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EPA May Miss Its Deadline For Deciding Whether To Raise The Ethanol Blend Rate. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson told *Reuters* the agency might have to work past the Dec. 1 deadline because it is still reviewing test results on how the higher blend rate would affect engines "across the board" – including cars, trucks, snow mobiles, motor boats and lawn mowers. Growth Energy and 54 ethanol manufacturers petitioned EPA in March to elevate the blend rate from the current 10% to 15%. During the comments period, TCFA submitted a letter to EPA opposing the proposed blend rate hike due to the likelihood it would inflate feedgrain prices. TCFA continues its efforts to prevent the blend rate from going higher.

The November Crop Production Report For Corn, which was released Tuesday, showed some modest adjustments. Because of the late crop development, excessive wet conditions and slow harvest progress, USDA did make a 1.3 bu. per acre adjustment on yields to 162.9 bu. per acre. As a result, the projected crop size was reduced to 12.921 billion bu. from the 13.018 billion bu. estimate in October. Due to the slow export pace, USDA has lowered the export estimate to 2.1 billion bu., a reduction of 50 million bu. The reduction in exports lowered the total usage estimate by 50 million bu. from the previous estimate to new estimate of 12.980 billion bu.. While the reduction in the export estimate partially offsets the reduced production estimate, the ending stocks projection was reduced to 1.625 billion bu. from 1.672 billion bu. As a result, the estimated average farm price forecast was increased to \$3.35 to \$3.55 per bu., up 20¢ on both the top and bottom of the range.

The First Year Of Mandatory COOL Saddled Retailers With Higher Costs while providing no apparent benefit for consumers, according to participants in a panel discussion at the TCFA Annual Convention.

Cathy East, group director of perishables for Safeway, said COOL "adds a tremendous amount of cost in the form of labor, in the form of recordkeeping, in the form of the time it takes to spend with an auditor in your store." She noted that time spent complying with COOL is time taken "away from your customers."

Dave Weaber, economic analyst for Food Lion, said grocery customers have not shown particular enthusiasm for COOL. "I don't think our consumers are willing to pay for it (COOL), and I don't think they do pay for it today. I think it trickles back down through the system clear to the cow-calf level through margins."

On other issues, East and Weaber said beef products labeled "organic" or "natural" remain no more than niche products due to factors such as cost and uncertainty about how those terms are defined. They also urged beef producers to develop more ready-to-eat and easy-to-cook products to meet the needs of today's consumers.

The panel discussion was moderated by Jim Henger, executive director of channel marketing for NCBA.

Beef Producers Are In A Growth Market, Jim Wiesemeyer of Informa Economics told TCFA members at their annual Convention in Amarillo recently.

Wiesemeyer said the decades ahead will be good for protein producers because of what he calls "the rise of the rest": the dramatic increase in both population and wealth occurring in Asia and Latin America.

Already, the trend toward increased meat consumption around the world is well-established, according to Wiesemeyer, who said beef consumption itself is up 19% since 1990. "You've got a success story with all your good marketing programs, with all your good production practices. Global meat consumption is growing because of population and diet changes."

Noting the recent UN-FAO report, which estimated a 70% increase in global food production will be needed by 2050 to meet growing demand, Wiesemeyer said you cannot get there without modern agricultural technologies. "I'm not saying organic agriculture is bad. You can co-exist with it. But you're not going to feed this world on organic agriculture production practices."

However, Wiesemeyer attached a caveat to his optimistic outlook: Producers ability to capitalize on increasing demand relies upon the U.S. government's willingness to let them compete. Much of his

presentation dealt with government actions that have or could hinder producers such as COOL, climate change legislation and ethanol policy.

Taiwan Is Now Open To Bone-In Beef Products From The U.S., a spokesperson for the U.S. Trade Representative told *Reuters* this week. USDA had put a temporary hold on certifying shipments of newly processed beef to Taiwan as officials worked to achieve a clear understanding of Taiwan's new import protocol. The U.S. agreed to a transition period during which beef exports will be limited to product from animals under 30 months of age.

The E. Coli Threat Has Actually Been Reduced In Recent Years, contrary to what the recent barrage of media coverage would suggest. A report released by the American Meat Institute Foundation shows that since 2000 *E. coli* O157:H7 prevalence on fresh ground beef products has declined 45%. According to CDC, human *E. coli* O157:H7 infections have declined 44% since 2000 and human listeriosis infections have stayed at a very low level after declining 40% before 2000. (It is important to note that human infections are linked to a variety of foods – not just meat products – but CDC does not currently provide information about the source of illnesses and outbreaks.)

The data on *E. coli* is included in the Foundation's 10-year report on its food safety initiative. To read the full report, go to <http://amif.org/ht/a/GetDocumentAction/i/54679>.

An International Antibiotic Resistance Task Force Will Be Established, according to a joint declaration by the White House and the EU. *Feedstuffs* reported the announcement was made following a Nov. 3 summit in Washington D.C. The joint declaration says the task force will address "urgent antimicrobial resistance issues focused on appropriate therapeutic use of antimicrobial drugs in the medical and veterinary communities, prevention of both health care- and community-associated drug-resistant infections and strategies for improving the pipeline of new antimicrobial drugs, which could be better addressed by intensified cooperation" between the U.S. and the EU.

An Office Of Humane Slaughter Within FSIS Would Be Created under legislation that U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif) plans to introduce, *Meatingplace.com* reported.

Feinstein said her planned legislative proposal would authorize new funding to hire additional FSIS inspectors and close any loopholes that allow the harvest of downed calves. She said creating an Office of Humane Slaughter within FSIS would "elevate the important responsibilities of the HMSA (Humane Methods of Slaughter Act) inspectors."

NCBA Has Begun A New Media Effort Called "Food Fight." Intended to help beef producers respond to critics of agriculture, Food Fight will include newspaper ads, letters-to-the-editor and postings on social media sites like Twitter and Facebook. The effort is being launched prior to Thanksgiving to offer a holiday reminder that agriculture is among our nation's many blessings.

To Help Promote U.S. Food And Ag Products Overseas, USDA Is Allocating \$234 Million to 70 U.S. trade organizations. Funding comes from two programs: The Market Access Program (MAP) and the Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program (FMD). Among the recipients is USMEF, which is receiving \$15.9 million under MAP and \$1.8 million under FMD.

Applications For The Environmental Stewardship Award are due by Feb. 24. Since 1991, the award has annually honored cattle operations from seven regions of the U.S. for their excellent stewardship and commitment to conservation. For more information and to obtain an application packet, go to http://www.environmentalstewardship.org/CMDocs/ESAP/2010_ENVN_Nomination_Packet.pdf.

The Texas A&M University Fit-To-Finish Show Cattle Camp is scheduled Dec.12-13 at the Pearce Pavilion on the campus of Texas A&M University in College Station. "There is no question that the 4-H and FFA members who exhibit cattle in the state of Texas represent some of the most competitive and well-respected exhibitors in the nation. The concept of the upcoming camp is to emphasize the grooming and fitting skills needed to maximize a student's cattle project," said Paul Maulsby, event coordinator and Texas A&M Beef Center manager. To find out more about the event, go to <http://agnews.tamu.edu/showstory.php?id=1501>.

Please note: All links are still available at <http://www.tcfa.org> under This Week's Newsletter links.