

NIFA in the News – Week of January 28, 2013

Curious as to what happens to all the news releases you see in the [NIFA newsroom](#)? Here's the weekly summary of NIFA's mentions in the news media for the week of January 28, 2013.

### **In the News**

**Online tool provides an interactive farm budgeting resource (Dairyherd Network 1/18).** The Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute (FAPRI) at the University of Missouri has developed an online tool to help farmers build projected budgets for their operations. The Farm Cost and Return Tool, or Farm CART... "The tool allows beginning farmers and ranchers, not only in Missouri but all over the country, to play a what-if game on the Web," said FAPRI economist Peter Zimmer. "They can develop a farm with how many acres they want, how many animals they want, and they can see what it will look like financially over the next five years." Farm CART was funded by a Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Grant from USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher project was started because the age of the average farmer is increasing and the number of farmers is decreasing. USDA is looking for ways to educate people who may want to start farming in the future, Zimmer said. [Link](#)

**N.C. State researchers Hassan and Koci win \$2.5 million USDA grant to combat salmonella (The News of Orange County 1/23).** Dr. Hosni Hassan, North Carolina State University professor of microbiology, and Dr. Matt Koci, associate professor of poultry science, are leading the charge on a new five-year, \$2.5 million grant from the United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture to stamp out salmonella. USDA-NIFA made the awards through the 2011 Agriculture and Food Research Initiative's Food Safety Program. [Link](#)

**USDA Grant Advancing Deadly Plant Disease, Insect Research (Newswise 1/23).** A competitive grant is helping a Kansas State University doctoral student turn the insect responsible for spreading one of the worst plant diseases into a tool that stifles the disease's transmission. Ismael E. Badillo-Vargas, a plant pathology doctoral student, Puerto Rico, recently was awarded a predoctoral fellowship grant of more than \$71,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The competitive scholarship is awarded to agriculture students who have two more years to complete their doctoral degree programs. Recipients receive two years of funding for research expenditures, tuition, a graduate research salary and conference travel. [Link](#)

**Federal agriculture official visits Purdue (WBAA Radio 1/24).** Millions of dollars in federal funding for Purdue is tied to the U.S. Farm Bill, including money from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) specifically for land grant universities. Sonny Ramaswamy is the director of NIFA and a former associate dean in Purdue's College of Agriculture. He realizes budget cuts are likely, but says he'll make a strong case against severe reductions in that money as Congress writes a new Farm Bill this year. [Link](#)

**NIFA Director to speak on role of land-grant universities (WESM 1/25).** Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy, director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), talks to faculty, staff and students at UMES on Wednesday, Jan. 30, at 11:30 a.m. in the Richard A. Henson Center, room 1116. His talk, sponsored by the School of Agricultural and Natural Sciences (SANS), explores the role of land-grant universities and the NIFA in addressing global challenges. [Link](#)

**AgCenter biofuels pilot plant commissioned in La. (The News Star 1/26).** The fledgling biofuels and bioprocessing industry in the South took a step forward Friday, with the formal commissioning of a pilot plant at the LSU AgCenter Audubon Sugar Institute. The pilot plant is part of a larger project funded by a five-year, \$17.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through its agriculture and food research initiative, said William Goldner, national program leader for sustainable bioenergy in the USDA Institute of Bioenergy, Climate and Environment. [Link](#)

**Role of land-grant universities in food and ag research is talk topic (County Times 1/27).** Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy, director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), talks at UMES on Wednesday, January 30, at 11:30 a.m. in the Richard A. Henson Center, Room 1116. His talk, sponsored by the School of Agricultural and Natural Sciences (SANS), explores the role of land-grant universities and the NIFA in addressing global challenges. [Link](#)

**Innovative Uses of Nanotechnology in Food and Agriculture Explored in Special Issue of Industrial Biotechnology (WebWire 1/28).** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) invests nearly \$10 million a year to support about 250 nanoscale science and engineering projects that could lead to revolutionary advances in agriculture and food systems. In their introductory article, "Overview: Nanoscale Science and Engineering for Agriculture and Food Systems," Co-Guest Editors Norman Scott, PhD, Professor, Cornell University (Ithaca, NY) and Hongda Chen, PhD, National Program Leader, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA (Washington, DC), describe the promising early advances nanotechnology is enabling all along the food supply chain, from production through consumption, and especially in the area of food safety. [Link](#)

**Ramaswamy Returns to Purdue amid Concerns about 9 Billion in 2050 (Hoosier Ag Today 1/28).** Eight months into his new job as director of USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Sonny Ramaswamy continues traveling the

country to assess initiatives that could benefit from federal grant money. NIFA, the former Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES,) provides funding and authority for research, extension and teaching, and his visits last week included Purdue University where he was associate dean of the College of Agriculture and director of agricultural research programs from 2006 to 2009. [Link](#)

**Biofuels Grant (WJTV 1/28).** Mississippi State University says part of a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant is funding research at the university that will help develop a process to create a clean, renewable energy source. Researchers at Mississippi State University and Ohio State University received \$6.5 million to work together on the project. They plan to develop a process to convert methane gases produced from leftover plant materials, or biomass, into cost competitive liquid fuels that more closely resemble diesel and gasoline. [Link](#)

**Nanotech concerns highlight core research needs (Food Production Daily 1/29).** Public concerns about nanotechnology in food processing highlight important areas for further research, according to a US paper just published in the journal Nanobiotechnology. [Link](#)

**Turning agriculture into oil - bio oil, that is (Philadelphia Inquirer 1/29).** Pour a few handfuls of chopped-up corn stalks or switchgrass into a hopper. Heat rapidly. Funnel the resulting mixture through an intricate network of metal pipes and canisters. Out the other end - drip, drip - comes a thick brown liquid that looks an awful lot like oil. Called bio oil, it is not quite the same as what comes out of a well. But it is close enough that government scientists think the process, called fast pyrolysis, is a promising way for farmers to enhance energy security. The room-size network of pipes and canisters is a pilot-scale reactor in Wyndmoor, at the eastern regional research center of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Scientists there are confident that, with some tweaking, they can turn any "biomass" - even manure - into oil that can be refined into gasoline or diesel fuel. "We want to engineer this for the farm," said Akwasi A. Boateng, the chemical engineer who is leading the effort for the Agricultural Research Service. [Link](#)

**Ag regains cachet as colleges grow (Capital Press 1/31).** Agriculture is hip again -- at least that's the word from ag schools around the West where enrollment has been booming over the last several years. We never knew that ag had stopped being hip, seeing as how eating seems to have always been popular. Still, it's heartening to see that young people are taking up the challenge of providing for the world's hungry 6 billion. Nationwide, enrollment in bachelor's degree programs focusing on agriculture at land-grant universities has increased nearly 28 percent since 2004, according to the USDA Food and Agriculture Education Information System... A few weeks ago Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack made headlines when he said rural areas have lost their relevance in American political life. Don't tell that to thousands of young people who see agriculture as a bright spot in the economy, and who are making a substantial investment to become part of its future. [Link](#)

**Chickpea genome could make crop stronger (Futurity: Research News 1/31).**

Chickpeas are a critically important crop in many parts of the world, especially for small-farm operators in marginal environments of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, according to researchers. The reference genome of the chickpea variety known as CDC Frontier and the genome sequence of 90 cultivated and wild chickpea lines from 10 different countries are published in the online version of Nature Biotechnology this week. “The importance of this new resource for chickpea improvement cannot be overstated,” says Douglas Cook, a professor of plant pathology at University of California, Davis. “The sequencing of the chickpea provides genetic information that will help plant breeders develop highly productive chickpea varieties that can better tolerate drought and resist disease—traits that are particularly important in light of the threat of global climate change,” says Cook, one of the study’s three lead authors.

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