



THE Loop

AUGUST 2009

NEWSLETTER

Down on the farm low-down from U.S. Ag Secretary

Contact: Ryan Findlay (800) 292-2680, ext. 2025

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack traveled to Michigan on Monday to speak with rural residents about their turf, on their turf. He addressed a standing-room-only crowd of nearly 500 people at the Country Mill Orchard in Charlotte to share what the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is doing to revitalize and rebuild rural America and to gather feedback from residents.

Pictured, Vilsack, center, takes a question from the audience as he's joined by U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Lansing), right, and Rep. Mark Schauer (D-Battle Creek), far left.



The community forum is one of many scheduled around the country as part of the Obama administration's Rural Tour across America.

Vilsack touched on several issues important to Michigan farmers, including USDA's commitment to help dairy and pork producers and fruit and vegetable growers overcome current market struggles. He also pledged USDA's support in helping to boost production and consumption of local food, including a targeted campaign called "Know your farmer. Know your food."

"The reality of life is every family needs a farmer," said Vilsack who repeatedly underscored the importance of rural communities to the

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Membership Standings

| | 2009 | July 21, 2009 | |
|--------|---------|---------------|---------------|
| GOAL | 192,719 | 171,041 | 88.75% |
| TARGET | 47,543 | 44,157 | 92.88% |

The summer edition of the quarterly Farm Bureau Update DVD comes to you from the 2009 Livestock Expo, which was held from July 17-19, at the Ingham County Fairgrounds in Mason. Featured stories include one about the Barry County Farm Bureau and their efforts to help a soldier, wounded while serving in Iraq. There is also a story about Roll-over Protection Systems (ROPS), and an update on the Animal Care package of bills making their way through the state house and senate.

A look ahead....

August

- 1 4-H Excellence in Ag applications due
- 31 Postmark deadline for all membership applications to count for the 2008/09 membership year, Level One, Two and Three incentives.

November

18-19 Campaign Mgt Workshop

December

30-Nov 4 MFB Annual Meeting



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For questions, comments and suggestions, please contact Mike Wenkel at Ext. 3232.



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nation's economy. Vilsack also emphasized the importance of expanding broadband Internet access in rural areas and the need for USDA and the Food and Drug Administration to bolster food safety measures to prevent food-borne illnesses.

Individuals who attended the forum are encouraged to share their reflections on the official Rural Tour blog, www.usda.gov/blog/ruraltour/. You can follow the Rural Tour's progress on the Web at www.RuralTour.gov or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/RuralTour.

Editor's note: More information about the American Renewal and Reinvestment Act efforts in Michigan is available in the AgriTips section.

Ag Secretary: Michigan reaps benefits of Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Contact: Ryan Findlay, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2025

At Monday's "Rural Tour" community forum in Charlotte, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack highlighted the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act efforts that are underway in Michigan and across the country, including the following:

- Through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development, 22 communities in Michigan will benefit from \$73.3 million in investments in local water and waste systems.
- Through USDA's Rural Development, approximately \$3 million will be made available for 23 community facilities projects. Casco Township will benefit from a \$650,000 loan and \$50,000 grant for a new Fire Hall, while Mecosta County Medical Center will benefit from a \$50,000 grant for new medical equipment.
- USDA's Forest Service will provide \$13.3 million for 11 projects, including nine projects in the Hiawatha National Forest. Through the Recovery Act funding, roads will be reconstructed, watersheds will be restored and trails will be reconstructed.
- USDA's Forest Service will provide \$12.2 million for three projects for wildland fire management. As a result of the grants, hazardous fuels will be removed to limit the potential for future fire outbreaks.
- USDA's Rural Development has helped guarantee 2,195 loans worth \$210 million in the state through the Single Family Housing Loan program. These loans help residents and producers have access to the capital they need to keep rural communities strong.
- USDA's Farm Service Agency is working to distribute the \$173 million allocated in the Recovery Act for its Direct Operating Farm Loan Program. So far, 89 Michigan farmers have been awarded a total of \$8.3 million in loans to purchase land, livestock, equipment, feed, seed, and supplies.

- USDA announced funding for a floodplain easement project in Ottawa County. This Natural Resources Conservation Services funding will reduce the impact of flooding on the Lower Grand River Watershed.
- The Recovery Act provided for an estimated increase of \$87.5 million in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in Michigan. Most four-person households will receive an \$80 increase in their monthly SNAP benefit. Eligibility limits on jobless adults will be suspended in most areas. The state also received \$6.2 million in State Administrative Funds.
- USDA is helping low-income Michigan residents receive healthy, nutritious meals through \$5 million in funding from The Emergency Food Assistance Program. Kids in Michigan also will benefit from \$2.6 through the National School Lunch Program.

Individuals who attended the forum are encouraged to share their reflections of the event on the official Rural Tour blog, <http://www.usda.gov/blog/ruraltour/>. You can follow the Rural Tour's progress on the Web at www.RuralTour.gov or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/RuralTour.

Farmer Idea Exchange (FIE)



The American Farm Bureau Federation sponsors the Farmer Idea Exchange Contest. The contest is designed to surface inventions, equipment modifications, innovative crops, marketing techniques, management systems and farming practices developed by farmers and ranchers.

Its purpose is to encourage Farm Bureau farmer/rancher members to share their innovative ideas and help other farmers/ranchers find new ways to cut cost, improve efficiency, protect/improve the environment and increase their net income.

Up to 15 ideas from around the country will be selected to display their winning idea as part of the 2010 AFBF Convention in Seattle, Washington, January 10-11, 2010. This is an informal presentation of the innovations and practices that farmers have developed and used. The winners selected will receive up to \$1,500 toward expenses incurred to participate in the AFBF showcase.

Enter your outstanding and innovative idea now. Who knows, you may be showing it off to Farm Bureau members and guests from across the nation in January!

You can complete the application online at <http://www.fb-orders.com/fie/> or mail your completed application to: Michigan Farm Bureau • Attn: Lori Chamberlain • 7373 W. Saginaw Hwy • Lansing, MI 48917. Applicants will also have the opportunity to share their idea with a poster display at the Michigan Farm Bureau Annual Meeting.

Farm Bureau: climate change bill embarks 'on a fool's errand'

Contact: Ryan Findlay, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2026

LANSING, July 16, 2009 - House-passed climate legislation will have little to no impact on global temperatures, and without the adoption of similar actions by other countries, the United States "will be embarking on a fool's errand." That was the message of American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) President Bob Stallman testifying on Tuesday before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

AFBF is opposed to H.R. 2454, the House-passed climate change bill being examined by the Senate and that will serve as the basis for writing a Senate companion bill.

"Unilateral cap-and-trade legislation will have little or no impact on the climate because greenhouse gas emissions require a global response," said Stallman. "A ton of greenhouse gases (GHG) emitted in China is the same as a ton of GHG emitted in Virginia. Regulating emissions in Virginia without regulating emissions in China will have little or no effect on the environment."

Stallman noted that most experts agree that if the House legislation worked exactly as planned, it would not lower temperatures by more than a few tenths of a degree by 2050. Further, most experts agree the United States cannot solve the problem alone.

AFBF also contends that the bill will raise food prices for consumers unless an offset program is put into place to defray production input costs. An agricultural offsets program administered by the Agriculture Department is an essential cost containment measure, but revenues from offsets will only partially defray increased costs and not all agriculture sectors will benefit from offset opportunities.

"Inclusion of an offset program is not the complete answer," said Stallman. "Even with a robust agricultural offset program, the bill still does not make economic sense for producers because a number of sectors will be not able to participate."

Participating in an offset program will depend to a great degree on where the farmer is located, what he or she grows and if his or her business can take

advantage of the program, Stallman noted. Not every dairy farmer can afford to capture methane. Not every farmer lives in a region where wind turbines are an option. Not every farmer can take advantage of no-till. And not every farmer has the land to set aside to plant trees, according to Stallman.

"Yet, these producers will incur the same increased fuel, fertilizer and energy costs as their counterparts who can benefit from the offsets market," said Stallman.

Another contention AFBF has with H.R. 2454 is that it would reduce the use of fossil fuels such as coal and oil, but does not specify what energy source will plug the hole left by these reductions. This could lead to energy shortages and much higher energy prices.

"We remain very concerned about the many broad potential adverse impacts of H.R. 2454 and cap-and-trade in general," concluded Stallman.

MFB, GM extend vehicle savings program with modifications

Contact: Jenna Schrot, (800) 292-2680, ext. 6552



The Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) is still able to provide members with a discount on many General Motors (GM) vehicles but some changes have been made to the savings program.

Now through Jan. 4, 2010, qualifying MFB members are eligible for \$500 toward the purchase or lease of select new GM vehicles, including Flexfuel/E85 vehicles. The discount program no longer offers a \$750 incentive for Flexfuel/E85 vehicles.

GM brands eligible for the new program are Chevrolet, Buick, Pontiac, GMC and Cadillac. Some vehicle exclusions apply. Medium-duty trucks are no longer eligible. www.michfb.com/benefits. Although the private offer has been scaled back, MFB is pleased to be able to continue offering its members this valuable benefit, said Jenna Schrot, MFB Members Services Department manager.

Individuals must be MFB members 120 days prior to the date of vehicle delivery to be eligible for the savings program. The private offer can be combined with many other incentives, including GM Business Choice.



DIGITAL DIALOGUE REMINDER!

You can follow Michigan Farm Bureau news and interact with the organization using the following social media tools.

Facebook: The Michigan Farm Bureau operates a page on Facebook called Michigan Farm Bureau. Search for it at www.facebook.com and become a fan.

Twitter: The Michigan Farm Bureau operates a Twitter account named MichFarmBureau (no spaces). You can find us at <http://twitter.com/MichFarmBureau> and become a follower.

YouTube: The Michigan Farm Bureau has its own YouTube channel, appropriately titled MichiganFarmBureau (no spaces). Find it at <http://www.youtube.com/MichiganFarmBureau> and become a subscriber.

Reminders



- **This issue contains your next quarterly "FB Update" DVD.**
- **CAG's have online resources available. The Loop, Discussion Topics, Discussion Response Form, Report Form, Questions and the Fun Page are all available to view and print by visiting www.michfb.com/cag**
- **Any suggestions or ideas for future articles, discussion topics or fun pages can be E-mailed to apline@michfb.com or sent to Michigan Farm Bureau, 7373 West Saginaw Hwy, PO Box 30960, Lansing, MI 48909-8460 Attention: Amy Pline**

FSA has procedures to expedite loans for farm storage, handling facilities

Contact: Bob Boehm, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2023



The 2008 farm bill reauthorized the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Farm Storage Facility Loan program (FSFL), which provides low-interest financing for farmers to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities. To expedite the FSFL approval process, farmers planning to submit an FSFL application can request from their local FSA office an environmental evaluation of their proposed project.

To comply with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), FSA must evaluate the potential impacts the proposed structure could have on the environment for FSFL applications. An FSA-850 form must be completed for each FSFL application before the application can be approved.

Farmers requesting an environmental compliance determination are advised that the FSFL application must be submitted and approved before site preparation and construction can begin on the facility. Applicants will be required to identify the type of structure they wish to construct and the proposed site by marking the location on an aerial photo.

County FSA offices will not accept requests to complete FSA-850 via telephone. If a farmer is unable to visit the office, the request must be submitted in writing and include the necessary information to complete FSA-850. Additional information is available at FSA county offices.