

# NIFA CLIPS

**New project will preserve cow diversity (Feedstuffs 11/26)** Plant breeders hunting for genes to combat new diseases or adapt to changes in climate can plumb the vast diversity of crops and their wild relatives using envelopes of seed banked in cold storage, but cattle breeders are limited to herds here and now, according to an announcement from Cornell University. A new \$500,000 U.S. Department of Agriculture grant, however, is funding research on a new, stem cell-based system that could capture global herd diversity in a subzero vault. [Link](#)

**Ag Extension, NIFA, the Farm Bill, and You (Wired Science 11/26)** I recently found out an old acquaintance was appointed to head a major federal agency. Cool! Except...I didn't know much about The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). So, I gave him a call and barraged him with questions about his new gig. NIFA was created in the 2008 Farm Bill as a new name for the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Cooperative Extension Service is a national network of education professionals located in each state. They are charged with providing research-based information and advice to agricultural producers, small business owners, kids and parents, and consumers. [Link](#)

**New Scarecrows for Vineyards: Car Dealers' Inflatable 'Dancing' Tube Men (The Wall Street Journal 11/28)** Some wineries and other farms are using the flailing, fan-blown characters—often seen on car lots—to scare off birds. Catherine Lindell, associate professor of zoology at Michigan State University is the principal investigator in a continuing U.S. Department of Agriculture-funded study examining how birds damage fruit crops and strategies for discouraging them. The agency put up \$2 million for the multistate and multiyear study of bird-related damage, which has pilot-tested several methods, including the dancers, recorded distress and predator noises and kites with raptor pictures attached to poles in the fields. [Link](#)

**Three Minn. nominees recently accepted for USDA veterinary loan repayment (West Central Tribune 11/30)** Veterinarians are critical to America's food safety and food security, plus the overall health and well-being of both animals and humans. Major studies indicate significant and growing shortages of food supply veterinarians, and veterinarians serving in certain other high-priority specialty areas. Authorized by the National Veterinary Medical Science Act of 2003 and administered by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the program provides student loan repayment benefits to annually selected program applicants from areas of the country with identified veterinarian shortages or special needs. [Link](#)

**Grants to help UF researchers grow pine trees faster (AG Professional 12/03)** University of Florida researchers will use \$1.45 million in federal grants to develop trait-prediction models and accelerate the growth of loblolly pine trees to produce more bioenergy. In his grant application, UF associate professor Matias Kirst, the principal investigator for the study, said Southern pines can be used as renewable biomass for bioenergy and renewable chemicals. However, for pines to meet their potential as a bioenergy crop, researchers must develop more productive cultivars that can be efficiently converted into liquid fuels, said Kirst, who teaches in the School of Forest Resources and Conservation, part of UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. The UF grants, along

with more than a dozen others totaling nearly \$9 million, were announced Nov. 15 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). [Link](#)

**USDA funds agricultural education in local area (Missouri State University 12/02)**  
Dr. Arbindra Rimal, professor of agriculture at Missouri State University, received a grant in the amount of \$569,890 through the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture for the project "Food Security Through Linking Resources to Enhance Undergraduate Education: Strategic Partnership Among Five Universities in Missouri." [Link](#)

**USDA awards \$291165 grant to Virginia State University professor (Biobased Digest 12/05)** In Virginia, Dr. Yixang Xu, food processing/engineering assistant professor in Virginia State University's Agricultural Research Station, has been awarded a three-year USDA capacity-building grant in the amount of \$291,165 which will fund research on the use of nanotechnology in food packaging. [Link](#)

**[ASTA CSS and Seed Expo Underway. \(AgWired 12/10\)](#)**. Over 2,500 seed industry professionals are in the Windy City this week to attend the [American Seed Trade Association's Annual Corn & Sorghum and Soybean Seed Research Conference and Seed Expo](#). The CSS opening session on Thursday will feature renowned agriculture economist Dan Basse and his predictions for the 2014 global crop market; Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy, Chief USDA Scientist, discussing the key issues impacting agriculture research; and Dr. Junyi Gai from Nanjing Ag University discussing the global outlook for the seed industry.

**[4-H Celebrates Youth With Year-End Awards \(The Post Journal 12/11\)](#)**. Cornell Cooperative Extension Chautauqua County's 4-H youth gathered at the Stockton Fire Hall on Nov. 9 to celebrate the youths' achievements. There were approximately 150 attendees. The event was emceed by Lori Cornell.

**[Full-time educator will lead enhanced Extension efforts. \(The Daily News 12/11\)](#)**. KNOWLESVILLE — The Orleans County Cornell Cooperative Extension is looking to expand its horticulture education program out of the garden and into the community. The extension will hire a full-time Garden-to-Table educator early next year to oversee the county's Master Gardener program while also providing a link to healthy nutrition initiatives in Orleans County.

**[OSU ag college enrollment growing \(Capital Press 12/11\)](#)** He's been on the job less than two years, but Dean Dan Arp is working up a good story to tell about the College of Agricultural Sciences at Oregon State University. As Arp told the state Board of Agriculture this month, enrollments at the college set a record this year, with 2,381 undergrads and 450 graduate students.

**[Washington County elementary schools recognized for healthy eating efforts \(Herald Mail Media 12/11\)](#)** Washington County Public Schools has gained national attention, as all 27 of its elementary schools achieved the bronze level award in the Healthier US School Challenge by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Sponsored by USDA Food and Nutrition Service, the challenge is a voluntary national certification initiative for schools participating in the National School Lunch Program.

**[Sonny Ramaswamy at ASTA CSS 2013 \(Agwired 12/12\)](#)** The Director of USDA's National Institute of Food & Agriculture Sonny Ramaswamy gave a presentation on "Setting the Table for a Hotter, Flatter, More Crowded Earth" during the opening general session at

the ASTA CSS 2013 on Thursday with a focus on how public sector research and private sector support need to work together to feed our growing population. (audio)

**[Save food: CTAHR professor studies new way to preserve food.](#) (Kaleo 12/09).**

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa associate professor Soojin Jun, Ph.D., received a grant to study a new high-tech way of preserving food for storage and shipping. Jun works in the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources' Department of Human Nutrition, Food and Animal Sciences and wanted to do a research project to show the loss of quality in food items caused by freezing and thawing during storage and transportation, which leads to waste and a decrease in economic value.

**[UNL professor earns early achievement honor from USDA](#) (The Daily Nebraskan**

**12/13)** The National Institute of Food and Agriculture is recognizing the efforts of University of Nebraska–Lincoln professor Tonia Durden with the 2013 Early Achievement Award. The national awards committee for Cooperative Extension Family Life and Human Development Specialists selected Durden because of her impressive achievements.

**[Online training provides continuing education for veterinarians](#) (High Plains**

**Journal 12/16)** The Animal Care Training program hosted by the Beef Cattle Institute at Kansas State University continues to grow and provide education for beef, dairy, equine, transportation and livestock marketing. Among the most widely attributed programs are the business training modules released earlier in 2013, which are offered by the National Food Animal Veterinary Institute and tailored for veterinarians' continuing education.

**[Grants Help Small Businesses Strengthen Innovation](#) (KTIC 840 Rural Radio**

**12/13)** USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture is awarding small businesses 18-million dollars in grants to conduct research and development that will lead to technological innovations in the agriculture industry. U.S. Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack says department grants to small businesses have spurred the development of hundreds of technologies and products that help make American agriculture successful. He says innovative agricultural research has helped make agriculture one of the two most productive industries in the U.S. economy since 1980. To sustain that - he says we need a new Food, Farm and Jobs Bill passed.

**[Supporting Innovation That Boosts Agriculture and Creates Jobs in Rural America](#)**

**(Yuma News Now 12/12)** Today, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack emphasized the importance of Farm Bill research programs that enable USDA researchers and those at Land Grant Universities across the nation to carry out groundbreaking discoveries, strengthen agriculture and grow business opportunity in rural America. Secretary Vilsack has called on Congress to expedite passage of a new Food, Farm and Jobs Bill that continues record

**[USDA NIFA Chief sets the table for a hotter, flatter, more crowded planet](#) (Quincy**

**Journal, 12/17)** Some of agriculture's most "wicked problems" revolve around trying to cope with the challenges of the world's increasing population, USDA's chief scientist told seed scientists last week in Chicago. Sonny Ramaswamy, administrator for USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, told members of the American Seed Trade Association he is setting the table for a hotter, flatter, more crowded Earth. Science must consider the premise of 9 billion people living with diminishing water resources, changing climate and health difficulties stemming from older demographics.

**To address the dementia epidemic, we need smarter research funding (Forbes, 12/18)** Yet another federal research boondoggle is the USDA's multi-million dollars per year program on risk-assessment for "genetically engineered organisms," run the by National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Guided (one would hope) by innumerable analyses by the National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences, academics and others, in the United States and abroad, the USDA has had decades to figure out that "genetically engineered organisms" do not represent a meaningful category amenable to risk analysis (or deserving of discriminatory, excessive regulatory oversight, which is another story). There is no scientific rationale for a dedicated set-aside for risk-assessment research on this pseudo-category of organisms. It's like doing risk-assessment on all the objects that have doors. And yet, as recently as last week, USDA's NIFA published a request for grant proposals concerning "the effects of introducing into the environment genetically engineered organisms." This is both wasteful and shameful.

**Farm bill aids innovation (WiscNews, 12/17)** First and foremost, research and innovation help agricultural production thrive. Scientists at USDA's Agricultural Research Service and outside researchers at Land Grant Universities have made incredible advancements in recent years, helping producers grow more on the same amounts of land. Moreover, since 2009, awards to university researchers by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture have resulted in nearly 400 patent applications.