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Solutions for Out-of-School Youth Agricultural Trends Newsletter

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SOSY PARTICIPATING STATES

COLORADO, FLORIDA, IDAHO, ILLINOIS, KANSAS, MARYLAND, MASSACHUSETTS, MINNESOTA, MISSISSIPPI, MONTANA, NEBRASKA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, NEW JERSEY, NEW YORK, NORTH CAROLINA, PENNSYLVANIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, TENNESSEE, VERMONT, WASHINGTON, WISCONSIN

Director's Message

Welcome to the third edition of the SOSY Agricultural Trends newsletter. We hope that all MEP staff are finding the newsletters useful. In this edition, you will find articles running the gamut from use of toxic pesticides to changes in the H2-A regulations. As you plan and implement your MEP programs, we hope you keep in mind the impact that agricultural trends has on the recruitment and identification of our Out-of-School Youth. If you have an interesting idea for a future article, submissions are being accepted. Please submit your article to me by May 20, 2011.

Please visit our Solutions for Out-of-School Youth website at www.osymigrantnt.org for more information on identification and recruitment as well as providing supportive and/instructional services to Out-of-School youth. Thank you for your continued support of OSY.

Tracie Kalic

Director, Solutions for Out-of-School Youth

tkalic@embarqmail.com

Pork Producers Worry About Feed Grain Availability

Top executives from hog farmer organizations in Canada, the United States and Mexico said they share a major concern regarding feed grain availability. Pork producer representatives met in Merida, Mexico, and stressed the critical importance to the hog industries in all three countries of having adequate availability to feed grain over the next year.

"Hog producers have been vigorously competing for a resource that is in high demand and shows no signs of dropping," said Rigoberto

Espinoza, presidente de la Confederacion de Porcicultores Mexicanos; Doug Wolf, president, National



Pork Producers Council; and Jurgen Preugschas, president, Canadian Pork Council, in a statement. "The sense of anxiety over the availability of feed grain for the hog industry was only heightened with the

release of the US Department of Agriculture's Grain Supply and Production Reports that indicated that the crop planting this coming spring and normal yields would provide only a modest easing of tight feed supplies.

"The lack of a stable supply of feed grains for livestock and poultry industry will significantly increase the cost of production, and consequently, the retail price of our products and make it all the more difficult for families to make healthy choices," they added.



Workers also often suffer dangerous nausea and dizziness -- Green Tobacco Sickness -- after absorbing enormous amounts of nicotine while handling wet tobacco leaves.



California's \$1.6 billion strawberry industry will undoubtedly provide one of the biggest markets for the chemical, as will the Central Valley's nut orchards and the fresh flower nurseries dotting the coast in Ventura and San Diego counties.



Possible Better Working Conditions for Tobacco Workers in North Carolina?

Tobacco Giant Reynolds American CEO Daniel Delon has been asked by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) to sit down and talk with farmworkers about human rights abuses in North Carolina tobacco fields.

In March, Delon became CEO of Reynolds American, the nation's second-largest tobacco company starting salary of \$1 million a year. Reynolds makes \$2 billion in profits each year buying tobacco from local growers in North Carolina and other states. The growers, in turn, employ mostly Latino farmworkers to harvest and dry tobacco.

Tobacco is notoriously difficult work among migrant workers; working and living conditions border on the inhumane. The average North Carolina farmworker works long hours stooped over harvesting tobacco leaves

and earns around \$7,000 a year. About half the state's farmworkers don't earn enough to feed their families, according to the North Carolina Farmworker Institute.

Growers aren't required to pay farmworkers the federal minimum wage for other workers or overtime pay, while farmworkers are frequently cheated out of even their sub-par wages.

Workers also often suffer dangerous nausea and dizziness -- Green Tobacco Sickness -- after absorbing enormous amounts of nicotine while handling wet tobacco leaves. GTS can contribute to even more dangerous heat exhaustion, which took the lives of nine farmworkers in the state in recent years.

Also, state regulations only require "one wash tub for every 30 workers, one toilet for every 15 workers, and do not require mat-

tresses or telephone access in case of emergency," says the Institute. Growers often ignore such poorly enforced rules anyway.

To prevent such abuses, FLOC has successfully organized several historic three-way agreements between companies, growers and workers. In 2004, after a five-year boycott, FLOC engineered an agreement between the Mt. Olive Pickle Company, the North Carolina Growers' Association, and farmworkers. The contract was the first of its kind, and guaranteed solid protections against abuse for farmworkers doing some of the nation's most difficult work.

Three years ago, FLOC also asked the Reynolds CEO to sit down with tobacco workers to discuss human rights abuses in the fields. She refused. Now, FLOC hopes to open communication with Reynolds' new chief officer, Daniel Delon.

California OKs Use of Toxic Pesticide on Fields-- Workers at Risk

Despite the abundant scientific data suggesting methyl iodide should not be sprayed on strawberries and other crops, on December 1, 2010, methyl iodide was approved as a pesticide in the State of California.

In Feb. 2010, the Scientific Review Committee on Methyl Iodide, hired by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation to study the possible impact of the herbicide/pesticide/fungicide methyl iodide, released its findings: The agent is significantly toxic. The group based its decision on several factors: Available research; a presentation from Arysta, the manufacturer of methyl iodide; the EPA; and farm workers, among others. Testimonies from the latter, it should be noted, were especially eye-opening to the committee; work-

ers are largely unprotected from the chemical, despite supposed precautions.

The group found that methyl iodide is a mutagenic agent, possibly giving rise to cancer and, too, a neurotoxin, capable of harming both fully developed adults and unborn offspring. They found that protection for farm workers and the wider population is difficult, if not impossible. Even skin contact is risky. And it's found to cause mutations because it messes with the body's DNA.

On Jan. 3, 2011, a coalition of environmental and farmworkers groups sued the state of California for approving the use of methyl iodide without sufficiently studying its risks — and that pesticide regulators improperly cut off

public comment to secure passage before Governor Schwarzenegger left office.

Methyl iodide was approved for use by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2007 as a replacement for the fumigant methyl bromide, which is being phased out by international treaty because it depletes the Earth's protective ozone layer.

Methyl iodide is now registered in 47 other states. Current users include growers of tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and other crops in southeastern states. California's \$1.6 billion strawberry industry will undoubtedly provide one of the biggest markets for the chemical, as will the Central Valley's nut orchards and the fresh flower nurseries dotting the coast in Ventura and San Diego counties.

World Counting on US Crops Amid Soaring Food Prices

With soaring food prices putting strain on family budgets in the U.S. and raising concerns for civil unrest across parts of the globe, there are major concerns about what will happen if prices continue to rise.

The U.S. plays a vital role, being the world's biggest exporter of wheat and corn. People across the globe are counting on these U.S. crops to come through this year.

According to AccuWeather.com Agricultural Meteorologist Dale Mohler, there are concerns about how the weather this year will affect both the wheat and corn crops.

Corn, especially, is a major concern with supplies being the tightest they've been in 15 years, according to Mohler. "That's after a very good production year in the U.S., the world's biggest producer, in 2010," he added.

This graphic shows the major corn-producing areas of the United States with the "Corn Belt" stretching from Nebraska and southern Minnesota to Ohio. The yellow numbers indicate the percentage each state contributed to the total national production. (Image courtesy of the United States Department of Agriculture)

Mohler said the tight supply is primarily due to high demand with a growing world population and increasing amounts of the corn crop going toward ethanol production.

"The weather has generally been favorable for the world's major production areas over the last several years," Mohler said, "but the favorable weather needs to continue. If not, there will be a huge stress on the world's supply, especially if adverse weather affects the U.S. crop."

Mohler is concerned that wet soil in the Midwest could slow early

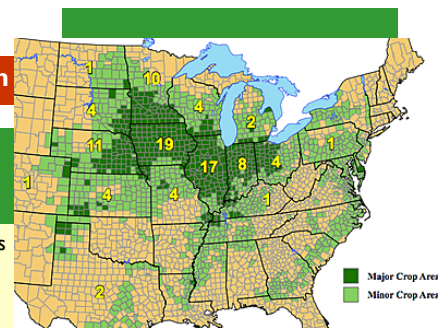
planting efforts this spring. Corn is usually planted in April in the Midwest.

"In a worst case scenario, it is possible that some fields may be abandoned, never planted or replaced by another crop," Mohler said.

The AccuWeather.com Spring 2011 Forecast calls for above-normal precipitation across the Midwest. In addition, if planting is delayed too long, Mohler said the maturity period of the crop could be pushed back to the point that the crop may get damaged by an early frost in the fall.

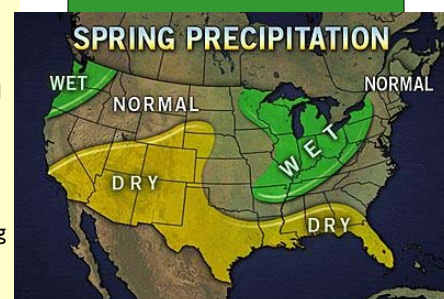
The nation's primary corn-growing region, the Corn Belt, spans an area from Nebraska and southern Minnesota to Ohio.

Article Source: <http://www.accuweather.com/blogs/news/story/46826/world-counting-on-us-crops-ami.asp>



Above: This graphic shows the major corn-producing areas of the United States with the "Corn Belt" stretching from Nebraska and southern Minnesota to Ohio. The yellow numbers indicate the percentage each state contributed to the total national production. (Image courtesy of the United States Department of Agriculture)

Below: The AccuWeather.com Spring 2011 Forecast calls for above-normal precipitation across the Midwest.



Cherry Exports to Japan Challenged

The Northwest Cherry Growers have seen their annual production increase by 50% over the past five years. This dramatic growth has driven the sweet cherry growers of Washington state to focus their market development efforts to markets outside of the United States. According to their projections export market growth will be the major contributor to sustained economic success for the state's growers and their crop which has a value of over \$400,000,000.

Exports to Japan now are challenged. Local farmers may have a hard time sending their crops to Japan after the earthquake and tsunami. Japan imports tons of cherries and other

agriculture products every year. Pasco, Washington farmer Pat Sullivan says Northwest and U.S. growers rely on outside countries because there isn't enough demand here for all of the fruits and vegetables that are grown here.

"Japan is a significant market for many products exported all over Washington and all across the U.S. Whenever there's an incident or a tragedy that has happened, it definitely affects the markets. There are other countries that we export to that hopefully will fill the void." Still, Sullivan is expecting a good crop. Already farmers overcame the problems that came with last year's November freeze.

Washington is the nation's leading producer of sweet cherries. In 2007, Washington growers produced \$327 million in cherries, with a record \$29 million in sales to Japan.

As of 2009, export sales represent 24.7% of the total fresh, sweet NW cherry crop value. In 2009 global markets of NW cherries exports included Canada (39%), Australia (5%), the Far East (43.6%, comprised of Hong Kong, 16.8%, Taiwan, 14.4%, Japan, 5.4%, Korea, 4.7%, and other 2.4%), Latin America (2.7%), Europe excluding U.K., (5.9%), United Kingdom (5.2%), and other (.9%).





“There continues to be a labor shortage in U.S. agriculture and agricultural employers need an efficient, affordable temporary worker program to help put food on Americans’ tables”



The SOSY Agricultural Trends Newsletter supports Objective 1 of the SOSY Consortium Incentive Grant: Each year of the project, increase the number of OSY identified and recruited.

Solutions for Out of School Youth

New H-2A Worker Visa Regulations Rile Farmers Utah Guest-worker Program

Excerpts from

<http://naturalresourcereport.com/2010/02/new-h-2a-worker-visa-regulations-rile-farmers/>
http://azstarnet.com/news/local/border/article_b4597292-e7f7-57f4-87c1-

New rules for the H-2A temporary agricultural worker program, released by the Labor Department on Feb. 12, will make the program more difficult than ever to use, according to American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman. Among the changes is a requirement that farmer employers who seek H-2A visas for agricultural workers provide documented evidence that they have looked for qualified U.S. citizens to fill the jobs. Previously, employers only had to indicate they had looked for qualified workers.

“There continues to be a labor shortage in U.S. agriculture and agricultural employers need an efficient, affordable temporary worker program to help put food on Americans’ tables,” Stallman said. “Even with the slower economy, farm labor remains physically demanding, periodic, all-weather work and it is often impossible for farmers and ranchers to find the workers they need.” Growers had urged the Obama administration to curtail or modify the H-2A program so it would be easier to find farm workers, but Stallman said the new regulation, effective March 15, undoes a number of improvements the department put in place last year and will only compound existing labor shortages.

The Labor Department is also poised to release a rule determining the minimum amount agricultural employers must pay their H-2A workers.

“Employers want to pay a fair wage, embodied in what’s known as the ‘prevailing wage,’ or the going rate for the area,” explained Ron Gaskill, AFBF labor

and immigration policy specialist. “Requiring them to pay more than that, as it looks like the department will do, could price them out of the program.”

Stallman emphasized agricultural

employers’ commitment to hire only those who are eligible to work in this country, but said lawmakers must be equally committed to ensuring capable, dependable and willing employees can come to the U.S. temporarily to do the jobs that domestic workers don’t want.

“The ball is now in the court of the Congress to do what the administration has failed to do: to create a meaningful guest worker program that works fairly and honorably for employers and employees alike, thereby encouraging economic growth and more new jobs in an industry that is essential to nourishing a growing world population,” Stallman said.

Utah has started its own guest-workers program. Utah Gov. Gary Herbert signed bills in March that will increase immigration enforcement but also implement a guest-worker program in Utah, as he formally challenged the federal government to address immigration before states make their own fixes.

The package of four measures the Republican-dominated Legislature passed earlier this month has upset people on both sides of the issue, and Herbert made it clear a primary goal of the package is to force a federal solution.

One of the bills the GOP governor signed at the state Capitol requires police to check the immigration status of anyone stopped for a felony or serious misdemeanor. Another bill, however, creates a guest worker program for illegal immigrants in the state.

The other bills allow businesses to recruit Mexican workers and American citizens to sponsor foreign residents who want to work or study in Utah.

Herbert said the package “is not perfect” but something had to be done because frustration with a bro-

ken system was turning into anger.

The guest-worker-permit bill requires a federal waiver, which is why it will not become effective until 2013. Herbert said that delayed date sends a clear signal from the state that it is almost out of patience. “Our strategy is to force the federal government to engage,” Herbert said.

That is already happening, said Alfonso Aguilar, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based Latino Partnership for Conservative Principles. His group is using Utah’s immigration package as an example of a balanced program in their discussions with members of Congress, especially Republicans.

Because Utah is “the reddest of the red states,” the immigration bills offer a conservative solution to a problem the Democrats in Congress and President Obama cannot provide, said Aguilar, who was the director of the Office of Citizenship for former President George W. Bush.

Unlike Arizona, which passed a controversial law last year focused exclusively on enforcement, Utah has recognized the need for immigrant workers and their benefits to the economy.

Herbert signed the bills despite significant criticism from across the country, including promised boycotts and threatened lawsuits. A Utah-based coalition of Latinos who oppose the enforcement bill started a two-week boycott of Utah businesses Monday.

Meanwhile, the North Carolina-based Americans for Legal Immigration has criticized the guest worker plan, saying it’s an “amnesty” measure.