

## NIFA in the News – Week of July 21, 2013

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### **In the News**

**Cornell Scientist's Quest: Perfect Broccoli (New York Times 7/9).** The Eastern Broccoli Project, based at the university's Agricultural Experiment Station here in this small Finger Lakes city, also aims to maximize the new broccoli's concentration of glucoraphanin, a compound that has been found to aid in preventing cancer. Knowing that smart retailing is essential to success, Mr. Bjorkman designed the broccoli project to include all aspects of its growing and marketing, which helped him secure a \$3.2 million grant from the Department of Agriculture in 2010, along with \$1.7 million worth of contributions from commercial partners, including the produce-centric Wegmans grocery chain. [Link](#)

**Companies need ag students (Des Moines Register, USA Today 7/13).** U.S. agriculture and food companies are struggling to attract enough workers, a problem the industry concedes is getting worse as innovation and growing demand for their products leads to the creation of thousands of new jobs. "We certainly have a shortfall, no doubt about it," said Sonny Ramaswamy, director of the Agriculture Department's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Ramaswamy added that while there has been an increase in the number of students enrolled in agriculture at U.S. universities, "that's not been enough to keep up with the demand that we've got in the workforce." [Link](#)

**Agricultural robots could revolutionize fresh-market fruit, veggie production, ease labor**

**woes (The Republic 7/14).** Researchers are now designing robots for these most delicate crops by integrating advanced sensors, powerful computing, electronics, computer vision, robotic hardware and algorithms, as well as networking and high precision GPS localization technologies. Machines have proved not only clumsy, but inadequate in selecting ripe produce. In addition to blunders in deciphering color and feel, machines have a hard time distinguishing produce from leaves and branches. And most importantly, matching the dexterity and speed of farmworkers has proved elusive. "The hand-eye coordination workers have is really amazing, and they can pick incredibly fast. To replicate that in a machine, at the speed humans do and in an economical manner, we're still pretty far away," said Daniel L. Schmoltdt at the U.S. Agriculture Department's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

[Link](#)

**Youth program adapts to changes in society, education (Columbus Telegram 7/16).** Is 4-H still 4-TK? As in for today's kids? As a youth organization administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture of the United States Department of Agriculture, the 4-H program in this country is now more than 100 years old. It was formally established around 1902 in Ohio. Research into 4-H history reveals that the program's early goals 4-H were to make public school education more connected to rural life. Early 4-H programs tied both public and private resources together to benefit rural youth by introducing them to new agricultural technology. However, some might wonder whether a program as old as 4-H can continue to exist in the 21st century. Education has taken on a new look, with the Internet putting vast amounts of knowledge at our fingertips. Advances have transformed education and young people perceive and pursue their interests. In order to show how 4-H is adapting, Butler County 4-H and Youth Development Extension Educator Katie Pleskac answered questions on the topic. [Link](#)

**Auburn research gaining new insights into kudzu bug behavior, control (Southeast Farm Press 7/18).** Two grants have helped an Alabama Extension specialist and Auburn University professor gain several breakthrough insights into the kudzu bug. Xing Ping Hu, an Alabama Cooperative Extension System entomologist and Auburn University professor in the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology, says her research has gained several breakthrough insights into the virulent kudzu bug, including the discovery of a native predator that could go a long way toward reducing the pest's numbers. The first grant of \$50,000 was awarded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, while the second, totaling \$30,000, was provided by the Extension Integrated Pest Management Coordination and Support Program to support Hu's efforts to deliver her research findings to the people affected by the pest. [Link](#)

**Raj named doctoral fellow in food-systems planning (University of Buffalo Reporter 7/18).**

Fulbright scholar and climate activist Subhashni Raj, who just completed her master of urban planning at UB, will start her PhD at the university this fall as the first recipient of the Jerome L. Kaufman Doctoral Fellowship for the study of food-systems planning. As a Kaufman Fellow, Raj will have the opportunity to test her research on a national scale by working with Raja and the Food Lab on the Growing Food Connections initiative, funded by a \$3.96 million grant from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That project seeks to bring the tools of food-systems planning to 20 food-insecure regions across the country through research and extension activities in the community. [Link](#)

**We must move the farm to feed the world (York Times 7/23).** A July 14, 2013 USA Today article written by Christopher Doering entitled, “Want a job? Agriculture industry teeming with them,” got me thinking about movement in relation to meeting global food demands. The article talks about how U.S. ag and food companies are seeking out workers and they aren’t finding enough of them. Doering’s article states, “The National Institute of Food and Agriculture funded a study released by Purdue University in 2010 that showed just how big of a problem the employment situation might be for the (agriculture/food) industry. The research found that, between 2010 and 2015, an estimated 54,400 jobs would be created annually in agricultural, food and renewable resources. [Link](#)

**History of Land Grant Universities (Southeast AgNet 7/23).** Abraham Lincoln called the land grant university system in America the engine to drive the American economy – a prediction that has proven true over time. Rod Bain looks at the history and importance of this education system in a two part series – starting with part one in this edition of “Agriculture USA”. Here is Rod Bain and USDA National Institute of Food And Agriculture Administrator Sonny Ramaswamy. [Link](#)

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Published on July 25, 2013 / Jennifer Martin