



# TEXAS CATTLE FEEDERS ASSOCIATION

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# NEWSLETTER

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## **Sixth Circuit Claims Jurisdiction Over WOTUS Rule**

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit concluded on Monday that it has jurisdiction to review challenges to the “waters of the U.S.” (WOTUS) rule issued by EPA / Corps of Engineers. Two of the three judges on the panel concluded that sufficient jurisdictional precedent existed for the Sixth Circuit to hear the consolidated, initial challenges to the WOTUS rule, rather than individual District Court cases around the country. Over 20 separate challenges have been filed against the WOTUS rule by numerous states and business groups.

The Sixth Circuit’s stay of the WOTUS rule, issued last year, will remain in effect.

## **Senate Ag to Markup Voluntary GMO Labeling Bill**

The U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee will hold a committee markup on March 1 to consider legislation that would authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to create a national, voluntary GMO labeling system and preclude states from enacting their own GMO labeling laws. The bill was introduced by Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts (R-Kan.).

“Our draft has the overwhelming support of virtually every agricultural industry from field to fork and beyond,” Roberts said. “This demonstrates the widespread concerns of significant and critical sectors of our economy regarding the urgent need to address biotech labeling before the patchwork of state laws harms producers and consumers.”

TCFA and NCBA are engaged on the bill in an effort to prevent adoption of amendments that would subject beef to GMO labeling or require the creation of a voluntary country-of-origin labeling (COOL) program for beef and beef products. Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.) has introduced an amendment to establish a voluntary COOL program. However, the Secretary of Agriculture already has the authority to develop a voluntary COOL program through the Agriculture Marketing Service process-verified marketing programs.

## **U.S. House Holds Several Ag Hearings this Week**

Capitol Hill was stirring this week with a series of hearings important to agriculture. On Wednesday, the House Agriculture Committee held a hearing with Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to review the state of the rural economy. Sec. Vilsack said the state of the agricultural economy remains sound despite lower commodity prices. However, committee members pressed the secretary and raised a number of concerns, including the impact that the continued outlook for depressed prices could have on America’s farmers and ranchers. Members pointed out that USDA’s latest economic forecast projects net farm income in the U.S. to fall by 56 percent from 2013 to 2016, the largest three-year percentage decline in net farm income since the Great Depression.

Sec. Vilsack explained that commodity price shifts are a result of a slowing global economy, especially in China, which has reduced demand for U.S. products, as well as a stronger U.S. dollar. A record 2015 harvest added to the downturn, which has brought about lower farm income and revenue in farm country. However, Vilsack said the debt-to-equity ratio remains stable, and although more lending is expected, a safety net is in place and working the way it was intended.

USDA officials also testified in two separate House Agriculture Appropriations subcommittee hearings on Wednesday. Kevin Concannon, Under Secretary of the Food, Nutrition and Family Services Agency, and Angie Tagtow, Executive Director of the Center for Nutrition and Public Policy, provided updates to the agency’s priority initiatives specific to nutrition assistance and education. Additionally, Al Almanza, Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety, provided updates on several Food Safety Inspection Service activities, including the modernization of the U.S. food safety inspection system. On Thursday, Dr. Stephen Ostroff, Acting Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, appeared before the committee to outline the agency’s priorities for the remainder of this year.

Today, the House Agriculture Appropriations Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies subcommittee will receive testimony from the Army Corps of Engineers concerning the agency's budget. Committee members are expected to press the agency on the WOTUS rule, specifically their misinterpretation regarding Clean Water Act 404 permits and failure to comply with the congressional mandate.

TCFA and NCBA will continue to engage with Members of Congress and the agencies on budget and policy issues important to cattle feeders and the overall agricultural economy.

### **Food Safety Grant Awarded to TAMU-Led Study**

Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biological Sciences (CVM) has been awarded a food safety grant from USDA based on its research on antimicrobial resistance. The team of researchers and extension faculty, led by Dr. H. Morgan Scott, was awarded a total of \$1 million to fund the research.

"Dr. Scott's research on antimicrobial resistance is truly exceptional," said Dr. Eleanor M. Green, the Carl B. King dean of veterinary medicine. "Receiving this grant is a testament to Dr. Scott's commitment to excellence in research, and we are proud of him and the team he is leading."

To learn more, visit <http://tinyurl.com/TAMU-2-26-16>.

### **Power of Meat Survey Announces Findings**

The "Power of Meat" survey, released by the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) and North American Meat Institute (NAMI), found that more than 80 percent of shoppers believe meat and poultry are important sources of protein and other key nutrients in a healthy, balanced diet.

According to the report, consumers were most likely to report that red meat, including beef, pork and lamb, were important to energy levels and provided nutrients such as iron and protein. Meanwhile, maintaining a healthy weight and receiving vital nutrients were factors associated with poultry. The findings were consistent across generations, with Millennials only slightly less likely to cite meat and poultry's health benefits.

"Meat and poultry remain shoppers' go-to source for protein and essential nutrients," NAMI President and CEO Barry Carpenter said. "The industry is working hard to respond to consumer demands for transparency and is continuing to offer a variety of convenient, flavorful and nutritious fresh and processed products to an increasingly diverse consumer base, particularly with regards to Millennial shoppers, whose influence is growing at retail."

**Another area of influence by Millennial shoppers on meat demand** is in the value-added, convenience meat category. This category grew by 6.4 percent over the last year to \$4 billion in sales. According to the report, 40 percent of consumers only "occasionally" or "hardly ever" know what they're making for dinner two hours before meal time, making this category even more crucial.

"With convenience (while at a cost) being the big driver behind heat-and-eat and ready-to-eat meat and poultry solutions, it appears these items provide alternate solutions for shoppers who are pressed for time, or have limited cooking knowledge, as shown by the demographics. As such, they are great solutions for food retailing to capture meals that may have gone to restaurants instead," the report states.

To learn more, visit <http://tinyurl.com/NAMI-2-26-16>.

### **Beef Brand Launches Easy-to-Prepare Cuts**

Colorado Premium Foods' Truly Simple brand has launched a new line of beef cuts targeted largely at Millennials. The line of aged steaks and beef tips is designed to help consumers enjoy easy, quick and healthy beef meals.

"Consumers are asking for ease and simplicity in lean meats and the Truly Simple brand delivers," says Kevin LaFleur, president of Colorado Premium Foods. "With our simple instructions for cooking the perfect steak and recipes on the package, consumers can count on these products to give them exactly what they've been seeking in the meat case."

To learn more, visit <http://tinyurl.com/Truly-Simple-Brand>.

### **New FDA Commissioner Confirmed**

The U.S. Senate confirmed Dr. Robert Califf as the new Food & Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner by an 89-4 vote. Dr. Califf is succeeding Dr. Margaret Hamburg, who resigned in March 2015.

Previously, Dr. Califf served as the FDA's Deputy Commissioner for Medical Products and Tobacco from February 2015 until his appointment as commissioner in February 2016. Prior to joining the FDA, Dr. Califf was a professor of medicine and vice chancellor for clinical and translational research at Duke University. He also served as director of the Duke Translational Medicine Institute and founding director of the Duke Clinical Research Institute.

To learn more, visit <http://tinyurl.com/FDA-2-26-16>.

### **Oklahoma Teacher Recognized with Ag in the Classroom Award**

Lisa Storm of Kingfisher, Okla., is among seven general education teachers from across the country selected as winners of the 2016 National Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award sponsored by the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO). Storm was also the 2014 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year for the statewide Ag in the Classroom program.

Teachers who use agricultural subjects in innovative ways to teach core subjects such as reading, writing, math, science and social studies are recognized for their efforts. Storm uses Ag in the Classroom by teaching agricultural developments in Oklahoma history, promoting healthy eating and lifestyle habits with cooking activities and visiting activity stations where students learn about local agriculture.

To learn more about Storm and the other recipients, visit <http://tinyurl.com/AITC-2-26-16>.

### **Processed Meat Technology Course Registration Open**

The 2016 Aggie Processed Meat Technology School will be held April 20-22 on the campus of Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. Attendees will discover both the science and the art of making processed meat products from learning how to cook and smoke various meats to evaluating food safety.

The early registration deadline is April 7, and registration closes April 15. Enrollment is limited to 45 people. To learn more or to register, visit <http://tinyurl.com/Meat-Tech-Course>.

### **2016 Texas Primary Elections – Last Chance to Vote**

Election Day for the 2016 Texas Primary is Tuesday, March 1.

Visit <http://tinyurl.com/BEEF-PAC-2-12-16> for a list of BEEF-PAC supported candidates. Please contact Josh Winegarner at (806) 358-3681 or [josh@tcfa.org](mailto:josh@tcfa.org) with questions about these candidates or to find out more information about the candidates from your area.

### **It's Not Too Late to Apply for Winter Storm Disaster Assistance Through FSA**

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) office in Washington, D.C., has informed TCFA that cattle producers who incurred losses as a result of the winter storm in December 2015 are still encouraged to file a Notice of Loss with their county office. While these notices technically will be filed after the 30-day deadline, confusion about program eligibility created an extenuating circumstance that will be given consideration. The FSA staff is currently working on amendments to their handbook that should remedy the confusion – clarifying that cattle feedyards and cattle feeders without an FSA number are eligible for disaster assistance through the Livestock Indemnity Program.

In addition, FSA has extended the deadline for filing the Application of Payment (documentation of the livestock loss) to March 30, 2016.

TCFA has been working with the county, state and national FSA staff for the past month to clarify these issues. Please contact TCFA Director of Government Relations Josh Winegarner at (806) 358-3681 or [josh@tcfa.org](mailto:josh@tcfa.org) with any questions.

### **Farm Foundation and ERS Host Antimicrobial Research and Development Workshop**

Farm Foundation, NFP, and USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) are hosting a workshop to examine incentives and disincentives of developing new antimicrobial drugs and non-antibiotic alternatives for food animals. The workshop will be held March 17-18 in Washington, D.C., at the ERS offices.

The workshop will also cover topics such as the market for animal pharmaceuticals, how to bring an alternative product to market, regulatory protocols required to bring products to market, regulations on use of antibiotics in food production and the overlap between human and animal antibiotic use and development.

Participants can register online, and there is no charge to attend. An audiocast of the workshop will be available for those unable to attend. To register for the event, visit <http://tinyurl.com/ERS-2-26-16>. To participate in the audiocast, visit <http://tinyurl.com/USDA-2-26-16>.

### **2016 Fed Beef Challenge**

The best cattle in Cattle Feeding Country will make their way to the historic Amarillo Livestock Auction on Wednesday, April 13 for the 2016 TCFA Fed Beef Challenge. Feedyards from throughout the TCFA area will bring their top quality steers, heifers and Holstein steers to compete for awards, cash and bragging rights. In addition to the carcass contest to determine the best beef, there will be a live evaluation contest, steak feed and special activities benefiting the TCFA Education Foundation. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/tcfafbc> for contest rules and the printable entry form. Contact Brady Miller at (806) 358-3681 or [brady@tcfa.org](mailto:brady@tcfa.org) for more information.

### **Calling All Junior Cattle Feeders**

The start of the 2016 Junior Fed Beef Challenge is just around the corner. Junior cattle feeders from all across Cattle Feeding Country will compete for scholarships, cash and prizes by participating in four phases of the event, including carcass merit, record keeping, written exam and oral presentation or interview. Steers can be validated March 1 – March 28. Find all contest details at <http://tinyurl.com/tcfaifbc>, or contact Brady Miller at (806) 358-3681 or [brady@tcfa.org](mailto:brady@tcfa.org).

### **2016 Farm Mom of the Year Program Accepting Nominations**

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2016 Farm Mom of the Year. If you know a mom who balances life at home and on the farm or ranch with a passion for community and agriculture, nominate her for a chance to win \$10,000 and the title of Farm Mom of the Year.

Nominations close March 29, and five regional winners will be chosen by the American Agri-Women on April 14. Public voting for the National Farm Mom of the Year will be held April 22 through May 4. Each of the five regional winners will receive a \$5,000 prize, and the national winner will receive an additional \$5,000.

To learn more or to nominate someone, visit <http://tinyurl.com/2016-Farm-Mom>.

### **NCBA, PLC Accepting Applications for Summer Positions**

NCBA and Public Lands Council's government affairs office in Washington D.C., is now accepting applications for a 2016 summer public policy intern as well as a summer law clerk. Interns will have the opportunity to work alongside staff on issues of concern to cattle producers in public policy.

These positions will begin May 23 and end August 19. To apply, visit [www.beefusa.org](http://www.beefusa.org).

### **TCFA Says Goodbye**

Former board member and feedyard manager Lee Britting passed away this week in Abilene. Memorial services were today.

Tommy Horndt of Pflugerville also passed away this week. Tommy worked at Capitol Land & Livestock for many years. Memorial services will be Wednesday, March 2, at 1 p.m. at First United Methodist Church in Pflugerville.

Please join us in keeping the Britting and Horndt families in your thoughts and prayers.

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