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NEWS

Lawmakers ask USDA to reinstate county crop reports

Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., and House Agriculture Livestock, Dairy and Poultry Subcommittee Chairman Tracey Mann, R-Kan., and Ranking Member Jim Costa, D-Calif., led [a May 3 letter](#) to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack asking him to reinstate county crop reports recently discontinued by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

NGFA worked with other agricultural groups to gain signatures on the letter from 70 lawmakers.

Citing budget constraints, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) NASS announced on April 9 that it would discontinue all county estimates for crops and livestock beginning with the 2024 production year.

“The reports slated for discontinuation are highly valuable to the entire U.S. agricultural sector, and particularly for cattle, cotton, and grain,” said the lawmakers. “Relatedly, the reports offer a great deal of transparency and market anticipation for the entire agricultural sector.”

The letter added: “While we recognize that NASS has seen a modest year-over-year appropriations reduction, we hold that the costs to industry will be more adverse than the cost-savings NASS may realize through cessation of these reports.”

In addition to NGFA, the letter was supported by the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, National Cotton Council, American Farm Bureau Federation, Livestock Marketing Association, Beef Alliance, and the American Livestock Markets and Dealers Association.

In the press release announcing the letter, the lawmakers quoted NGFA President and CEO Mike Seyfert: “We appreciate Rep. Mann’s leadership and lawmakers’ recognition of the highly valuable nature of these reports to the entire U.S. agricultural value chain. NASS county estimates are critical for the operation of agricultural businesses. They are used to build supply and demand estimates, which help determine commodity sourcing plans to keep agribusiness facilities operational. The knowledge the reports provide contributes to an efficient and nimble supply chain. NGFA members, including agricultural exporters, processors, and livestock feeders rely on these reports to participate in the export sales market and to make appropriate purchase decisions.”

NASS Webinar: Meanwhile, NASS hosted a webinar on May 8 highlighting alternative data available for the recently discontinued programs. A [recording of that webinar is available here](#).

NGFA urges Canadian leaders to avoid rail strike

NGFA and 19 other Agricultural Transportation Working Group members urged Canadian leaders to take action to avoid a rail strike that could begin as soon as May 22.

The Teamsters Canada union, which represents 9,000 workers at Canadian National Railway (CN) and Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC), has threatened to strike as they negotiate labor agreements. Earlier this month, the union’s members voted in favor of a strike, which “would disrupt supply chains on a scale Canada has luckily never experienced,” said Teamsters Canada President Paul Boucher.

In a [May 9 letter](#) to Minister of Labour Seamus Regan, NGFA and other stakeholders said rail in Canada should be designated as an essential service. “A rail stoppage would lead to shutdowns or slowdowns of rail-dependent facilities resulting in devastating consequences to national and global food security,” the letter noted.

“Our memberships rely on freight rail to move essential products across Canada and the U.S. and a disruption to CN and CPKC’s rail service could ripple across North America,” NGFA and the other groups stated. “The impact of a strike would be particularly severe as trucking is not a viable option for many shippers due to their high-volume needs and the long distances for many of the movements.”

USDA, EPA, FDA publish biotech regulatory plan

Federal agencies on May 8 [announced a plan](#) to streamline the regulation of plants, animals and microorganisms produced through biotechnology.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) said they developed a plan to “update, streamline, and clarify their regulations and oversight mechanisms for products of biotechnology.”

The agencies said they intend to implement the following joint efforts:

- clarify and streamline regulatory oversight for genetically engineered plants, animals and microorganisms;
- update and expand their information sharing through an MOU to improve and broaden communication and coordination of oversight of modified microbes; and
- undertake a pilot project focused on modified microbes to explore and consider the feasibility and costs of developing a web-based tool that informs developers about which agency may regulate a given product category.

The announcement fulfills an executive order issued by President Joe Biden in 2022 to the three agencies to improve how they implement the Coordinated Framework for the Regulation of Biotechnology. Last year, NGFA submitted comments in response to the government's request for information on an updated framework. NGFA emphasized the need to prioritize transparency in the commercialization of products produced through genetic engineering, including mandatory notification from companies to the FDA.

NGFA is reviewing the agencies' plan and will provide updates to members as needed.

EVENTS

'Three Steps to Succession Planning Success' webinar is May 16

Join NGFA and People Spark Consulting for a one-hour webinar on the three steps to take for business succession planning on May 16 at 1 p.m. EDT. The steps include:

- How to address a legacy employee who may not be ready to retire,
- How to define the role based on where the business needs to go, and
- How to develop high-potential employees for these identified roles.

Register for [Three Steps to Succession Planning Success](#). Co-founders of People Spark Consulting, Kristen Ireland and Erin Mies, will guide the discussion.

CONVEY'24 is July 23-25

[CONVEY'24](#), an annual conference jointly hosted by NGFA, Grain Journal, and the Grain and Elevator Processing Society (GEAPS), is July 23-25 in Omaha, Neb.

Each year, NGFA, GEAPS and Grain Journal present this unique opportunity for grain handling employees and leaders to gain practical knowledge and training on real-world compliance issues, best practices and emerging industry trends. This year's focus will be on new technology and automation.



Early bird registration rate ends **May 31!** Register to attend or exhibit at conveyconference.com.

New this year: DEGESCH will host a pesticide state-certification workshop on the afternoon of July 23.

SUPPLEMENTS

NGFA Members: Communications Survey ends today

NGFA's [Communications Survey](#) closes TODAY, May 10.

Prize Drawing: NGFA will randomly select three winners to receive free registration to the 2024 CEC or the 2025 Annual Convention with a complimentary hotel suite upgrade. Include your name at the end of the survey to be included in the drawing. [Access the survey here.](#)

The answers to this survey will **directly** influence how NGFA makes changes to its information system for members. This is the first survey of its kind for NGFA with 18 questions aimed at guiding long-term decisions on the use of new tools and resources.



CISA to host May 15 webinar on China cyber threats

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) will host a live LinkedIn session on May 15 to discuss why cyber actors from the People’s Republic of China (PRC) pose one of the most significant threats to the U.S. critical infrastructure.

“[People’s Republic of China Cyber Threats and What We Can Do](#)” will feature Andrew Scott, CISA’s associate director for China operations, who will cover CISA’s efforts to detect, prevent, and defend against PRC cyber actors’ efforts to pre-position for disruptive or destructive attacks against U.S. critical infrastructure. Attendees will learn about information, tools, technical assistance and other resources available through CISA. Questions are welcome in the live Q&A.

The session is May 15 at 11:30 a.m. EDT. Access the event page [here](#).

Extra Supplements

NGFA in the news:

Hagstrom Report: [Mann, Costa lead letter urging USDA to re-establish reports](#)

Brownfield: [Members of Congress urge Vilsack to reverse decision to cancel some reports](#)

DTN: [STB Adopts Final Rail Reciprocal Switching Rule in Unanimous Vote](#)

Other news:

Associated Press: [Activist investor wins 3 Norfolk Southern board seats but won’t have control to fire CEO](#)

FreightWaves: [As Norfolk Southern battle nears climax, STB head Oberman backs management](#)

DTN: [NASS Officials: \\$7.5 Million Needed to Bring Back July Cattle and County Yield Reports](#)

Reuters: [China approves first gene-edited wheat in step to open up GM tech to food crops](#)

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