



LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU NEWS

THE VOICE OF LOUISIANA AGRICULTURE

Louisiana Young Farmers: Congressional Gridlock Impacts American Consumers, Taxpayers

By Michael Danna
FB News Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. – John Compton knows that the rice payment he receives from the government is sometimes the difference between money in the bank and bankruptcy. This year will mark Compton's third rice crop. As a young farmer just starting out on

his own, knowing those federal supports for rice will be there helps him sleep a little easier at night.

"It's been something that me and my banker have been able to count on," said the 29-year-old rice farmer from Jeff Davis Parish. "He

knows I'm good for the loan, but that government payment is his guarantee. It's mine too in a lot of ways."

Compton was one of a handful of young Louisiana farmers who traveled to Washington D.C. March 4-6 to visit with the state's congressional delegation. In meetings with Louisiana's members of Congress they impressed upon lawmakers the need for a comprehensive, fully funded farm bill to the

necessity of a workable immigration policy that keeps workers from Mexico employed on U.S. farms.

Compton traveled on behalf of the Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee with Amelia Levin Kent, a cattle producer and landscaper from Clinton, Oil City cattleman Marty Wooldridge and St. Mary Parish sugarcane farmer Wilson Judice. During their three-day visit they also sat in on economic and farm policy briefings presented by the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Like all Americans, the young farmers voiced their displeasure with congressional gridlock and the across-the-board budget cuts that became effective March 1. Cuts in federal farm spending are expected to top \$27 billion, something Compton and the others said will impact farmers first, but quickly makes its way to the grocery store check out counter.

"Food is more expensive than it's ever been," said Marty Wooldridge. "When farmers get hit that ripple effect is quickly felt down the food distribution chain. Shoppers are going to feel it as well. If you think food is expensive

now, just wait until farmers start feeling the hit from the lack of farm program payments."

Congress, unable to muster support for a new farm bill last year, or any federal spending for that matter, extended the current farm law until September 2013. Additionally, lawmakers plan to cut some \$27 billion from the current farm bill. That comes on top of more than \$18 billion already cut from farm program spending over the last nine years, according to the Government Accounting Office.

Amelia Levin Kent, who along with her husband Russell raises cattle and ornamentals, told members of the state's congressional delegation that if farm program spending is cut, producers must have viable alternatives to protect both their income and the nation's food supply.

"The farm economy is highly cyclical and it changes like the weather," Kent told Rep. John Fleming, R-La. "This is why we shouldn't just look at current economic conditions on the farm as a predicate for setting long term farm policies. Crop insurance can never replace

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Representatives of Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation's Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee Amelia Levin Kent, John Compton, Marty Wooldridge and Wilson Judice visited with Sen. David Vitter (R-La.) via webcam on their annual visit to the nation's capital.

California: Producers Say It's the Toughest Place In the Country to Farm

California ag regulations give La. farmers idea of results when state bureaucracy runs wild

FB News Staff Reports

SANTA MARIA, CALIF. – When Darin Gee talks about how much California's regulations cost his farm, his face sometimes turns as red as the strawberries he grows.

Before he ever picks the first strawberry he has \$40,000 per acre invested in his crop. That's right, not \$40,000 total, but \$40,000 per acre. When multiplied by 680 acres the total is a staggering \$27.2 million. You've got to sell a lot of strawberries to recover that cost. And while those costs include labor, inputs, equipment, insurance and the like, it's the regulations that bear a hefty price tag.

See California, page 7

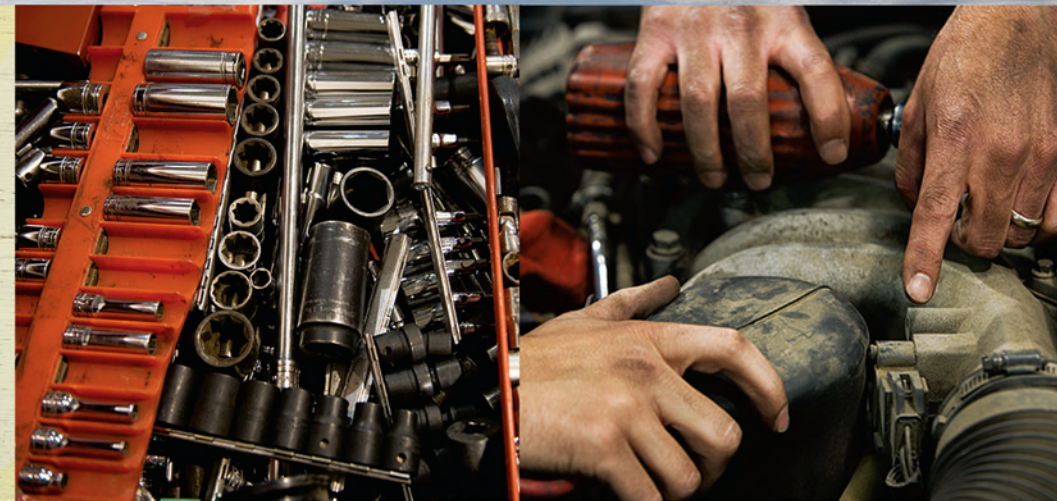


Wesley Ridgedell, left and Butch Oaks, center, listen as Santa Maria strawberry grower Darin Gee explains how state regulations are driving up his cost of production. Ridgedell and Oaks were among two dozen Louisiana farmers who traveled to Santa Barbara County in February. Photo by Michael Danna.



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² Ownership dip costs based on Vincentric 2013 Model Level Analysis of full-size pickups in the U.S. retail market.



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LFB Radio Network Merges with LA Radio Network

Move Creates One of South's Largest Ag Radio Networks

FB News Staff Reports

The Louisiana Farm Bureau Agri-news Radio Network (LFBARN) is one of the largest farm networks in the South, created on August 6, 2012 by the merger of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Radio Network's farm broadcasting operations with the Louisiana Radio Network's agri-news division.

LFBARN has a combined 42 affiliates in Louisiana and Mississippi. LRN President Jim Engster said the merger represents the largest consolidation of Louisiana stations that carry farm news.

"This merger gives us both an opportunity to improve our farm news presence across the state," Engster said.

LRN launched the Louisiana Agri-news Network in 1976, offering several daily agriculture reports for the state's farmers and produced in cooperation with the Farm Bureau. In 1998, the Farm Bureau began the Louisiana Farm Bureau Radio Network with 22 affiliates statewide.

In 2008, both organizations began sharing farm news and commodities prices. Ronnie Anderson, president of the Louisiana Farm Bureau, said merging the networks represents the next logical step.

"This is an opportunity for us to increase public awareness of the important role farmers and ranchers play in our daily lives," Anderson said. "It's also a chance to showcase the economic impact that farming has on our state while keeping residents updated on things going on in their communities."

Neil Melancon, general manager of the Farm Bureau network, will share LFBARN broadcasting duties with Don Molino, LRN's farm director since 1987.

"We'll be able to get out into the field more often, bringing listeners a wider range of stories than ever before," Molino said. "For our affiliates, it means more concise broadcasts and greater local revenue-generating potential."

LFBARN has a variety of programs that air at the times when farmers need them, with market news, analysis and the latest events in agriculture. In addition to offering informative local news features, we also present national and international news and tell Louisiana producers how actions on the national scene will affect their operations here at home.

Founded in 1974, Louisiana Radio Network provides 71 radio stations throughout Louisiana and parts of Mississippi with news, sports and agri-news. LRN also publishes Tiger Rag, "The Bible of LSU Sports," since 1978, and presents the annual Louisiana Farmer of the Year award.

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICES FOR THE 2013 LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION, INC. STATE CONVENTION

(Editor's Note: While all meetings of the 91st annual convention of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation's affiliated companies are scheduled to begin at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013, the meetings may begin earlier or later, depending on the adjournment of the voting delegates' session.)

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION, INC.

Notice is hereby given to all members of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, Inc. and to all members of any Farm Bureau organization affiliated therewith, that the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, Inc., will hold its 91st annual meeting June 27 through June 30, 2013, at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La., and that the meeting of the House of Voting Delegates shall be held in conjunction therewith for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU MARKETING ASSOCIATION, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Marketing Association, Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU SERVICE COMPANY, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Service Company, Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU INVESTMENT CORPORATION

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Investment Corporation will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU ENTERPRISES, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Enterprises, Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

AgriPAC

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of AgriPAC will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Foundation, Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013

for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA BROKERAGE OUTLET, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of Louisiana Brokerage Outlet, Inc., will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the policyholders of Louisiana Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

Louisiana Farm Bureau Donates Food, Supplies to Monroe, New Orleans Ronald McDonald House Charities

FB News Staff Reports

BATON ROUGE – Ronald McDonald House Charities in Monroe and New Orleans received food and cash donations from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation in honor of National Food Checkout Week.

Food Checkout Week commemorates the time when the average American consumer has earned enough money to pay the

entire year's food bill. Food Checkout Week 2013 was celebrated Sunday, Feb. 17 through Feb. 22. The theme of this year's events was stretching your food dollar with healthy, nutritious food. Louisiana's donations took place March 18 in Monroe and March 20 in New Orleans to better accommodate the schedules of each charity.

The Farm Bureau's Women's Leadership Committee organized this year's event by collecting Louisiana foodstuffs such as sweet potatoes, milk, Creole gumbo mixes and sugarcane products, as well as washcloths, towels and other household items such as linens and paper products from the state's cotton and timber industries. This is the 17th year the organization has donated food to the Ronald McDonald House Charities.

The food, supplies and monetary donations will be used to help feed visiting families staying at both locations of Louisiana Ronald McDonald House charities. Denise Cannatella, a grain producer from Melville, in St. Landry Parish, and chair of the Farm Bureau's Women's Leadership Committee, said her organization looks forward to Food Checkout Week each year as a way to celebrate farming and showcase how farmers reach out to their local communities.

"We get so much positive feedback from the people at these charities," Cannatella said. "We also get an opportunity to prove just how generous our farmers are. This is just one way farmers and ranchers get involved in their local communities throughout the year."

In addition to the Ronald McDonald House donations, Farm Bureau women were able to reach out to consumers in Thibodaux, La., by conducting a consumer education program at the local farmers' market.

"Shoppers today want to make every penny count," Cannatella continued. "We show consumers how to compare products and use recipes we provide to prepare meals that are both nutritious and affordable. It's about getting the most value into the shopping cart."

Food Checkout Week, a national initiative begun in 1998, celebrates the abundance and affordability of food in the U.S. The average American household spends only about 10 percent of its annual disposable income on food, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Ronald McDonald House charities provide a home away from home for families of critically ill children receiving care or treatment in Monroe and New Orleans-area hospitals. The Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation is a private, non-profit organization representing the state's farmers, ranchers and rural residents.



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a Farm Bill because the two serve different functions. Crop insurance generally focuses on insuring production risks while the Farm Bill generally focuses on price. Producers need both."

Unfortunately, Kent said, crop insurance does not currently meet the needs of many southern producers, as evidenced by low participation and coverage levels. She said consumers also need to understand the situation and many Louisiana farmers currently find themselves in.

"Everyone should care about the state of the farm economy, not just those directly involved in agriculture," she continued. "Agriculture boasts a rare trade surplus, and it generates hundreds of billions of dollars in economic activity each year. Here in Louisiana it's the No. 2 income generator behind oil and gas. Many people don't know that."

The four young farmers also voiced their concerns over increased government regulations and migrant labor issues. Wilson Judice, who planted his first cane crop on his own last year, said he depends on migrant workers from Mexico to plant and harvest his sugarcane. Without them, he said, his farm could not operate.

"You can shut my operation down," he told U.S. Sen.

David Vitter via web-based video conference call. "There no one locally who wants to work on my farm. I'm a small operator and totally dependent on workers from Mexico. I'd love to hire locally, but no one wants the job. Without these (migrant) workers the reality is sugar farming in much of my parish would simply cease to exist."

During briefings with American Farm Bureau policy staffers, the young farmers heard details of pending water regulations, as well as EPA crackdowns on on-farm fuel storage. The agency's Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures (SPCC) rule is scheduled to go into effect for aboveground oil storage capacity on farms beginning May 10, 2013. The law would require farmers storing more than 1,350 gallons of fuel to build retaining walls around their fuel storage tanks, even those on wheels. Wilson Judice said his farm has never spilled a drop of diesel and that the federal requirement could cost him nearly \$100,000 in construction and compliance costs.

"I buy diesel in bulk and go through it pretty quickly," Judice said. "It usually goes from the delivery truck, to the storage tank to the tractor or harvester. And believe me, I'm careful with it. At \$4 a gallon it's too expensive to spill even one drop."

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South Louisiana Rice Planting Complete, North Louisiana Rice Producers Gearing Up for Season

By **BRUCE SCHULTZ**
Special to the LFB News from the LSU AgCenter

CROWLEY, La. – Rice planting in the southern part of Louisiana is wrapping up, and north Louisiana farmers are getting ready to plant.

“For a lot of farmers, it’s done,” said Steve Linscombe, director of the LSU AgCenter Rice Research Station near Crowley. “I think down here in the southern part of the state, we’re 80-90 percent planted. Farmers had more rice planted in a shorter period of time than I personally can recall.”

That will mean that a large amount of acreage will be ready for harvest at the same time, Linscombe said.

Farmers are planting early because research has consistently shown that planting early tends to provide higher yields, he said. Most farmers have succeeded at obtaining good stands of rice emerging from the soil.

The weather has been good for drill seeding, including research plots at the station and on five off-station sites, Linscombe said. “Up to this point, I think everything is doing as well as it could be.”

A recent rain brought more than 3 inches of rain in many areas, adding to the decreased likelihood that surface water will become salty in rice fields near the coast, he said.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has



estimated 420,000 acres will be planted, an increase of 20,000 from last year.

LSU AgCenter rice specialist Johnny Saichuk said the heavy rain on April 3 will delay completion of planting. “It brought things to a halt. If we had not had the weather, we’d almost be finished down here.”

Last year, he said, rains also interrupted planting, but March was warmer.

Keith Collins, LSU AgCenter county agent in Richland Parish, said north Louisiana rice farmers are waiting to start planting. “I expect to see some rice start to go into the ground as soon as it dries up.”

A considerable amount of rice in north

Louisiana was planted in March 2012, unlike this year, Collins said. “Last year was the exception. It was very warm.”

Collins said he expects north Louisiana rice acreage to decline again this year by at least 10 percent because of higher prices for corn and soybeans.

“I talked to a few farmers who planted rice last year who won’t this year,” he said.

Barrett Courville, LSU AgCenter county agent in Acadia and Jefferson Davis parishes, said farmers in both parishes are about 90 percent finished with planting. “The early planted rice is up, and it looks pretty good. We need some warm weather.”

Flocks of blackbirds and ducks feeding on seed have caused farmers to replant. But when the bird repellent AV-1011 is used, birds avoid the seed. Temporary approval of the repellent has been granted by the Environmental Protection Agency, but a full label is needed, Courville said.

“It’s a wonderful product,” he said. “The

difference is like night and day. If you can’t protect what you’ve got out there, you can’t plant early where birds are a problem.”

Acreage might dip slightly, but the totals in Jefferson Davis and Acadia parishes should each be around 80,000 acres, he said.

Keith Fontenot, LSU AgCenter county agent in Evangeline Parish, said many farmers there have finished planting. Much of the rice isn’t growing much, he said, because of the chilly weather.

Rice acreage in Evangeline Parish will be about the same as last year – slightly more than 35,000 acres, Fontenot said. “They are staying close to what they have had.”

Some farmers waited to see what crawfish prices will do after Easter before deciding how much they would plant, Fontenot said. That’s also the case in Vermilion Parish, where county agent Andrew Granger said farmers with fields in crawfish will plant rice in those when the catch declines. He expects acreage to remain at last year’s level of 42,000 acres.

Granger said the parish is 85-90 percent complete. “The biggest problem has been the cool weather.”

The rains this past week stopped much of the planting that remains, he said. “Anybody still wanting to drill seed had to stop.”

Bird problems also have been significant in Vermilion Parish for seed not treated with the AV-1011 repellent, Granger said.

Harper Armstrong Named 2013 LA Radio Network Farmer of the Year

FB News Staff Reports

BATON ROUGE, La. – For his work as an agricultural innovator and mentor the Louisiana Radio Network named Harper Armstrong of Bastrop its 2013 Louisiana Farmer of the Year.

The 16th annual awards banquet honoring Harper and two other finalists was held Feb. 28 at White Oak Plantation. Nearly 200 attended the event.

A lifelong farmer for nearly 50 years, Armstrong was recognized for his work as an agricultural innovator, as well as his dedication to helping fellow minority growers adopt the latest technology. He serves as an industry advocate and a local youth mentor. He is president of the Morehouse Parish Black Farmers and Landowners Association and serves as assistant chairman of the National Black Growers Council.

Armstrong’s 2,500-acre farm in Morehouse Parish produces corn, soybeans, wheat and cotton. He also raises cattle and has a haying operation. Armstrong’s farm has been used to demonstrate some of the latest agricultural advancements and equipment to farmers throughout Louisiana and around the country. In addition, he opens his farm to area young people to promote agriculture as a livelihood.



Farm broadcaster Neil Melancon, left, is shown with LN Farmer of the Year Harper Armstrong and his wife Lois. LN Farm Broadcaster Don Molino, right, presented the Armstrong’s with the award Feb. 28 at the annual event held at White Oak Plantation in Baton Rouge. Photo by Michael Danna.

“His dedication to improving and refining Louisiana agriculture alone makes Harper Armstrong a substantial candidate for Farmer of the Year,” said Jim Engster, president of Louisiana Radio Network. “What sets him apart is his commitment to his fellow farmers, his role as a community leader and his willingness to spend time with young people. Harper is a reminder of what the American farmer means to us all.”

Armstrong was chosen Farmer of the Year by an independent panel of judges from the University of Kentucky and Texas A&M. The award includes a \$1,000 prize and 100 hours’ use of a Case IH Magnum tractor from Progressive Tractor & Implement Co.

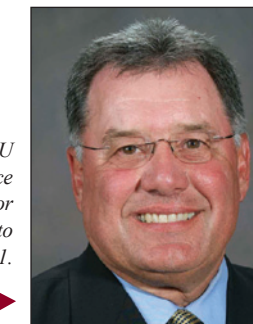
The Farmer of the Year Program is sponsored by Louisiana Radio Network in conjunction with the Louisiana Farm Bureau Agri-news Radio Network, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, LSU AgCenter and Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation.

The other finalists for this year’s award were Donald Berken, a rice grower from Welsh, and Gerald Wood, a sugar farmer with operations in St. James and Pointe Coupee. Founded in 1974, Louisiana Radio Network provides 71 radio stations throughout Louisiana and parts of Mississippi with news, sports and agricultural news.

President’s, continued from page 2



Dr. Paul Coreil, vice chancellor and director of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service for the LSU AgCenter, has been named Interim Chancellor at LSU Alexandria.



Dwight Landreneau, LSU AgCenter’s associate vice chancellor and associate director of the extension service, plans to retire June 1.

shoes. Making that transition go more smoothly, thankfully, is the continuing presence of Dr. John Russin, vice chancellor and director of the state’s agricultural experiment station network. Dr. Russin is picking up the slack right now and goodness knows his plate stays full.

We in Louisiana agriculture salute Paul and Dwight for their work on behalf of all farmers and ranchers. They’ve both left agriculture and rural Louisiana better than they found it.

After More than Seven Years of Negotiation, Japan Officially Agrees to Increase U.S. Beef Imports

FARM BUREAU NEWS STAFF REPORTS

The United States and Japan officially sealed an agreement last week that will allow exports of U.S. beef from cattle less than 30 months of age to enter that Asian market.

The agreement was a long time in the making and its positive influence on U.S. beef markets could mean more than an immediate increase in trade volume with Japan, according to farm and beef trade groups across the country.

“Japan has long been a prime import market for Louisiana and U.S. beef,” said Ronnie Anderson, president of the Louisiana Farm Bureau and a beef cattle producer from Ethel. “The real bonus could be that an influx of U.S. beef to Japan could lower consumer prices there and as a result lead to higher consumption levels there.”

The announcement that Japan will begin to import U.S. beef from cattle 30 months of age and younger comes after a seven-year ban of the importation of such animals. The initial rules, imposed by Japan in 2005, permitted U.S. beef imports only from cattle up to 20 months old, after a total ban in 2003 that followed an outbreak of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

“Japan’s imports of U.S. beef plunged by 60 percent to some 120,000 metric tons from 2001 to 2011,” said Veronica Nigh, a trade specialist with the American Farm Bureau. “Australian beef producers were the main beneficiaries in an import market worth more than \$2 billion. Australian beef essentially took the place of U.S. beef. Their producers won and ours lost.”



But that could all change following the new ruling, Nigh said. Late last year, Japan’s food safety organization helped pave the way for the announcement by reporting that the risk from importing beef from cattle aged 30 months or younger from the United States, Canada, France and the Netherlands would be negligible to human health. The Japanese government held a series of public consultations and bilateral talks on how the new safety requirements would be met in the supplying countries.

“This is a big win, and it’s the result of seven-plus years of resolute work by both the Bush and Obama administrations,” said AFBF President Bob Stallman. “This is great news for American cattle producers and it should have positive ripple effects for other U.S. food and agricultural sectors.”

According to Stallman, Japan’s action highlights the impor-

ance of sticking to sound, validated science; using multi-pronged efforts that included U.S. and Canada pushing for common-sense BSE guidelines; Congress supporting funding for the overall BSE effort; and multi-agency cooperation.

“We saw a sustained grassroots push to make sure officials knew how important this milestone is,” Stallman said. “It truly sets the stage and establishes a process for other efforts on breaking down non-tariff barriers.”

According to Nigh, the United States produces large amounts of specific meat cuts and offal that bring higher returns in Japan than in domestic markets. She said Japanese beef prices rose significantly following the 2003 trade restrictions, which severely limited supplies of those cuts. But now, an increased presence of U.S. beef in Japan could bring higher returns for U.S. producers and lower prices for Japanese consumers.

Anderson pointed out a 2010 study by the Agriculture Department’s Economic Research Service, which estimated that every decrease of 1 percent in beef prices in Japan actually leads to increases in consumption greater than 1 percent.

“The positive effects for U.S. beef producers go beyond the actual export volume,” Anderson said. “This gives U.S. beef an opportunity to lead a resurgence in beef consumption. Analysis by USDA indicates Japanese consumers are very price sensitive when it comes to beef and the increased presence of U.S. beef in the Japanese market will lower their retail beef prices. Lower retail prices traditionally lead to increased beef consumption and therefore demand. This would be good news for U.S. producers because much of this new demand would likely be captured by U.S. beef.”

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