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Solutions for Out-of-School Youth Agricultural Trends Newsletter

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Director's Message

Welcome to the second edition of the SOSY Agricultural Trends Newsletter. We hope that you find the information useful as you plan your MEP programs. In this month's issue, you will find articles that run the gamut from apples to bees to chickens.

For those of you reading the newsletter for the first time, it has been specifically created to inform MEP staff across the country of trends, current research, and agricultural news that can potentially effect where migrants come and go to work. This can affect all eligible migrant students ages 3-21, including out-of-school youth. It is important to utilize this information in order to track in a proactive manner where OSY may be moving and working.

Please visit our Solutions for Out-of-School Youth website at www.osymigrant.org for more information on identification and recruitment as well as providing supportive and/instructional services to Out-of-School youth.

Tracie Kalic

Solutions for Out-of-School Youth, Director



Washington State Apple Shipments Are Up!

Washington marketers set a monthly record for apple shipments in November, then promptly shattered that mark in December. The growth has continued into January.

Smaller crops of apples in competing states and countries and damage to other fruit and citrus crops are fueling the strong season. Others say also at play is more retail shelf space due to an economy that is beginning to stir and a growing interest in health and nutrition. In addition, export demand is up more than 11 percent this year.

Small crops in Eastern states, primarily New York and Michigan, have retailers turning earlier to Washington, which



has the majority of the remaining domestic supply.

Jon DeVaney, executive director of the Yakima Valley Growers-Shippers Association, said freeze damage and drought hurt production elsewhere in

the United States.

"We have a greater share of the national and world apple supply, which allows us to take advantage of other peoples' absence from the market," he said.

The industry shipped 11.4 million boxes of apples in December, eclipsing the record set in November of 11.2 million boxes, according to records maintained by the association. The previous record was December 2008, with 10.7 million boxes.



If this long run trend continues there will be likely fewer feed yards, and fewer beef packers and processors as well.

There are now 53 countries whose nationals are eligible to participate in the H-2A program this coming year.



Nebraska Livestock Economist Concerned with Cattle Market Structure

Record feeder cattle prices are positive in the short-term. But University of Nebraska livestock marketing economist Darrell Mark is concerned about the impact on the overall cattle market structure. He says in an attempt to satisfy the short run demand for beef with a smaller cattle inventory, the industry has been slaughtering more females—both cull cows and bred heifers.

“If you look at the ratio of females-to-male slaughter, you can definitely see in the last couple of years that we’ve been killing more females relative to males,” Mark says. “It’s not just because we’ve been killing more cull cows, but it’s also because we’ve been killing fewer steers out of feedyards—and more heifers.”

Mark says the female-to-steer slaughter ratio has been increasing for the past five years—and was near 100 percent in 2010. “What I’ve noted, historically, over the last two to three decades is when you have that female-to-male slaughter ratio near 100 percent, you continue to see declines in beef cow numbers for at least the next two to three years,” he says, “and you never tend to see much growth in cattle numbers until you see that ratio drop below about 90 percent. We haven’t been below 90 percent since 2006.”

Mark expects the annual cattle inventory report on January 28th to show a continued decline in the nation’s cow herd. He says the impact reaches beyond the cow-calf sector.

“I think we’ve gotten pushed now in the last year or so to the point where we’ve got feed yards and meat packers running far enough below what would be optimal capacity utilization rates, that it’s going to start having a bigger and bigger impact on them all of the time,” Mark says, “in terms of how many shifts they run or how many employees they need—all those types of things and I expect to see that in both sectors.”

Mark says if the long run trend towards fewer cattle continues, there will likely be fewer feed yards, and fewer beef packers and processors as well. He says that could have a significant impact on the communities where they are located.

Changes to the H2A Program— Workers Eligible from New Countries

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced in January 2011 that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in consultation with the Department of State, has identified 53 countries whose nationals are eligible to participate in the H-2A programs for the coming year.

The H-2A program allows U.S. employers to bring foreign nationals to the United States to fill temporary agricultural jobs. USCIS, with limited exception, approves petitions only for nationals of countries designated by the Secretary of Homeland Security as eligible to participate in the H-2A

program.

Effective Jan. 18, 2011, nationals from the following countries are eligible to participate in the H-2A and H-2B programs: Argentina, Australia,



Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary,

Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Mexico, Moldova, Nauru, The Netherlands, Nicaragua, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Samoa, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, South Korea, Tonga, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, and Vanuatu. Of these countries, the following were designated for the first time this year: Barbados, Estonia, Fiji, Hungary, Kiribati, Latvia, Macedonia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu

2010: A Good Year for Delmarva's Chicken Industry

The Delmarva Peninsula, an area on the East Coast of US that encompasses parts of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, has a poultry industry that produces 600 million chickens a year.

Record high feed ingredient prices, notably corn and soybeans, made it much more expensive to produce chickens in this region in 2010.

Rising energy costs add to the financial challenges for all sectors of Delmarva's chicken industry. Chicken houses depend upon propane gas and electricity to ensure optimum growing conditions to maintain the welfare of the birds. Rising motor fuel costs are affecting all industry vehicles, such as trucks needed to carry eggs, chicks, birds, finished products and feed.

America's two largest chicken export nations, China and Russia, bought very little chicken last year. Fortunately, sales to other nations have helped fill that void but American exports are expected to be down compared to the previous year.

The poor condition of the American economy has hurt Delmarva's chicken industry as consumers are eating out less often. While retail and supermarket sales have held their own, food service sales have lagged.

Nationally, the US Department of Agriculture predicted that the 2010 broiler chicken production will exceed 2009 and the 2011 estimate is for more chicken meat than in 2010, but the rate of growth is slowing. High corn prices for 2011 coupled with relatively weak prices for broiler products are causing broiler companies to scale back

plans for production increases for 2011, according to the Livestock, Dairy and Poultry Outlook Report from USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS).

Despite the challenges in 2010 and likely challenges in 2011, Delmarva's chicken industry remains a bright spot for Delmarva's economy. There have been no major employee layoffs or plant closings. Delmarva produces close to 600 million chickens per year, thanks to nearly 15,000 chicken company employees and 1,700 farm families that raise the birds. Together, in 2009, these people earned more than \$613 million, a huge amount of money circulating through the local economy. It is estimated that close to 100,000 people have jobs because of Delmarva's chicken industry and the chicken industry money that is spent and re-spent many times.



The Delmarva Peninsula produces close to 600 million chickens a year and employs nearly 15,000 workers

Dwindling Rain in the Southern US

A drought is an extended period of months or years when a region notes a deficiency in its water supply. Generally, this occurs when a region receives consistently below average precipitation. It can have a substantial impact on the ecosystem and agriculture of the affected region.

Although droughts can persist for several years, even a short, intense drought can cause significant damage and harm the local economy.

While wet and snowy weather has dominated the western U.S., persistent drought conditions are likely to linger in the Southern Plains and Southeast through mid to late spring

2011, according to NOAA's National Weather Service. La Niña has kept storms and most of their precipitation in the north, leaving the South drier than normal.

In Florida, 51 percent of the state was in severe to extreme drought by the end of 2010.

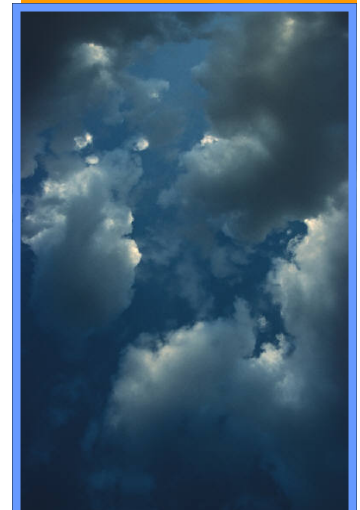
Drought happens periodically. At the worst of the USA's most recent drought, in August 2007, almost 50% of the country was involved.

In early 2010, about 7% of the country was in a drought, according to federal scientists.

The only part of the USA in "extreme" drought then was a small fraction of Hawaii.

In 2007, gigantic portions of the Southeast were in the worst drought in more than a century, sparking water wars among Georgia, Alabama and Florida.

La Niña has developed 13 times since 1950, and the current La Niña ranks as the sixth strongest. The question climate experts are asking now is whether it will fade with the approach of summer or continue into next year.



Fears for Crops as Shock Figures from America Show Scale of Bee Catastrophe in 2010

Excerpts below from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/may/02/food-fear-mystery-beehives-collapse>



Disturbing evidence that honeybees are in terminal decline has emerged from the United States where, for the fourth year in a row, more than a third of colonies have failed to survive the winter.



The SOSY Agricultural Trends Newsletter supports Objective 1 of the SOSY Consortium Incentive Grant: Each year of the project, increase the number of OSY identified and recruited.

Disturbing evidence that honeybees are in terminal decline has emerged from the United States where, for the fourth year in a row, more than a third of colonies have failed to survive the winter.

The decline of the country's estimated 2.4 million beehives began in 2006, when a phenomenon dubbed colony collapse disorder (CCD) led to the disappearance of hundreds of thousands of colonies. Since then more than three million colonies in the US and billions of honeybees worldwide have died and scientists are no nearer to knowing what is causing the catastrophic fall in numbers.

The number of managed honeybee colonies in the US fell by 33.8% last winter, according to the annual survey by the Apiary Inspectors of America and the US government's Agricultural Research Service (ARS).

The collapse in the global honeybee population is a major threat to crops. It is estimated that a third of everything we eat depends upon honeybee pollination.

Potential causes range from parasites, such as the blood-sucking varroa mite, to viral and bacterial infections, pesticides and poor nutrition stemming from intensive farming methods. The disappearance of so many colonies

has also been dubbed "Mary Celeste syndrome" due to the absence of dead bees in many of the empty hives.

US scientists have found 121 different pesticides in samples of bees, wax and pollen, lending credence to the notion that pesticides are a key problem. "We believe that some subtle interactions between nutrition, pesticide exposure and other stressors are converging to kill colonies," said Jeffery Pettis, of the ARS's bee research laboratory.

A global review of honeybee deaths by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) reported last week that there was no one single cause, but pointed the finger at the "irresponsible use" of pesticides that may damage bee health and make them more susceptible to diseases.

Dave Hackenberg of Hackenberg Apiaries, the Pennsylvania-based commercial beekeeper who first raised the alarm about CCD, said that last year had been the worst yet for bee losses, with 62% of his 2,600 hives dying between May 2009 and April 2010. "It's getting worse," he said. "The AIA survey doesn't give you the full picture because it is only measuring losses through the winter. In the summer the bees are exposed to lots of pesticides. Farmers mix them together and no one has any idea what the effects might be."

Pettis agreed that losses in some commercial operations are running at 50% or greater. "Continued losses of this magnitude are not economically sustainable for commercial beekeepers," he said, adding that a solution may be years away. "Look at Aids, they have billions in research dollars and a causative agent and still no cure. Research takes time and beehives are complex organisms."

WHY BEES MATTER

Flowering plants require insects for pollination. The most effective is the honeybee, which pollinates 90 commercial crops worldwide. As well as most fruits and vegetables – including apples, oranges, strawberries, onions and carrots – they pollinate nuts, sunflowers and oil-seed rape. Coffee, soy beans, clovers – like alfalfa, which is used for cattle feed – and even cotton are all dependent on honeybee pollination to increase yields.

Mankind has been managing and transporting bees for centuries to pollinate food and produce honey, nature's natural sweetener and anti-septic. Their extinction would mean not only a colorless, meatless diet of cereals and rice, and cotton less clothes, but a landscape without orchards, allotments and meadows of wildflowers – and the collapse of the food chain for birds and animals.