

AGRICULTURE



NATIONAL AGRICULTURE WEEK

March 18-25, 2016

Knights of Columbus Hall hosts Ag Dinner

Attorney presents five current issues in agricultural law

By Joshua Heath
Daily News

GREENSBURG — Decatur County residents interested in agriculture were able to attend the Ag Dinner at the Knights of Columbus Hall on Thursday, headlined by an informative presentation from Janzen Agricultural Law LLC attorney Brianna Schroeder.

Schroeder's presentation involved the top five current issues in ag law: the Right to Farm Act, soil and groundwater health, employment law, farm data and gene editing.

The first portion of the presentation focused on the Right to Farm Act, and according to the Schroeder, that can be best thought of as a defense to a nuisance lawsuit.

"Especially important for any livestock producers, dairy, hogs, turkey, and alpaca, whatever you've got," Schroeder said during the presentation. "It was a tool that was enacted by the Indiana legislature to fight against suburban sprawl in agricultural areas."

Basically, according to Schroeder, that means that if you have an agricultural operation and the area around it is changing, that operation does not become a nuisance due to expansion of change — as long as it's not significant.

As for soil and groundwater health, Schroeder discussed cover crops and nitrates. A few examples of cover crops, according to the attorney, are radishes, oats and rye.

"The real reason we encourage the use of cover crops is to improve that soil health. It reduces compaction — smooshing down the soil — by creating roots that

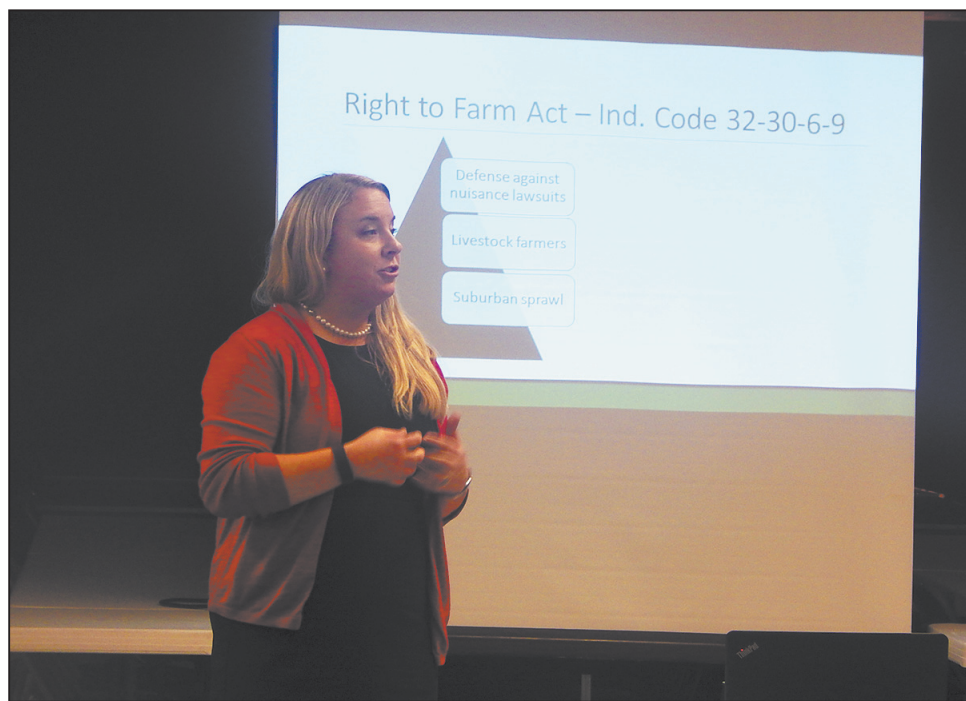


Photo by Joshua Heath | Daily News

Janzen Agricultural Law LLC attorney Brianna Schroeder gave an in depth presentation on the five current issues in agricultural law on Thursday.

go through the soil," Schroeder said. "Compaction can become a problem because once you have heavily compacted soil, it's really hard to reverse that, so you're better off preventing it in the first place. Cover crops are a great way to do that."

Schroeder spoke about the use of nitrogen and the effect of nitrates on local groundwater. She said at the moment, there are many questions surrounding the subject. For example, when do you apply it, how you apply it, how much do you apply and where do you store it.

Using resources from Purdue, she said many think that applying more nitrogen may serve as low cost insurance, but that might not be the case.

"The first amounts of nitrogen that you're applying are giving you the most results, but eventually that sort of levels out and adding more nitrogen isn't necessarily going to give you a higher yield," Schroeder

said. "It may give you a greater opportunity to have IDEM (Indiana Department of Environmental Management) knocking on your door, which no one wants, but it won't give you higher yields just by using more nitrogen."

Furthermore, Schroeder said this becomes more of a legal topic rather than a science and environmental topic when you apply too much nitrogen.

"Nitrogen is essential, but the problem is if you have too much nitrogen that gets into the drinking water, it causes what they call 'blue baby' or 'blue baby syndrome,'" Schroeder said.

Moving forward, Schroeder provided insight on employment law in agriculture. The audience may have learned a few things when it comes to preventing conflicts with past, present or future employees. The two big things the attorney tells her clients to worry about are: compliance when hiring and com-

pliance when firing.

"I think the best practice when you have a new employee walk in the door is to have them sign an employment agreement," Schroeder said. "It may be one paragraph, but that may save your butt from a lawsuit. If you're a little bit bigger operation, it may be worth it to have that employment agreement say that they have read over an employee handbook."

Essentially, it's important to make sure you have, in writing, at-will employment relationship. However, Schroeder offered even more advice when it comes to problems such as employee tardiness, absence.

"If I could give my client one piece of advice in all of employment law area, it would be to document everything," Schroeder said.

As for farm data, Schroeder said that information allows you to make educated decisions about what you may or may not



Photo by Les Patterson | Daily News

The Knights of Columbus spent their Thursday afternoon preparing meals for guests.

do in your field, but what protects that data? She listed a series of questions to ask your ag technology provider:

- What are you going to collect from my farm?
- What control do I have after that information is transferred?
- Who are you going to share my information with, or who do you sell it to?
- What if there's a breach?
- Can I delete or move my data?

"When it comes to ag data, find out what you're clicking through," Schroeder said. "Find out what you're signing, because you may be surprised; you may be giving your information away — never to see it again. They may be able to do whatever they want with it — maybe not."

Information in regards to gene editing closed out the presentation. Schroeder explained the difference between gene editing and genetically modified organisms.

"Gene editing is slightly different in that it is typically deleting or editing individual components of the DNA," Schroeder said.

"It typically doesn't involve 'foreign genetics,' which I am hopeful that that will push back on some of the criticism that is sometimes thrown up against any kind of genetic modifications."

She explained that gene editing is something that has always existed in nature. Schroeder pointed toward bacteria and their use of gene editing, which fights viruses.

"It's sort of like conventional breeding, but what conventional breeding might take 100 years to do, gene editing might take two years to do," Schroeder said.

In a follow-up, Schroeder talked about what she hopes Decatur County residents can take away from the presentation.

"I think it's important that local farmers be aware of issues that might affect them in the future," Schroeder said. "Just know what's out there and be prepared."

The Ag Dinner was organized by the Greensburg Decatur County Chamber of Commerce with Executive Director Jeff Emsweller.

Contact: Joshua Heath, 812-663-3111 x7401; joshua.heath@greensburg-dailynews.com

ARC and PLC programs offer safety net

Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage Ends Aug. 1

Producers who chose coverage from the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can visit FSA county offices through Aug. 1, 2016, to sign contracts to enroll in coverage for 2016.

Although the choice

between ARC and PLC is completed and remains in effect through 2018, producers must still enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to receive coverage.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to enroll. If a farm is not enrolled during the 2016 enrollment period, producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial

assistance from the ARC or PLC programs should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program.

The two programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. Covered commodities include barley, canola, large

and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

ARC and PLC Acreage Maintenance

Producers enrolled in Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC), or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) must protect all cropland and non-cropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. Producers who sign ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm

according to sound agricultural practices. If a producer fails to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on a farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate the contract for the program year.

A list of noxious weeds can be found on the following website: <http://plants.usda.gov/java/noxious-Driver>.



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The pollinators have to be protected

Debbie Blank
The Herald-Tribune

BATESVILLE – Michele Colopy spoke about the pollinator crisis at the 10th annual Food and Growers Association Winter Conference here recently. “Our pollinators are a natural resource we must protect.”

The insects are vital to human health, she believed. “One-third of our food supply is helped along by pollinators.”

She pointed out, “Pesticides conserves losses ... but it is pollination that increases crop yields,” not pesticides.

The Pollinator Stewardship Council program director noted, “All of us can help, but we have to understand the issues and crisis.”

“There is no one thing impacting the health of our bees,” the Akron, Ohio, resident maintained. “Colony collapse disorder ... does not tell the whole story. It’s a piling on, a cumulative effect of pesticides, pests, pathogens and poor forage.”

“Our pollinators are suffering in a number of ways. Historically, they always suffer from weather,”

such as when snow covers blooms. “We have always had winter losses of bees.” When it’s too cold for too long, 10 to 15 percent of the population freezes to death. Numbers can increase to 40-60 percent if bees are eating toxic foods in the winter.

“For some reason, humans love grassy yards,” but pollinators do not feed on grass. “We need more bushes and trees and blooming plants and less grass. We need diversity in our ecosystem.”

An herbicide called glyphosate controls weeds, but also decimates the forage

for bees and Monarch butterflies. “We are wiping out their milkweed, their food source.”

The Varroa mite, a bee’s main pest, arrived in the U.S. from Asia in 1987. It attaches to a bee, sucking its blood and transmitting diseases.

She reported the position of council leaders is “we don’t want to ban pesticides, but we want them to be used judiciously. All of us in agriculture can work together to protect our pollinators in order to maintain and afford sustainable, healthy agriculture.”

“What is now occurring is heavy end-of-the-summer losses” due to pesticides. “When bees should be building up their honey stores and getting ready for winter,” the honey and pollen bees have collected are laced with pesticides, making their environment and food supply toxic.

More than 50 insecticides, herbicides, fungicides and adjuvants are used on apples, plums and cherries in California, according to her. “Pesticides linger. They are in the pollen, nectar, soil and water. Pesticides will weaken the bees’ immune systems” so they are more susceptible to diseases.

In a survey of 23 states and Canada, 121 different pesticides were found in hives.

Colopy observed, “We’ve got to be our brother’s keepers. What one farmer does affects his neighbor’s crop” and area beekeepers. She said the biggest issue is when a producer mixes



Submitted photo

Michele Colopy shows how populated hives are. She reported, “Honey bees are not native to North America. They came from Europe and were brought over by the pilgrims” for mead. Native bees are necessary to pollinate native plants.

combinations of pesticides in a tank because toxicity levels increase.

How citizens can help pollinators:

- She recommended not buying plants in soil treated with a neonicotinoid, a type of insecticide.
- Controlling mosquitoes with chemicals is the biggest reason backyard beekeepers lose their bees. Read the label.
- A cup of water can hold 1,000 mosquito eggs. Instead of spraying for mosquitos, empty water from gutters, bird baths and other outdoor receptacles. “We need to eliminate the breeding grounds for mosquitos and we will reduce pesticide use.”
- Mosquitos are out at night so if you have to spray, do it then.
- “Just because your

neighbor is spraying doesn’t mean you should spray. Scout your fields, see if pests are out there,” she advised. “Many people forget that less than 54 percent of the world’s insects are harmful to humans or crops.”

• Decrease pollinators’ exposure to pesticides. If more bees are healthy, crop yields will be higher.

• “You hired bees to pollinate your crop,” Colopy told producers. Follow guidelines of agriculture extension educators, researchers and the State Department of Agriculture to avoid spraying crops when they are in bloom and when bees are most active.

• Learn not just trade names, but active ingredients of pesticides, Colopy suggested. “Purdue has wonderful information

How pollinators help the economy

- The value of pollination by honey bees is \$12.4 billion for dependent crops and \$6.8 billion for indirectly dependent crops.
- The value of pollination by other insects is \$4 billion for dependent crops and \$5.9 billion for indirectly dependent crops.
- “Without the honeybees, there are no little almonds,” according to Colopy. One hundred percent of the crop worth \$4.8 billion is reliant on bees for pollination.
- When blueberries were pollinated by more than one species of bees, there was an increase of \$311 in yield per acre in North Carolina.

about bees and pollinators” and a paper on toxic pesticides to honeybees. “You don’t want it to harm your bees or your neighbors’ bees.” One Florida farmer lost all bees in his hives because of drift and bees going outside of his 40 acres for food.

• Reduce pesticide drift. • Use less toxic compounds. Avoid using pesticides that come in the form of dusts, wettable powders or micro-encapsulated pesticides.

• Let fields go fallow so unsprayed vegetation there can feed bees.

• Bee kills need to be reported to the Environmental Protection Agency so it has “the data and finds out what’s happening in the real world.” She encouraged farmers that, when asked, to tell area beekeepers with losses what they put in tank mixes.

• Beekeepers can participate in a hive tracking project at www.pollinatorstewardship.org.

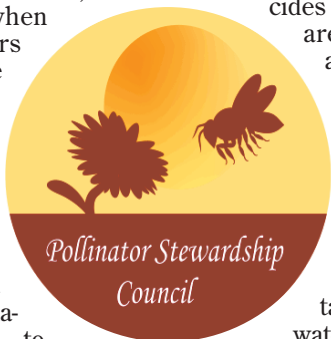
Everyone can learn more about the pollinator crisis at that Web site and www.honeybeehealthcoalition.org.

The program director mused, “We all have to find a way to work together to protect our pollinators.”

Colopy serves on a Honey Bee Health Coalition committee that is looking at a national strategy. The report was released in May 2015 at the White House. “There is no federal funding associated with this. It’s getting all of the government agencies to look at their land and land uses and make them much more pollinator friendly.”

Indiana is working on a Pollinator Protection Plan. “All ag stakeholders need to be there” to help formulate it, not just state regulators, she contended.

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AGRICULTURE

Soil management vital

Debbie Blank
The Herald-Tribune

BATESVILLE — “We’re blessed with some of the best soils in the world. It’s really good for grass-fed beef,” Mac Stone told about 50 farmers and gardeners at the 10th Annual Food and Growers Association Winter Conference at the Batesville Intermediate School cafeteria Feb. 6.

Stone, whose family owns the largest organic farm (<http://elmwoodstockfarm.com>) in Kentucky near Georgetown, was discussing soil management. The Kentucky Proud member was one of five speakers during the all-day event that had producer and consumer tracks.

Some attendees were lamenting the clay soil here. The speaker said, “If you’ve got clay ... if it’s wet, water can’t get out. You have to physically disturb it” to break apart the clay particles. He suggested, “Plant plants with long roots,” which is easier than breaking up the soil.

The farmer reported Kentucky soil is silt loam (soil containing not less than 70 percent silt and clay and not less than 20 percent sand). “There’s a reason horses are in central Kentucky,” Kings in England and France brought horses to that state because the ground has a balance of calcium and phosphorus, “so great for horse bone health.”

He noted the soil food web is the basis of organic farming. When an arthropod eats a nematode, nitrogen is added to the soil, which allows it to become healthy without spraying.

Stone also uses compost, which contains bacteria and fungi, to put diversity back into his fields. “The soil is alive. We all know about inoculating soybeans. Take nitrogen from the air and give it to the plant. It not only feeds the plant root, but the soil all around it.”

His family received a grant for composting equipment years ago and they still make compost tea to spray on fields. He advised, “Compost or compost tea has to be protected from the sun.” The organic matter can be applied to the ground and turned under, while tea can be sprayed at night.

“The roots of plants don’t just stick into the ground and magically suck up what they need. You always want to have something green and growing,” he advised.

The speaker said the “three legs” of making good soil for organic farming are animal manure, legumes and biomass.

“Crop rotation is very, very, very important,” he emphasized. “You need to have your crop rotation planned out for the next 10 years” to prevent diseases and pests. Because tomatoes, peppers, potatoes and egg-

plant are all in same family, those crops must be rotated and not planted in the same field year after year.

Stone follows an eight-year rotation schedule. “The first year when we plow,” heavy feeders, such as tomatoes and peppers, are planted. A cover crop grows during that first winter. The next spring, the field is disked and replanted with lettuce, broccoli and cabbage varieties. The third spring, peas, beans and edamame are grown.

He and other family members plant alfalfa in the fall, then add barley, wheat and rye. “It will germinate, give a cover and prevent frost heaving.” Installing heavy landscape fabric allows the soil to stay moist for pricey crops, like strawberries.

In fact, fields are pampered at Elmwood Stock Farm. Alfalfa and similar legumes are grown for five years to break up the soil and pull nutrients from deep in the ground up to the surface. When the plants are cut, the roots decompose and feed the soil.

The producer contended soil “just needs to heal” by using a mixture of perennial grasses and legumes. “You still have to manage it, mow it or graze it. People call it working lands. It’s not just sitting there, it’s working.” After three years of growing crops on a parcel, it rests for five years. When the soil was tested, “it was back to where

it was” and had gained nutrients.

Late in the growing season, farmers can plant rye, which has more cold tolerance, according to Stone. On slopes, he favors planting perennial ryegrass, which lessens soil compaction and splatter onto plants and serves as “a nice reservoir for beneficial insects.”

Normally the Kentuckian plants wheat 2 bushels to the acre, but even 1 bushel would be OK.

Some farmers use T-Tape, which is installed on the ground to drip water, to help reduce water consumption, increase crop quality and hike crop yields. Stone reported, “We’ll put T-Tape every other row, so we can move it over a row to cultivate ... The University of Kentucky has designed a system to put T-Tape four inches underground so cultivating is possible. We cultivate and till as little as possible so carbon and worms are not disturbed.”

For the sake of food safety, hot wires separate most farm animals from produce. “We’ve done every version of mob or intensive grazing,” placing temporary fencing on 1, 3 or 5 acres. “Each class of animals has its own grazing and nutrient requirements.” Workers can divide fields in a matter of minutes into paddocks.

“The legume program in the grazing of beef allows us



Debbie Blank | The Herald-Tribune

“Straw and hay mulches are a real important part of what we do,” Mac Stone reports. They not only discourage weeds, but also decompose, enriching the soil.

to bring almost nothing onto the farm.” He added, “The ruminant animal is truly the basis of our nutrient management program.”

A hilly pasture behind the house is where chicken layers and broilers are. The family gets 30,000-40,000 eggs from that pasture. Meat chickens are moved twice a day to prevent disease, including coccidiosis, a parasitic disease that can be fatal.

“Turkeys are excellent grazers,” and eat less feed than chickens, preferring clover with lime. In the farm’s turkey field, “the fescue is going away. The bluegrass and orchard grass are coming. We didn’t plant any of those things. Turkeys are chasing sugar, digging into the ground and helping us out.”

Like many organic farmers, Stone is an advocate of

Bacillus thuringiensis, commonly called Bt, a soil-dwelling bacterium that he uses as a pesticide. It’s regarded as environmentally friendly, with little or no effect on humans, wildlife, pollinators and most other beneficial insects.

His prescription? “A little bit of Bt, some beneficial insects, buy poultry feed ... Every year the soils get better ... and the insect pressure goes down.”

In his presentation, Stone showed a slide of a cave found near their home. “People have lived off of this land” for hundreds of years. “It’s a reminder you’ve got to take care of” it.

Debbie Blank can be contacted at debbie.blank@batesvilleheraldtribune.com or 812-934-4343, Ext. 113.

Program information available to area farmers

Acreage Reporting

Filing an accurate acreage report at your local FSA office can prevent the loss of benefits for a variety of programs. Failed acreage is acreage that was timely planted with the intent to harvest, but because of disaster related conditions,

the crop failed before it could be brought to harvest. Prevented planting must be reported no later than 15 days after the final planting date. Annual acreage reports are required for most Farm Service Agency programs. Annual crop report deadlines vary based

on region, crop, permanent vs. annual crop type, NAP or non-NAP crop and fall or winter seeding. Consult your local FSA office for deadlines in your area. Most crops (corn, soybeans, tobacco, CRP) in Ripley County have a July 15th crop reporting deadline.

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AGRICULTURE

FSA Loan programs can be important to farm operations

Direct Loans

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating Loans to producers who want to establish, maintain or strengthen their farm or ranch. FSA loan officers process, approve and service direct loans.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and to make farm improvements.

The maximum loan amount for both direct farm ownership and operating loans is \$300,000 and a down payment is not required. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your local FSA office for more information or to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan.

Guaranteed Loan Program

FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. Farmers and ranchers apply for a guaranteed loan through a lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating pur-



File photo

poses. Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation or to refinance debt.

Guaranteed operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to \$1,399,000. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your lender or local FSA farm loan office for more information on guaranteed loans.

Youth Loans for Livestock Projects

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connec-

tion with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the

youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

Stop by the county office for help preparing and processing the application forms.

USDA Adds More Eligible Commodities for Farm Storage Facility Loans

New Provisions Increase On-Farm Storage for Dairy, Flowers, Meats

FSA's Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program, which provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade storage facilities, will now include dairy, flowers and meats as eligible commodities.

For 15 years, the FSFL program has provided affordable financing, allowing American farmers and ranchers to construct or expand storage on the farm and by adding eligible commodities; these low-interest loans will help even more family farmers to expand on-site storage.

The new commodities eligible for facility loans include floriculture, hops, rye, milk, cheese, butter,

yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Commodities already eligible for the loans include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, and fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities.

Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

To learn more about the FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport or contact your local FSA county office.

the operation of the farm

- Agrees to participate in the loan assessment, borrower training & financial management program sponsored by FSA

- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

Additional program information, loan applications and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Microloans

Microloans will be available to also help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers, and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farms Service Agency.

The microloan is another USDA resource for America's farmers and ranchers to utilize especially as new and beginning farmers and ranchers look for the assistance they need to get started. To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans or contact your local FSA office.

— CNHI News

Beginning Farmer Loans

FSA assists beginning farmer to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in

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AGRICULTURE

Ag Day 2016: Honors Stewards of a Healthy Planet

I have the tremendous opportunity to work with some of the greatest employees in the federal government and we have the pleasure to serve and work for the American farmer. On behalf of Indiana Farm Service Agency (FSA) employees, we all are proud to be partners with the men and women who farm in the great state of Indiana.

Agriculture is an honorable profession and we are privileged to do our part to help. We salute you – the American Farmer – on National Ag Day, March 15.

National Agriculture Day – a day designated each year by the Agriculture Council of America to celebrate the accomplishments of agriculture. Indiana FSA joins the council in recognizing farmers for their contributions to the nation's outstanding quality of life. This year's theme is Agriculture: Stewards of a Healthy Planet.

Agricultural producers



Julia A. Wickard

STATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
INDIANA FARM SERVICE AGENCY

are the original stewards of the land. They understand the fragility of the land and are well aware that there are increasingly fewer producers and fewer acres for production. They want to sustain it and protect what they have.

According to the 2012 Agriculture Census, there are 3.2 million farmers in the United States. These American farmers constantly seek new and sustainable ways to operate. Through these efforts, they preserve wildlife, protect water sources and reduce soil erosion. They also use precision production practices to greatly reduce their footprint on

the environment.

Last year, 912 million acres produced food and fiber. Not only are American farmers, who represent one percent of the U.S. population, devoted to taking care of the land, but they're committed to feeding the nation and producing imports that help the country balance its trade.

Every year, farmers face challenges such as natural disasters, downturns in markets and plant disease, which can financially cripple their operations, but they persevere. During such times, FSA provides financial relief through various conservation, disaster assistance, commodity safety-net programs and low interest-rate credit outlined in the 2014 Farm Bill.

FSA's programs provide Indiana's 58,600 farms with the ability to lead the nation and rank among the top states in commodities, livestock and poultry. Agriculture has been an important part of Indiana's heritage since the first settlers

discovered the rich farm ground in the heartland of the new territories. Covering more than 83 percent of our land, Indiana agriculture directly generates more than \$25 billion toward Indiana's gross domestic product.

I am honored to administer programs that enable our producers to manage their risks when the agriculture industry faces hardship. On behalf of the Indiana Farm Service Agency, I would like to thank American farmers for continuing to feed our nation and the world during every circumstance.

March 15 is National Ag Day. To find more Ag Day information and events, visit the sponsoring Agriculture Council of America at www.agday.org.

Julia A. Wickard is the State Executive Director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency in Indiana. She may be contacted at julie.wickard@in.usda.gov

30th Anniversary of CRP

Conservation Reserve Program

Dec. 23, 2015 marked the 30th anniversary of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a federally funded program that assists agricultural producers with the cost of restoring, enhancing and protecting certain grasses, shrubs and trees to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.

The Robert and Ellen Mulford farm here in Ripley County Indiana was featured nationally as the lead off article for FSA Fence Post News in celebrating the 30th Anniversary of CRP. We will once again be featuring their farm with a public field day in late May. For details, contact the local FSA or SWCD office at (812) 689-6410.

CRP establishes long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands

The Conservation Reserve Program establishes long-term resource-conserving plant species such as approved grasses and trees to reduce soil erosion, protect the Nation's ability to produce food and fiber, reduce sedimentation in streams and lakes, improves water quality, establish wildlife habi-

tat, and enhance forest and wetland resources.

CRP encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as grass waterways, native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filter strips and riparian buffers. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

Producer may currently enroll through CRP Continuous Sign-up which is offered on a continuous basis.

Most Common Continuous Practices in Ripley County include:

- CP5A Field Wind-break
- CP8A Grassed Waterways
- CP9 Shallow Water Areas
- CP21 Filter Strips
- CP22 Riparian Buffers
- CP33 Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds (Quail Habitat)
- CP38E SAFE Native Grasses (Henslow Sparrow Priority Area)
- CP42 Pollinator Habitat

Producers wishing to enroll into CRP for the first time or wishing to re-enroll their 2016 expiring CRP acreage should contact the Ripley County FSA Office at (812) 689-6410 Ext 2 or via email to angie.stuehnenberg@in.usda.gov to set up an appointment.

Fun facts: About the food we eat

This array of facts are concerned with trivial and not-so-trivial information about food. We also compiled a list of facts on plants, animals and agriculture in the U.S.: Ag Day Fun Facts: Flora, Fauna and Food for Thought.

Corn Poppin' Facts

Popcorn pops because water is stored in a small circle of soft starch in each kernel. As the kernel is heated, the water heats, the droplet of moisture turns to steam and the steam builds

up pressure until the kernel finally explodes to many times its original volume.

Americans today consume 17.3 billion quarts of popped popcorn each year! The average American eats about 68 quarts!

While the first breakfast

cereal was made by adding sugar and milk to popped popcorn, a shortage of baking flours after World War II forced breadmakers to substitute up to 25% of wheat flour with ground

See **FOOD** / B6

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If you make a living in agriculture or an ag-related business, you should be a member. An annual membership is \$32.50. Select or Student memberships are \$15.00. Call Indiana Farm Bureau at 1-800-FARM-BUR (1-800-327-6287) for more information and an application. Or visit, www.infarmbureau.org.

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AGRICULTURE

FOOD

Continued from Page B5

popped popcorn. Over the years, popcorn also has been used as an ingredient in pudding, candy, soup, salad and entrees.

Popcorn's nutritional value comes from the fact that, like other cereal grains, its primary function is to provide the body with heat and energy.

Microwave popcorn is the same as other popcorn except the kernels are usually larger and the packaging is designed for maximum popability.

Cherrific!

The same chemicals that give tart cherries their color may relieve pain better than aspirin and ibuprofen in humans.

Eating about 20 tart cherries a day could reduce inflammatory pain and headache pain.

There are about 7,000 cherries on an average tart cherry tree (the number varies depending on the age of the tree, weather and growing conditions). It takes about 250 cherries to make a cherry pie, so each tree could produce enough cherries for 28 pies!

Today, in Michigan, there are almost 4 million cherry trees which annually produce 150 to 200 pounds of tart cherries.

Head Strong

Lettuce is a member of the sunflower family.

Darker Green lettuce leaves are more nutritious than lighter green leaves.

Americans eat about 30 pounds of lettuce every year. That's about five times more than what we ate in the early 1900s.

In the United States, lettuce is the second most popular fresh vegetable.

Almost all lettuce is packed right in the field.

About 25% of all iceberg lettuce is made into fresh cut salads.

What's up Doc?

The plant pigment that gives carrots and other vegetables their vivid orange color is Beta-Carotene. Fruits and Vegetables that are yellow/orange in color contain Beta-Carotene and carrots are one of the richest in this nutrient. Our bodies convert Beta-Carotene into Vitamin A.

The bright orange color of carrots tell you they're an excellent source of Vitamin A which is important for good eyesight, especially at night. Vitamin A helps your body fight infection, and keeps your skin and hair healthy!

Berry, Berry Good for You!

Blueberries are the second most popular berry in the United States.

Michigan and New Jersey produce 66% of all the blueberries in the United States, followed by North Carolina, Oregon and Washington.

Over 200 million pounds of blueberries are grown every year in North America.

Blueberries are first picked by hand to gather the best of the early fruit. Later, if the fruit is to be mechanically harvested, a harvesting machine goes through the field and gently shakes each bush so only the ripe blueberries drop off.

Blueberries are a good source of Vitamin C and fiber.

Cracking Up

In the U.S. in 1998, hens produced 6,657,000,000 dozen eggs - that's 6.657 billion dozen! After these eggs were laid, about two-thirds were sold in the shell and one third of them were broken - not by accident, but on purpose. Because after the eggs are broken out of their shells, they can be made into liquid, frozen, dried and specialty egg products.

The egg shell may have as many as 17,000 tiny

pores over its surface. Through them, the egg can absorb flavors and odors. Storing them in their cartons helps keep them fresh!

Eggs age more in one day at room temperature than in one week in the refrigerator.

Occasionally, a hen will produce double-yolked eggs throughout her egg-laying career. It is rare, but not unusual, for a young hen to produce an egg with no yolk at all.

It takes 24 to 26 hours for a hen to produce an egg; there is 30 minutes between each egg-producing cycle.

About 240 million laying hens produce about 5.5 billion dozen eggs per year in the United States.

Egg yolks are one of the few foods that naturally contain Vitamin D.

Going Bananas!

There are over 500 different types of bananas. That means if you ate a different kind of banana everyday, it would take almost a year and a half to eat every one!

Although generally regarded as a tree, this large tropical plant is really an herb. That means it does not have a woody trunk like a tree. The stalk is composed of leaf sheaths that overlap each other and grow from an underground stem called a rhizome.

The banana plant can grow as high as 20 feet tall. That's as big as a two-story house!

Bananas are about 99.5% fat free.

Bananas are a great source of potassium. Potassium helps build muscle power and keeps your body fluids in balance.

Banana's are most likely the first fruit ever to be grown on a farm.

Macaroni Mania

Pasta is one of America's favorite foods. Last year, 1.3 million pounds of pasta were sold in American grocery stores. If you lined up 1.3 million pounds of 16 oz.

spaghetti packages, it could circle the Earth's equator almost nine times! Noodles got their start in China, not Italy as many people might think.

Pasta made its way to the New World through the English who found it while traveling through Italy. The English made pasta by cooking it for about a half an hour and then smothering it with cream sauce and cheese. This was the beginning of Macaroni and Cheese!

America's first large pasta factory was built in Brooklyn, New York in 1848 by a Frenchman who would spread out his spaghetti strands on the roof to dry in the sunshine.

An Apple a Day

Apples are a member of the rose family.

Washington state grows the most apples in the U.S. The apples from one tree can fill 20 boxes every year.

Fresh apples float because 25 percent of their volume is air.

In the winter, apple trees need to "rest" for about 900-1,000 hours below 45 degrees Fahrenheit in order to flower and fruit properly.

If you grew 100 apple trees from the seeds of one tree, they would all be different.

Apples are high in fiber. There are more than 7,000 varieties of apples grown in the world.

Green Greek Goddess

The name asparagus comes from the Greek language and means "sprout" or "shoot."

Asparagus is a member of the Lily family.

Asparagus is related to onions, leeks, and garlic. One of the most popular varieties of green asparagus is named after Martha Washington, the wife of George Washington.

California grows about 70% of all the asparagus

grown in the United States. More than 50,000 tons of asparagus are grown in California every year.

Pumpkin Eater

Pumpkins were once recommended for removing freckles and curing snake bites!

Pumpkin flowers are edible.

Pumpkins are 90% water. Pumpkins are used for feed for animals.

Pumpkin seeds can be roasted as a snack.

Native Americans used pumpkin seeds for food and medicine.

In early colonial times, pumpkins were used as an ingredient for the crust of pies, not the filling.

The name "pumpkin" originated from "pepon", the Greek word for "large melon."

Pumpkins contain potassium and Vitamin A.

Stacking Up!

The batter used to make pancakes is almost exactly the same as the batter used to make regular cakes. The pancake batter is just a little thinner.

Pancakes have become so popular, that people don't just eat them for breakfast anymore. Many people like to eat pancakes for dinner!

On Pancake Day in Newfoundland (the day before Ash Wednesday, the beginning of lent), items are placed in the pancake batter before it is cooked to foretell the future for family members. If a boy received an item for a trade, it meant he would enter that trade. If a girl received an item for a trade, it meant she would marry a person from that trade.

Pretty Peachy

Peaches are a good source of Vitamin C.

The United States provides about one-fourth (25%) of the world's total supply of fresh peaches.

The peach is a member of the rose family and will have a sweet fragrance when ripe.

Most peaches that are imported to the United States during winter months come from Chile.

Peaches are the third most popular fruit grown in America.

Pizza Perfect

Americans eat approximately 100 acres of pizza each day, or 350 slices per second.

Each man, woman and child in America eats an average of 46 slices (23 pounds) of pizza a year.

Pepperoni is America's favorite topping (36 percent of all pizza orders we eat approximately 251,770,000 pounds a year!

In America, anchovies always rank last on the list of favorite toppings.

In 1830 pizza truly began with the opening of the world's first pizzeria. Port' Alba, the pizzas were cooked in an oven lined with lava from Mount Vesuvius, a volcano located on the Bay of Naples.

Pizza makers have tried virtually every type of food on pizzas, including peanut butter and jelly, bacon and eggs and mashed potatoes!

According to Domino's, some of the more popular international toppings are pickled ginger, minced mutton and tofu in India, squid (octopus) and Mayou Jaga (mayonnaise, potato and bacon) in Japan, and green peas in Brazil. In Russia, they serve pizza covered with mockba, which is a combination of sardines, tuna, mackerel, salmon and onions. In France, a popular combo is called the Flambee, with bacon, onion and fresh cream.

There are approximately 61,269 pizzerias in the United States.

Approximately 3 billion pizzas are sold in the U.S. each year.



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