choices to producers to decide what to plant and keep their crop rotation management in order. Sugar prices have been staying in a profit making margin.

As commodity prices are going up, the cost of fertilizer, fuel, tires, chemicals, seed and equipment have been climbing as well. Sugar beet farmers will be spending between \$300 and \$370 per acre for fertilizer this year. Roundup Ready sugar beet seed has been helping to reduce usage of expensive chemicals, tractor work, and fuel use for sugar farmers.

America's sugar beet industry has been under attack for using Roundup

Ready sugar beet seed. The Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS/USDA) has proposed three options for addressing the regulated status of Roundup Ready Sugar Beet (RRSB). Also, 336 pages of environmental assessment are under review by the industry. Please keep in mind these three options are recommended by APHIS, and the sugar industry will submit their own review of APHIS proposals.

The first option is to do nothing and keep the crop regulated (no Roundup Ready sugar beet). This option is disastrous to sugar beet growers and customers. The second option is to use Roundup Ready sugar beet which should be planted under permits provided by the processor. The third option is that growers have to agree to comply with the conditions of the permit. There are a number of restrictions on the seed crop in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Seed producers have to acknowledge APHIS restrictions.

American farmers have been serving this nation and have helped to build this country. The sugar industry provides stability to our food market. The sugar program operates at no cost to consumers and provides jobs and income in many states.

Sixty new GOP faces on Capitol Hill should be aware of the agricultural issues and farmers that serve this nation. This year commodity exports will exceed over \$2 trillion according to USDA. Our hope is that lawmakers do not make it more difficult for farmers to maintain their farms. Judge White that presides

on RRSB should bear in mind that sugar is used in a variety of food products and should use common sense and help secure our nation's food production by our own American producers.

Did you know that cotton costs the same today as it did 150 years ago? Or that sugar is the same price as it was in the 1980s? Think about that for a moment. Now try to think of any other products that are still as inexpensive as they were when men like Abraham Lincoln and Jimmy Carter called 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue home.

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# Transportation Report



By Pat Torgerson  
Montana

Chairman John Jay Rockefeller has announced his priorities and goals for the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee for the 112th Congress. Key priorities of interest for agriculture include a focus on jobs, economic security, and growth. This report directly addresses one major agricultural issue: “alleviating the financial pinch felt by railroad shippers nationwide.”

Hopefully this is not just lip service and the Commerce Committee will actually investigate the railroad’s per bushel rate and its surcharge system. Agriculture knows it needs the rail system, but the railroads have forgotten the reasons for their development: economical transportation of goods and people.

As a reward for this undertaking, railroads were often given huge land grants. The profits made off this land by sale or development of were to offset any loss. These lands have since been moved into other divisions of business for the railroad, leaving Goods and People holding the bag of costs.

Railroads have also begun to shift costs to some shippers, including costs for fuel surcharges, car ownership, and liability costs. Captive shippers have complained about the lack of competitive access and poor service from railroads to seemingly deaf ears.

The railroad freight industry remains important to the U.S. economy. Some commodities are dependent on rail transportation. For example, 70 percent of domestically produced auto-

## Railroads have forgotten the reasons for their development

mobiles, 70 percent of coal delivered to power plants, and 35 percent of the U.S. grain harvest moves by rail.

In a September 15 report, Chairman Rockefeller concluded that railroads are some of the “most highly profitable businesses in the U.S. economy,” but he found a consistent pattern over the past several years of the railroads downplaying their success to federal government in order to preserve

their favored regulatory position. The railroads have used this favored position to extract excessive rates from captive American businesses and farmer producers that use the rail to ship their products to market.

Railroads were ranked the fifth most profitable industry in U.S. in 2008 by the Fortune Magazine. I ask, “Why don’t they share that profit with the users by having lower rates?”



By Jacquelyn Sistrunk  
Alabama

## Specialty Crops Report

### ConAgra’s Peter Pan brand fights hunger

ConAgra Foods had a bad salmonella scare about a year ago. Today on the Peter Pan peanut butter label, we read “Feeding America: Donating over 1 million meals.”

Nearly 17 million American children are at risk of not getting meals on a regular basis. In fact, 1 in 5 children doesn’t get enough to eat to lead an active, healthy life. When children don’t eat a balanced diet—even for a short time—they can develop problems with their physical, emotional, and cognitive development. Research indicates that even mild undernutrition experienced by young children during critical periods of growth impacts the behavior of children, their school performance, and their overall cognitive development.

Peter Pan Peanut Butter is spreading magic to make a difference in the lives of children and families by making a donation that will provide more than 1 million meals to Feeding America®—the country’s largest domestic hunger-relief organization. Peter Pan also wants to raise awareness and get more people involved in the fight against this largely hidden problem.

You and your family can join Peter Pan Peanut Butter in spreading magic to make a difference in the lives of hungry kids by participating in at least one of five easy ways to help us fight childhood hunger which can be found at [www.peterpanpb.com](http://www.peterpanpb.com).

To get more information about childhood hunger in America, visit [feedingamerica.org](http://feedingamerica.org).



By Marlene Kouba  
North Dakota

# Energy Report

## New regulations will affect cost of farm machinery and groceries

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says diesel-powered vehicles are major sources of particulate matter emissions—the stuff that makes smoke black and air difficult to breathe.

New emissions standards for diesel-powered off-road equipment began taking effect in early January. The burden to meet the new regulations will fall on the manufacturers of the vehicles.

Standards set by the EPA that govern over-the-road vehicles like semi-trucks are going to be applied to off-road equipment as well. The goal is to reduce the air pollution coming from the machines. The federal government has been increasing these emissions standards since 1996 under the Clean Air Act. Old standards were for diesel-powered road equipment, but now more emphasis is turned to farm equipment.

Called the Tier 4 rule, the new regulations apply only to new equipment. For 2011, machinery that has diesel engines with 176 to 750 horsepower will be included. This will include larger tractors and nonfarm equipment as well. By 2012, the standards will apply to all equipment with 75 horsepower or more. By 2014, the EPA will mandate that the emissions of nitrous oxide and particulate matter in diesel exhaust be decreased by 90 percent. Particulate matter can be seen as soot. Nitrous oxide is believed

to be a greenhouse gas that affects the atmosphere or acid rain.

The different manufacturers are changing their new systems accordingly. Caterpillar, Cummins, Deutz, John Deere, Komatsu, and Perkins will be using exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) to control nitrous oxides plus a filter to capture and burn the particulate matter. AGCO, Case IH, and New Holland will be using a selective catalytic reduction (SCR) method. About a gallon of urea-water mix, called diesel exhaust fluid (DEF),

has to be used with every 25 gallons of diesel fuel in the last process, and the cost is about the same as fuel and will be available at many fuel stations. Without it, the computerized equipment loses power. Diesel exhaust is 69 percent water, freezes at 12 degrees, and gels at -25 degrees.

The cost of new equipment could increase about 10 percent, with about half of that from the cost of the machinery. The new tractors can cost \$100,000 to \$300,000. With the increased cost, many farmers are in no hurry to upgrade their tractors. Older tractors are being traded rather than retired. Others say the new technology is untested, so they are skeptical and will keep their older tractors. The companies will still make equipment without the new emissions standards,

but they will have to pay a per-unit fine for doing so. Therefore, it seems the equipment will be more government-mandated than business-related and will affect increased costs for many industries and products, including food.

The EPA is studying new regulations on the natural gas and oil industry that will affect many wells in the nation. They have posted a new rule on hydraulic fracturing, requiring a company to obtain permits if the company uses diesel when fracking. Hy-

draulic fracturing, a long-proven process by which pressurized water and other substances are injected into wells to extract natural gas, has been the subject of much debate between environmentalists and industry because of the “other substances.” This \$1.9 million study was inserted in the 2010 Appropriations Act last year in regard to clean energy.

The EPA confirmed the approval of a 15 percent ethanol blend in gasoline (E15) for model-year 2001-2006 cars and light trucks. With the approval last fall of E15 for 2007 and newer models, the higher ethanol blend would be available for use in about 54 percent of the nation’s vehicles. Actual availability is pending additional federal and state safety and labeling procedures.

The federal government has been increasing these emissions standards since 1996 under the Clean Air Act. Old standards were for diesel-powered road equipment, but now more emphasis is turned to farm equipment.

# Rural Health, Farm Finance, and Communications **Report**



**By Donna Bolz  
Nebraska**

It is in the news everywhere these days. People are talking about eating healthier. Wal-Mart has even agreed to help.

In considering ways to eat healthier, have you ever thought about chocolate? Chocolate is a functional food that contains an active compound that provides health benefits. Chocolate is used in a large number of raw and processed foods produced from the bean of the Theobroma cacao tree found in Mexico and in Central and South America.

Chocolate was first found around 1100 BC. The Aztecs and Mayans made a chocolate beverage that had a bitter taste. The Aztecs used chocolate for ceremonial purposes and believed chocolate had medicinal properties. Cacao beans also were used as a form of currency. The Spanish brought chocolate to Europe, and it was considered a luxury item.

The modern chocolate bar with added sugar was created in 1847. Before this, chocolate was only consumed as a drink. The Dutch removed the cocoa butter from the solids and then were able to process chocolate in a solid form.

Through the centuries, chocolate was considered an aphrodisiac and was used to treat fatigue and diarrhea. More recently, compounds in chocolate have been found to have health benefits. Components in chocolate include antioxidant flavanol compounds, which lower LDL cholesterol and reduce blood pressure.

The amount of the antioxidant flavanol compounds in chocolate products depends on the type of chocolate and the way it is processed. Dutch processed cocoa will have lower levels of antioxi-

## Eating chocolate could be an enjoyable way to improve health

dants. Dark chocolate is higher in these compounds than white chocolate, which is very low in antioxidant flavanol compounds.

The fat and sugar content of chocolate does increase calories. If you are lactose intolerant, the addition of milk to chocolate will be a problem. Nuts will also cause problems to those allergic to tree nuts. Read the ingredient label carefully for added ingredients that may cause a health problem.

Magnesium is a mineral found in large amounts in chocolate products. Low amounts of dietary magnesium in your diet may be a risk factor for hypertension and strokes. Women in the U.S. generally do not get the recommended dietary amount (RDA) for magnesium. A serving of milk chocolate provides 8 percent of the RDA, and a serving of

dark chocolate provides 15 percent of the RDA for magnesium. Milk chocolate products also add calcium to the diet.

It is important to store chocolate properly as it is sensitive to temperature and humidity. Chocolate should be stored between 59 and 63 degrees F in low humidity. Chocolate can absorb aromas from other foods. Be sure to keep chocolate wrapped to prevent absorption of moisture and aromas. If chocolate is not stored properly, it will bloom or turn a whitish color. This is unappealing, but the chocolate is safe to eat.

Now that you know how health benefits of chocolate, take some time to enjoy some. With Valentine's Day coming up, buy some for someone you want to have good health. Also remember that chocolate is cheaper than therapy, and you don't need an appointment.



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# Dairy Report



By Dianna Reed  
Kansas

## U.S attempts to solve trade disputes

The Department of Transportation has released an “initial

concept document” intended to allow for a long-haul, cross-border Mexican trucking program that prioritizes safety while complying with the U.S. trade obligations to Mexico under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The concept document is aimed at rectifying a trade spat between the two countries that is hurting the U.S. dairy sector, among others.

In response to long-standing lack of U.S. compliance with its trucking obligations to Mexico under NAFTA, Mexico has been legally levying tariffs on a variety of U.S. exports since March 2009. Since August 2010, that retaliation list has included many U.S. cheeses.

The proposal for the new program is seen as a positive first step toward resolution of the long-running dispute. From August through November of last year, exports of the targeted cheeses to Mexico have plunged by 66 percent. The United States has recognized the heavy toll that retaliation is having on the many impacted sectors, such as America’s dairy industry, and has proposed to begin to move forward with working with Mexico to find a way to address this issue.

Mexico is our largest export market and therefore absorbs sizable quantities of the milk U.S. dairy farmers produce. The dairy industry is encouraged to see the U.S. initiate a path toward a permanent resolution of this transportation issue that has been negatively impacting the dairy industry.

The dairy industry has stressed the importance of the two governments working together from this point to craft a mutually agreeable final resolution to this issue, one that complies with U.S.

trade commitments in order to avoid future upheavals. Congress has been urged to support this process and approve any

resulting proposal from the negotiations between the U.S. and Mexican Governments. *(Source-NMPPF)*



By Lisa Goodheart  
Kansas

## Cereal Grains Report

### Farming has rich history

The definition of a “cereal grain” is any plant from the grass family

that contains an edible grain or seed. These include barley, corn, millet, oats, quinoa, rice, rye, sorghum, wheat, and wild rice. Cereals are a readily available source of protein and have more carbohydrates than any other food, which makes them a staple throughout the world. About 80 percent of the protein and over 50 percent of the calories consumed by humans and livestock come from cereal grains. The U.S. is a major supplier of cereal grains to the rest of the world.

Most scholars agree that agriculture began around 10,000 B.C., when people in Mesopotamia (later called Iraq) settled near the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and began cultivating wheat. Subsequently, millet and rice were grown in central Asia; wheat, barley and oats were grown in Greece; maize was grown in South and Central America; and wheat and barley were being grown and fermented in Egypt to make beer.

The first European colonists in North America brought wheat with them, which was a staple of their diet. They ran into difficulties in New England where the crops were unproductive due to the cool climate and in Vir-

ginia because the high humidity caused decay in stored wheat, which poisoned the fall harvest, making it useless for winter food.

The Native Americans in New England were farmers, and their most important crop was maize. The colonists took the highest yielding varieties of maize and bred them in an effort to conserve their good qualities, such as large kernels and successful germination, in hopes of growing a better crop the next season. Unfortunately, when maize is inbred, the good qualities are almost always lost, making every successive crop worse than the previous one. In order for maize to remain hardy, its varieties need to be crossbred. The failure of the wheat and maize crops almost starved all the earliest settlers, but the Native Americans shared their harvest, allowing many to survive.

In the 1700’s, rice and oats were imported, and rice was grown in the hilly, rocky region of western Pennsylvania. From 8,000 B.C. to the 19th century, rice was raised on dry land, not in water-laden paddies.

Early American colonists also grew a hardy dryland rice in South Carolina beginning in 1695. Oats proved to be resistant to both drought and cold, which made the crop almost as valuable as maize and sometimes more valuable than wheat. The colonists learned to make bread out of maize, and cornbread became an everyday part of the American diet.



By Ruth Laribee  
New York

# Trade Report

## Trade negotiations take place with Mexico and Asian countries

Meetings and trade deals abound in the beginning of 2011. On Jan 20-21, United States Trade Representative Assistant Wendy Cutler and Choi Seok-Young, Deputy Trade Minister of Korea, attended the annual meeting of the U.S.-Korea Business Council held in Los Angeles, Calif. Discussions took place concerning the legal wording for the additional December 3, 2010, agreement to the United States Korea Free Trade Agreement. The negotiations need to be finalized before sending the pact to Congress for its approval.

Ron Kirk, United States Trade Representative, is looking for a July 1 deadline, as that is when a trade agreement between South Korea and the European Union takes effect. According to Ambassador Han Duk-Soo of South Korea, it is urgent to get approval of the deal before the EU pact is in place so that U.S. businessmen and farmers will not be put at a "competitive disadvantage."

Back in 2007 the U.S. International Trade Commission put out a report that the Korean Free Trade Agreement would increase U.S. exports by approximately \$10 to \$11 billion yearly, while imports from Korea would be about \$6 to \$7 billion. The Columbia and Panama agreements are still pending.

Assistant U.S. Trade Representative Wendy Cutler and the Director General of the Economic Affairs Bureau of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Takeshi Yagi, presided over a two day meeting of the U.S.-Japan Trade Forum. Topics brought to the table included general trade policy regulations, bilateral trade issues, level playing fields, beef and auto markets, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and the position of Japan's Economic Partnership

Agreement discussions with Korea, the European Union, and Australia.

Mexico and the United States are working on a solution to allow the Mexican trucks back in the U.S. and to stop the Mexican retaliatory tariffs. The 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) requires open borders for "long-haul" vehicles (trucks). When the U.S. stopped funding for a plan to slowly allow Mexican trucks to cross the border, Mexico placed tariffs on a large list of U.S imports, such as U.S. pork exports.

On Jan. 6, the U.S. administration put forth a proposal for a new "inspection and monitoring regime" to permit long-haul trucks from Mexico to cross the border into the United States. By putting this regulation in place, the administration is hopeful to calm the Americans' fears of safety concerning Mexican trucks and drivers on U.S. highways. According to the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, it could save over \$400 million yearly in transportation costs for consumers in both countries.

The cost of Chinese products, Chinese interest rates, and Chinese wages are rising. The over printing of the renminbi in order to limit their currency's rise against the dollar helped in the last decade to keep a competitive advantage of Chinese exporters maintaining their prices comparatively low on the global market. This also helped in safeguarding jobs in China. But now, according to the Chinese central bank, the additional renminbi is providing for inflation. Victor Fung, chairman for a large trading company, reported that contracts signed late in 2010 would produce a hike of 10 to 20 percent in imported products arriving at American ports.

Fung also stated that by the middle of 2011 there will be a large shift of trade away from China. American retailers are already looking to the Philippines and

Bangladesh, but inflation seems to be concern over much of Asia. Beijing economists are saying inflation isn't just the result of China's money interference; it's the rising wages of the workers. The supplies of laborers from the rural areas are "drying up," a consequence of the "one child" policy for the past three decades in addition to increased enrollment in the universities.

*(Sources: New York Times, Reuters, Asia News, China Biz, The Washington Post, Japan Times)*

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# Registration



**Women Involved in Farm Economics Legislative Seminar in Washington, D.C.  
March 12-15, 2011**

**Registration Deadline: Feb. 15, 2011**

**Hotel Reservation Deadline  
February 10, 2011**

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