

NIFA Clips

[The betrayal of the aphids](#) (**EurkAlert, 6/2**) Aphids are devastating insect pests and cause great losses to agriculture worldwide. These sap-feeding plant pests harbor in their body cavity bacteria, which are essential for the aphids' fecundity and survival. *Buchnera*, the bacterium, benefits also because it cannot grow outside the aphid. This mutually beneficial relationship is sabotaged, however, by the bacterium which proceeds to betray the aphid, a research team led by scientists at the University of California, Riverside has found. The research was supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture—National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

[ASERL, DPLA Launch Southern Agriculture History Portal](#) (**Library Journal 6/2**) The Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) and the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) are teaming to launch a new collection of agricultural research and resources from ASERL's 38 member libraries. From photographs to field notes, the 'Deeply Rooted' collection will mark the first time many of these items have been made available outside of the walls of their host libraries.

[Several Tucson groups plan mesquite conference](#) (**Arizona Daily Star 6/2**) June 13 will mark the first-ever mesquite conference sponsored by the UA Cooperative Extension, Western SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education) and Baja Arizona Sustainable Agriculture. It will include presentations by mesquite experts from the University of Arizona and the Tohono O'odham Nation as well as nonprofit groups that work to promote modern mesquite harvesting, consumption and recognition for its potential to become a new arid lands food crop, according to the news release.

[Grant to help small growers cut costs](#) (**The Packer, 6/3**) A four-year research project by researchers at Kansas State University and the University of Florida aims to help small fruit and vegetable growers reduce postharvest loss. The goal is to increase the availability of locally grown food by reducing the loss of fresh fruits and vegetables after they've been harvested. The project, which started March 1, is funded by a \$1 million AFRI

[Speeding food safety tests to deliver fresher products](#) (**NanoWerk, 6/3**) A research team led by food scientist Sam Nugen at the University of Massachusetts Amherst recently received a \$495,950 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to improve food safety by developing faster methods for detecting and separating microbial contamination from food. New techniques should help food manufacturers avoid costly waiting for safety tests before products can be sold.

[Texas A&M study: Bioenergy sorghum could help with GHG emissions](#) (**Ethanol Producer, 6/3**) Bioenergy sorghum may offer more than another energy supply; it may offer a "sink" for greenhouse gases, according to a Texas A&M AgriLife Research study. One objective of their study was to determine the effects of crop rotation, nitrogen fertilization and residue management on net greenhouse gas emissions from bioenergy sorghum production. The study was funded by the AgriLife Research Cropping Systems bioenergy program and a USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture grant.

[Iowa State University launches third study on quality of life in state's towns](#) (**The Gazette, 6/3**) Iowa State University researchers have begun a third two-year study to

track changes in quality of life and social capital in 99 Iowa towns. While the preceding studies have identified trends that signal a declining quality of life, residents of Iowa towns “absolutely are satisfied” with their choice of residence, said Terry Besser, a professor of sociology and the team lead for the project. The project, funded by a grant from the USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture, was designed to provide data that would improve the basis for policy decisions to stimulate rural development and economic growth.

[Food safety and farmers markets \(Food Safety Magazine, 6/5\)](#) Farmers markets have increased by almost 370 percent since 1994, with over 8,100 farmers markets listed in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)’s market directory in 2013. Although the farmers and market managers used many good practices, some practices being used may put consumers at risk for foodborne illness. As part of a USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture multistate grant-funded initiative by the University of Georgia, Virginia Tech and Clemson University, two curriculum packages for training farmers on small farms and farmers market managers have been developed to enhance the safety of locally grown produce and thus help ensure the economic viability of local markets.

[Tractor Supply Company, 4-H set new donation record \(Pleasanton Express, 6/5\)](#) Tractor Supply Company, in partnership with National 4-H Council, recently announced the record-breaking fundraising results of its spring 2014 Paper Clover Campaign. The largest retail farm and ranch supply store chain in the United States raised \$787,769 during a 12-day national in-store fundraiser. Tractor Supply has raised almost \$4 million for 4-H programs across the country through Paper Clover Campaigns in just four years. 4-H is a community of seven million young people around the world learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills. National 4-H Council is the private sector, non-profit partner of the Cooperative Extension System and 4-H National Headquarters located at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

[USDA issues grants to MSU for food security, production \(Feedstuffs, 6/5\)](#) Michigan State University has netted the lion’s share of the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) \$6 million awards to help to increase food security and improve food production. The grants were awarded through the USDA’s Agriculture and Food Research Initiative and administered through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

[Time for the fair: New food, ride, app coming \(Daily Journal, 6/6\)](#) Veggie burgers, steamed artichoke with lemon slices and grilled tofu bowls don’t sound like typical fair food, but food options at the 80th annual San Mateo County Fair are expanding as a result of a grant, in addition to other changes coming to the fair. The June 7-15 fair doesn’t only have new food as a result of a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — Education (SNAP-Ed) grant, it also has a new app on iTunes and Google Play that just launched last week. NIFA supports SNAP-Ed by providing leadership, establishing collaborative relationships, and strengthening communication among federal, state, and local partners.

[More than just a hill of beans: Phaseolus genome lends insight into nitrogen fixation \(EurekAlert, 6/8\)](#) All plants require nitrogen to thrive, and nitrogen fixation is the process by which atmospheric nitrogen is converted into ammonia. However, many agricultural lands are deficient in nitrogen, leading farmers to rely on fertilizers to supply the needed nutrient for their crops. “Unlocking the genetic make-up of the common bean is a tremendous achievement that will lead to future advances in feeding the world’s growing population through improved crop production,” said Sonny Ramaswamy, director of USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

[White House threatens veto of agricultural appropriations bill](#) (Daily Pulse, 6/10)

Citing concerns over school nutrition, potatoes in the WIC program, and a number of other elements of H.R. 4800, the 2015 agricultural appropriations bill pending in the U.S. House of Representatives, the White House issued a strongly worded veto threat. A statement of administration policy contains details on what exactly the White House likes and dislikes about the measure which provides funding for key programs at the USDA, including: *National Institute of Food and Agriculture* – The Administration is concerned that the Committee included no funding to support the three research innovation institutes, as requested in the FY 2015 Budget, and recommended by the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. These institutes would provide competitive grants to support public-private cooperation for pollinator health research, advanced manufacturing, and anti-microbial resistance, all important issues facing the nation.

[Recently signed agrotourism bill could bolster an already growing industry in Weld, CO](#) (The Tribune, 6/11)

An already growing industry could get a bit of a boost, thanks to Colorado lawmakers who recently put in place the first law specifically aimed at bolstering Colorado's agritourism. It could be a boost to an industry that, in Colorado, already has seen its number of farms that take part in agritourism activities grow from 679 in 2007 to 864 in 2012, according to the most recent U.S. Census of Agriculture, released this year. A group of researchers in April were awarded a \$500,000 grant from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture for a three-year study to learn more about agritourism.

[Plan BEE](#) (Michigan State Today 6/11) Honeybees have been the first choice of growers across the United States to pollinate crops and improve the quality of their yields for nearly four centuries. Imported from Europe in the early years of North American colonization, honeybees became a horticultural mainstay throughout the continent. And the economy depends on them. Researchers at Michigan State University, along with colleagues from 15 institutions throughout the country, are studying alternative pollination strategies, a sort of "crop insurance," using less common bee varieties for growers hit hard by colony collapse. The endeavor, known as the Integrated Crop Pollination (ICP) project, is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and is being led by MSU AgBioResearch entomologist Rufus Isaacs.

[Hypoallergenic Peanuts Move Closer to Commercial Reality](#) (Food Safety News 6/11) Hypoallergenic peanuts, peanut butter, and other peanut products are a step closer to grocery stores with the signing of an exclusive licensing agreement for a patented process that claims to reduce allergens in peanuts by 98 percent. North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NC A&T) in Greensboro signed the agreement with [Xemerge](#), a Toronto-based firm that commercializes emerging technologies in food, agriculture, and a variety of other fields. Research funding was provided by the [Agriculture and Food Research Initiative](#) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

[Common bean's genome sequenced, could lead to better varieties](#) (Southeast Farm Press 6/11) Beans are a staple crop and primary protein source for millions of people around the world, but very little has been known about their domestication or nitrogen-fixing properties until now. Recently, researchers sequenced and analyzed the genome of the common bean, *Phaseolus vulgaris*. Black beans, pinto beans, kidney beans, green beans, pole beans and others are varieties of the common bean.

[Citrus greening research efforts and dollars increase](#) (USDA Radio, 6/12) NIFA National Program Leader Tom Bewick (Division of Plant System – Production) talks to USDA's Radio News Service about how to apply for citrus greening research funding.

[USDA announces \\$31.5 million in funding for research to fight citrus greening \(AgriPulse, 6/12\)](#) United States Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced the availability of \$25 million in funding for research and Cooperative Extension Service projects to combat huanglongbing (HLB), commonly known as citrus greening disease. The funding comes from the 2014 Farm Bill. USDA allocated another \$6.5 million, for a total of \$31.5 million, to several other projects through its Huanglongbing Multi-Agency Coordination Group. Secretary Vilsack created the HLB MAC Group last December to foster greater coordination among federal and state agencies in responding to citrus greening. The Group includes representatives from USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), as well as State departments of agriculture and the citrus industry.

[USDA directs funding for citrus greening research \(The Packer, 6/12\)](#) The U.S. Department of Agriculture is directing \$25 million in funding for research to fight citrus greening. On June 12, the USDA released news of the funding availability for research and cooperative extension service projects to stop citrus greening, also known as HLB and huanglongbing.

[U.S. goes into battle against disease turning oranges green and killing trees \(Huffington Post, 6/12\)](#) The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced on Thursday a total of \$31.5 million in funding to combat a plant disease that threatens to devastate Florida's \$9 billion citrus industry and has driven up the cost of a glass of orange juice. As many as 70 percent of Florida's citrus trees are believed to be infected by citrus greening disease, or huanglongbing, which is caused by bacteria deposited on trees by an insect called the Asian citrus psyllid.

[Federal funds for citrus greening \(ABC News, 6/13\)](#) Federal agriculture officials said Thursday that they are allocating millions of dollars toward research to solve problems caused by the devastating citrus greening bacteria that threatens Florida's \$9 billion citrus industry. United States Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack told The Associated Press in a statement that \$25 million in funding comes from the 2014 Farm Bill. Another \$6.5 million will be sent to projects through a group formed to combat greening.

[USDA: \\$24 million available for citrus greening research \(ABC News 10/6/13\)](#) The Department of Agriculture said Thursday it will distribute \$24 million worth of grants to researchers to find ways to combat the citrus greening disease. Though the disease -- whose formal name is huanglongbing -- has been identified in only one tree in Los Angeles, state agriculture officials have set up quarantine zones across swaths of Central and Southern California to isolate and eradicate the Asian citrus psyllid, an insect that spreads the disease.

[Vilsack announces farm bill funding for bioenergy research, converting to biomass fuel systems \(Noodles, 6/13\)](#) Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced up to \$14.5 million in funding for two USDA bioenergy programs made available through the 2014 Farm Bill. USDA's Rural Development (RD) announced it is accepting applications from companies seeking to offset the costs associated with converting fossil fuel systems to renewable biomass fuel systems, while USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) announced the availability of \$2.5 million in grants to enhance national energy security through the development of bio-based transportation fuels, biopower, and new bio-based products.

[Vilsack outlines plan of climate change attack \(AgWeb, 6/13\)](#) The Agriculture Secretary used a recent speech to update developments in an ongoing program. Vilsack

took the occasion of a speech at last month's summit on climate change, held by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, to update the audience on USDA's two-year-old climate change program designed to help farmers adjust to the impact of climate change, which he said includes more intense weather patterns, longer droughts, more severe storms, more pests and more diseases. In April, USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture awarded \$6 million to 10 universities to study the impact of climate change on agriculture. As part of the grant, the universities will develop strategies to help farmers and ranchers deal with the impact of climate change.

President Obama announces more key administrative posts (The White House, 6/13) President Barack Obama announced his intent to nominate Dr. Roger N. Beachy, Appointee for Member, National Science Board, National Science Foundation. Beachy was the first Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture at the Department of Agriculture from 2009 to 2011.

Teams comb Flathead Indian Reservation for clues about ancient, recent fires (Montana State University, 6/16) On a quest to learn more about fires in the Northern Rockies, Montana State University, Salish Kootenai College and federal researchers are looking to the trees, lakes and oral tradition for insights they can share with land managers. [David McWethy](#) of MSU is now leading a team of students sampling sediments from several lakes on the Flathead Indian Reservation. At the same time, Rick Everett of SKC is leading a group of students collecting tree rings and fire scars. The two-year project is funded by a USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture Tribal Colleges Research Grant.