

May 2012

## Bees, Bees, Bees

Ready or not the bees will show up. Once your box of bees arrives, you have a few days to get them in the hive but the important thing is that they are fed. The queen will arrive in a separate little box with a sugar plug or a cork. Before you allow (bang) the bees to get into their hive you will want to replace the cork with a small marsh-mellow then hang the trapped queen between two frames. Time has a lot to do with the worker bees becoming friends with the queen. Believe me they are servants just mess with the queen when everybody's friends and you will quickly find out who isn't. The sugar plug usually takes the workers longer to eat so you will want to check to make sure it has been eaten no later than three days after you put the bees in the hive. Don't forget to have sugar on hand to mix some feed. If you have the resources you would enjoy a pollen catcher on the box. I have used the drawer style and collecting pollen is a neat thing. One of the first is the pussy willow so keep looking out for it to bud. The bees will be foraging early so their legs will pick up the pollen. I still have a couple of feet of snow over my boxes since they are located in a sheltered spot with full sunlight. It is imperative that you feed your bees in the beginning since there is nothing for them to eat. Bees do drown, so if you use a feeder that hangs in the hive make sure you put a float stick on top. I take the screen from the outside of the shipping box and stuff it in that feeder. It allows them more surface area to get at that sugar water. Hope you are as excited as me and happy bee keeping to you.

Bee worth thought is that last year Nebraska Farmers Union strongly supported and helped to develop with Sen. Annette Dubas and the Nebraska Beekeepers Association a law related to an identity standard for honey. This came about because other countries (China) have been allowed to import in large amounts of adulterated honey, creating an unfair trade advantage. Now I realize that currently there isn't one of us that has difficulty selling our honey but there may come a time when you do because of unfair trade advantages. "Domestic beekeepers need a clear definition of honey in order to have a viable shot at any sort of trade based or legal challenge," according to the NFU source. Is it time Alaska beekeepers considered the problems faced by beekeepers across America? Check out LB114 Nebraska law. Let AFU know if we need to take up the cause, we're ready!

## STATE OF ALASKA AGRICULTURE LAND SALES

The Division of Agriculture South Central is currently working on 2 land sale projects. The Willer-Kash agricultural project area is 6 miles east of Willow. A public meeting to discuss the W-K project is being planned and should be finalized in later April or May. A 40 acre parcel near the Talkeetna "Y" that was offered in 2006, but did not go into a sale contract is being evaluated as a potential re-offer.

The Northern Region is currently working on a sales brochure for land within the Kobe North Agriculture project. The sale is planned for this summer and will consist of at least 1300 acres. The Northern Region is also working on the revision of the Tanana Basin Area Plan, now to be divided into two separate plans, Yukon Tanana Area Plan (<http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/areaplans/ytap/>) and the Eastern Tanana Area Plan (<http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/areaplans/etap/>). The Division's focus is on retaining all existing designated agriculture land in the planning area as well as adding suitable agriculture land that is currently not designated and designate for another purpose.

## FROM THE DRIVER'S SEAT

By Ed Storey

I've driven motor-homes for the past ten years and have seen the beauty of acres and acres of ranch and farm land. From Elkhart, IN to Anchorage I've enjoyed the scenery of the farms and land in IN, IL, WI, MN, ND, on through Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC, the Yukon and to our great state. The farm equipment has changed, it all has been exciting to see. I listen to the local radio stations and often get to hear the local, state and national farm market reports for grain, livestock and other commodities. That includes gold, silver as well as oil and gas market values. The meaning of farming includes metals and fluids "out there". It's quite the sight to see a field of hay or corn with the donkey pumps sucking up the black gold and gas lines going to storage tanks on the same acreage. Why is it that we can't see nor hear the Ag progress in Alaska? Not that there is anything fantastic about the lower forty-eight and Canadian markets at certain times, at least everyone who is involved or cares about agriculture there is able to see and hear of their progress. On that note, why aren't we all investing in some kind of futures market in some way or another? It seems to me, as if it matters to anyone else out there that Alaska has more land not used for Ag than any other state in the country and we have the most of it. In 2010 according to the State Ag. Reports only 760 acres were in potatoes. You've got to be amazed at that figure. Ranching and farming from the seat of a motor home driver looks awfully good, but I am sure that the reality of it isn't that way. Production is all relative until it has to do with you and your land, livestock and crops. I just wish that we could hear more about the Alaska market of what we truly produce up here. Just seeing a John Deere tractor driving down the road either out in front of my house or in my travels doesn't tell the real facts of farming and ranching. The story still needs to be heard. Agriculture has been the foundation of our country even if it's a victory garden in the back yard. It's time to call the critters back to the feeding trough. Let's let folk know where their food is coming from in Alaska. What is your production and market report look like to Juneau and the rest of the state? It's time to get up on the farm. Don't forget to check out those ag statistics, give Sue a call. Go Ag!

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### Hey, Hey, Hey!

Get ready, get set, the grass is coming back. Hay/grass call it what you may but the time to be thinking about your hay crop is on the burner. First things first, isn't it about time you got a soil test? Call Wasilla Soil and Water and get that done. You will need to get a representative sample for your field and try to keep one field separate from the other. Now that you have got that done get out there and look to purchase your fertilizer. Locally in the valley we can call Pioneer Equipment and purchase a high quality fertilizer. You might be able to save a little money by going into Anchorage and purchasing direct from Alaska Mill and Feed but you still have to get it brought out to your fields. Everybody has their own method, but we try for two cuts in between the times that it rains. Our last cut usually never starts before Sept. 15, but that can vary depending upon your location. Watch your hay and when it "heads out" the protein is on the decline. A word of advice is to try and make hay for the dairy cows. I know you have heard that some people have all the luck, well if you need rain just ask me to cut hay. We are all looking forward to another great year!

### Anchor Point Greenhouse

Established in 1976. First Greenhouse was 28x96 for plant and tomato production. Now used as a soil factory blending Fishy Peat Potting soil and custom soils. Sold and used throughout Alaska. Two other greenhouses were added for local plant sales and hydroponic strawberries. Our unique potting soil is full of beneficial microbes made from composted fish and seaweed blended with peat, lime, wetting agent. Made from all Alaskan resources in Alaska by Alaskans. Give Al a call and don't forget to stop in for ideas with your hoop houses!

### HOG PRICES TO IMPROVE THIS SPRING

Recent declines in the hog market will soon abate, according to market experts. "Seasonally, hog prices should rise between now and the end of May and traders are looking for any sign that the increase in prices is finally beginning," according to Rich Pottorff, Doane analyst. "If we get the seasonal increase in cash hog prices that people expect, the summer and fall hog contracts should continue to strengthen." With U.S. consumers buying less hamburger due to the lean finely textured beef "pink slime" controversy, and broiler production declining, Pottorff expects to see domestic demand for pork improve. American pork exports to China continues strong with their

As I write this, the Iditarod is winding down. I just got back from a whirlwind trip to the Commodity Classic in Nashville and then to our National Convention in Omaha. If you raise some of the major crops like corn, soybeans, wheat, or sorghum, then you might have been in attendance. There were some 5,000 or so at that show. Do you remember the Tornados in Tennessee or those states? At one time the hotel sounded a warning and we all congregated in the basement next to a very tall block wall. Each crop had its respective get together and boy what a great time. I got to see a couple of comedians, country western singers, besides a large trade show. There was a combine completely decked out in camo, my guess is that they were going to use it for a deer stand. I met a family out of New England that raise s 250 acres of vegetables. Next year the CC is in Florida! Guess where I am thinking of going? I stayed two days I then headed for Omaha. I flew in on Saturday and waltzed into a board meeting. My daughter Lydia flew in a couple hours behind me. Come to think of it, when it was over I flew out and she flew out a couple of hours behind me. Lydia had a grand time, learned lots and became involved with Farmers Union on the national level. Of course, the National Convention is always a time to renew friendships, but the major emphasis is on setting the organizations priorities, policy, and other agenda items. NFU has been the force behind positive change. Just check out the National website regarding a plan NFU proposes known as the Market-Driven Inventory System (MDIS). We firmly believe we can lower the cost of farm programs while protecting the producers. A big issue is the coming farm bill. I noticed an article the other day that said the NFB is on the same train. Across the board producers are well aware of budget cuts



and the impact on American agriculture. Those in attendance got to listen to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack as well as many other guest speakers. One that I enjoyed was by a gentleman farmer from upstate New York – an up and coming dairy farmer at that. He and his wife are new to America and he shared with us some of the things happening in Germany. The country has a policy in place that requires the electrical utility to purchase power from the farmer whether it is created by wind or methane. The policy is such that the producer will be able to recoup his expenses within five years. Why can't we have the same policy? I have always said leadership starts within but sometimes our leadership can be leaders. Isn't it time for that to happen?

Last but not least, FFA news. It sounds good in the legislature. Rep. Stoltz got the proposal moving forward and it looks like, at this time, that the funding will be through the University budget. My guess is that means through extension and what a great place to be! Don't forget to call and let the Rep. know we are proud of his efforts. All for now, so keep things in check. –Bob

affect the producer? According to the Sterling Trackers, for the farrow-to-finish producers, the profit margins for the week ending April 13th came in at \$10.85 per head on average. That's it, only about \$10 profit per head (not per hundredweight) for producing the entire hog. Does the average consumer realize how little profit is left for producing an entire hog from farrow-to-finish? Alaska Farmers Union continues its goal to help educate the food consumer who may not realize how little the producer receives from doing all the work to produce what we eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.



# WASHINGTON

from National Farmers Union

# Corner

## FARM BILL

In Washington, and throughout the country, two words are on the minds of many – farm bill. National Farmers Union has been proactive in working with Congress to ensure the voices of our members are heard. The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives Agriculture Committees have been holding hearings to gain insight on this critical piece of legislation. Recently, NFU President Roger Johnson testified, as did Kansas Farmers Union member Tom Giessel.

We have been highlighting the Market-Driven Inventory System (MDIS) as a solution that will cut government spending, while also benefiting many different audiences. In our meetings with ag committee members, we have been emphasizing that MDIS is the only approach that deals with long-term price collapse and extreme price volatility.

We recently held a legislative fly-in, where approximately 75 Farmers Union members walked the halls of Congress with our farm bill priorities, and the message that a farm bill must be passed in 2012. Our members talked about MDIS, the need for a strong investment in crop insurance and permanent disaster program.

Renewable energy is another priority for the farm bill. The 2002 Farm Bill was the first to include an energy title dedicated to supporting programs like the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), Bio-refinery Assistance Program (BAP), Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP), and Biobased Markets Program (BioPreferred), which help farmers and ranchers produce clean, renewable energy on their farms. The 2008 bill built upon these programs' successes, but did not provide for funding beyond the end of the 2012 fiscal year. Key energy title programs are creating a significant amount of jobs in rural America. Farmers Union advocates a Farm Bill in 2012 that includes robust, mandatory funding for REAP, BCAP, BAP and BioPreferred.

A livestock title is also a vital element in the farm bill. The 2008 Farm Bill included language that established and continued important research, animal health, marketing, and disaster programs related to livestock production. After a decades-long battle by farmers and consumers, the livestock title in the 2008 Farm Bill finally mandated Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) for meat, poultry, fish, perishable agricultural commodities, and assorted other food products. We urge congress to pass a farm bill that keeps COOL and protects family livestock producers.

Thanks to everyone who came to Washington for the fly-in! Your voices are important.

## A NEW LOGO

In March, NFU revealed a new logo. This new logo will unite Farmers Union states, and take us into the future as we increase our efforts to expand our membership. The three stars represent the three core components of the NFU: Education, Cooperation and Legislation. The stars—aligned in a triangular formation—are a nod to the past shape from earlier brand identities. The color blue represents the sky. The Arial typeface has been redrawn so it is not as vertical as the standard font. Redrawing the typeface further enhances the left to right motion established in the wave graphic. A rich, dark green color represents earth and growth. The waves represent both field and water. In addition, the wave action also represents movement (not stagnant), which signifies an organization that is progressive and forward thinking. The gold color was chosen as a neutral color, as not to define either field or water. The color also evokes attributes such as posterity and wisdom. Gold is also appropriate for a national organization positioned and defined as a leadership group. We received many positive comments about our new look.



UNITED TO GROW FAMILY AGRICULTURE

National Farmers Union

National Farmers Union concluded the 110th Anniversary convention in Omaha, Neb., the first week of March. More than 550 members from across the country joined us to hear from U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and other speakers, attend breakout sessions, take agricultural tours and adopt our policy for 2012. Mark your calendar for NFU's 111th Anniversary Convention on March 2-5, 2013, in Springfield, Mass. Check [www.nfu.org/convention](http://www.nfu.org/convention) for updates.

## WFO

The World Farmers Organization (WFO) is continuing to make progress in its formation. Staff have been hired for the office in Rome. NFU Vice President of International Affairs and WFO President Robert Carlson has been actively involved in meetings to ensure the organization continues to move forward in representing U.S. farmers at the international table. This summer, WFO will hold a general assembly meeting in Rome. This gathering will

be an opportunity for WFO members to discuss key issues in agriculture. It will be the first major conference since the group's formation. In addition to Carlson, NFU President Roger Johnson, NFU General Counsel Dave Velde, North Dakota Farmers Union President Woody Barth, Montana Farmers Union President Alan Merrill, Minnesota Farmers Union President Doug Peterson, and South Dakota Farmers Union President Doug Sombke will attend.

## BEGINNING FARMERS

NFU is pleased to announce the 10 participants selected for NFU's next Beginning Farmer Institute. Applicants who will participate in the institute are Eric Kornacki of Colorado, Nicole Mroz of Florida, Natalie Cash of Hawaii, Thomas Burkhead of

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# Management of High Tunnel Structures

by Mike Presley, AKGreenhouses.com

The bad news is over 20 high tunnel structures have collapsed here in Alaska because of snow overloading in the last two winters (only one of ours, thankfully). The good news is that most if not all of these failures could have been avoided if the structures had been assembled and/or managed according to the recommendations from the manufacturers and, in those cases of NRCS cost sharing, the NRCS program guidelines. It begins with selecting the appropriate sized structure. Many of the shelters obtained with funding help from NRCS are 30' X 72'; a size that maximizes the available grant funds in a single shelter, and if that size fits your production requirements, then you should have it. However, these structures usually will have a peak of 15 or more feet. Structures of this height require considerably more effort and equipment to safely assemble and properly maintain than multiple shelters of more manageable dimensions. A farmer will be much more likely to remove and store the poly cover as recommended from a structure that is only 10 feet at the peak (a 20' X whatever). That is the safest and best way to safeguard your shelters. They can be re-covered early in the spring to maximize season extension. If covers are left on over winter, snow buildup must be prevented to insure survivability. Yes, it will cost some more to build multiple shelters. But, there are also production and crop management advantages to having separately manageable climates for the varied crops that many of our market gardeners need to meet customer demand. I'm sure a number of you will have stories of structures that survived all that our Alaskan climates (yes, plural) could serve up. But ask those who have lost structures how they felt when they first discovered the failure. That is not something you want to have to experience and it can be easily avoided with forethought and minimal preventative effort.

# THE 2012 FARM BILL: ALASKANS NEED A STRONG FOOD ASSISTANCE SAFETY NET

By Food Bank of Alaska



As Congress works to reauthorize the 2012 Farm Bill, The Food Bank of Alaska urges legislators to safeguard and strengthen critical anti-hunger programs.

- 77,000 Alaskans receive food assistance each year through the Food Bank of Alaska's network of more than 300 anti-hunger agencies.
- Food Bank of Alaska's network is reporting up to 30 percent increases in the number of clients they serve.
- Food Bank of Alaska could not provide current levels of food assistance without significant support from TEFAP, nor could we effectively address the increased demand if the current funding levels and structure of SNAP and other federal nutrition programs were eroded.

With the need for food assistance at historic levels, the Farm Bill must protect and strengthen the nutrition safety net. Food Bank of Alaska urges Congress to invest in and protect programs like TEFAP, SNAP, and CSFP.

## THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TEFAP):

TEFAP is a means-tested federal program that provides food commodities at no cost to Americans in need of short-term hunger relief through organizations like food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters.

- TEFAP commodities account for approximately 15 percent of the food moving through FBA's networks.
- TEFAP is the primary source of food for rural Alaskan food pantries.

### *Farm Bill Priorities for TEFAP:*

- Tie TEFAP funding to the unemployment rate to make funding more responsive to changes in need
- Allow the secretary of agriculture to purchase bonus commodities in times of high need for emergency relief
- Reauthorize funding for TEFAP Storage and Distribution Funds at \$100 million per year
- Reauthorize funding for TEFAP Infrastructure Grants at \$15 million per year

## SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP):

SNAP provides more than 90,000 Alaskans with monthly benefits. Eligibility is based on household income and assets and is subject to work and citizenship requirements.

- SNAP participation in Alaska has seen an increase of 53 percent in the last five years
- The SNAP accuracy rate nationally is 96.19 percent, an all-time high. In Alaska, the rate is 97.85 percent
- For every \$1 of SNAP benefits spent, local communities receive \$1.73 to \$1.79 in increased economic activity
- SNAP serves only those whose household incomes are below 130 percent of the federal poverty guideline

### *Farm Bill Priorities for SNAP:*

- Opposing proposals to cap or reduce funding or benefits, or otherwise impede access or benefit adequacy.
- Restore the cut to the SNAP ARRA benefit boost used to pay for the 2010 child nutrition bill.
- Encourage better nutrition by maintaining nutrition education, incentivizing the purchase of healthy foods, and ensuring that retailer standards balance adequate access to stores with healthy foods and moderate prices.
- Upgrade resources and technology for trafficking prevention.

## COMMODITY SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM (CSFP):

CSFP leverages government buying power to provide food packages to approximately 2,500 low-income Alaskans.

- CSFP helps to combat the poor health conditions often found in seniors who are experiencing food insecurity by adding nutrients such as protein, iron, and zinc to the diets of participants.

### *Farm Bill Priorities for CSFP:*

- Transition CSFP to a seniors-only program while grandfathering in current participants.



## ALASKA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION 4-H INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Summer • Discover • Learn • Host Students  
• Friends • Exchange



Greetings!

We are looking for Host Families for the **2012 LABO Japan-Alaska** youth exchange for the Summer of 2012. We hope you might consider opening your heart and home to a Japanese youth and your family to furthering global understanding and friendship here in Alaska. Each family must have a child ages 10-16 who is willing to be the host brother or sister for the Japanese youth. The family will be matched with a delegate of the same gender and similar age and interests. **Please apply as soon as possible so that you can begin corresponding with your Japanese delegate brother or sister!**

Japanese youth delegates will be in the Anchorage/Kenai/Mat-Su area July 21 - August 19, 2012. If your child's school begins during that time, we can help you make arrangements for your Japanese delegate to visit school.

Delegates stay with one family for the entire 4-week exchange:

- The Delegate can share a room with their host. *(some families think their home is too small)*
- The Delegate can travel within Alaska with their host families. *(some families think they can't host because of in-state vacation plans)*
- Their parents will pay so that they can attend camp with their host. *(some families think they can't host because their child is going away to camp)*

This 4-H Japanese Youth Exchange program is now in its 41<sup>st</sup> year <http://www.states4hexchange.org/> If you would like to obtain an application form for yourself or for a friend for the 2012 program, contact your local 4-H office or:

**Tony Nakazawa or Marianne Kerr**  
**c/o 4-H LABO Japan-Alaska Youth Exchange Program**  
Cooperative Extension Service – Anchorage  
1675 C Street #100  
Anchorage, AK 99501

Email: [atnakazawa@alaska.edu](mailto:atnakazawa@alaska.edu) or [mlkerr@alaska.edu](mailto:mlkerr@alaska.edu)  
Phone: 907-786-6300 or 907-460-0825 Fax: 907-726-1948



Art by Kaylyn Hale, 4-H member in Fairbanks

## WASHINGTON CORNER (CONTINUED)

Iowa, Laura Arvidson and Benjamin Peterson of Montana, Bryn Bird and Lee Bird of Ohio, Steve Wolterstorff of South Dakota and Kent Wright of Washington. The group had its first meeting in Washington in mid-April and participants have already developed strong relationships. The selected individuals from across the nation range from cattle ranchers and grain farmers to those growing for farmers markets to urban farmers. The program is jointly sponsored by Farm Credit, CHS Foundation and the NFU Foundation.

### WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Based on the well-respected "Annie's Project" education program, a conference for farm and rural women is being organized by NFU. The event is set for June 21-23. A variety of trained instructors will teach family farm finances, budgeting and cash flow, cooperatives, marketing, farm transfer and estate planning, business planning, leadership assessment and skills, generational issues, and action planning.

The conference will be held at the NFU Education Center at Bailey, Colo. The \$150 registration will cover camp-style lodging in the Rocky Mountains at the NFU Education Center, catered meals, and conference materials. Those interested in participating are urged to register early, as capacity is limited. Full payment must accompany

registration and be postmarked by May 18. More information and registration details are available at [www.nfu.org/education](http://www.nfu.org/education).

### USDA AT 150



On May 15, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will celebrate its 150th anniversary. NFU is working with USDA and

other organizations in town to celebrate this momentous occasion and spotlight the importance of agriculture. On May 15, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed into law a bill establishing a Department of Agriculture. The new Federal agency was directed to acquire information through "practical and scientific experiments" as well as collect and propagate to the nation's agriculturists "new and valuable seeds and plants." This was the first in a series of acts of Congress that helped to modernize and advance American agriculture.

Five days later, President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, granting land to people who would settle on frontier land and improve it. On July 2, 1862, the president signed the Morrill Act, which granted huge tracts of land to the states to endow colleg-

es dedicated to teaching "such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts ... to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes..." This was the beginning of today's vast and flourishing land-grant university system.

While American agriculture continues to lead the world, significant global challenges await in the decades ahead. The world's population recently passed the 7 billion mark. According to the World Food Program, the best estimate is that one billion people (1 in 7) are hungry and food insecure. By 2050, the world's population will rise to 9 billion people, and we must double world food production to meet this challenge. To put it in stark terms, more food will need to be produced in the next 50 years than has been produced during the past 10,000 years combined.

In order to answer this challenge, we must embrace agricultural research, science, innovation, and biotechnology. America's farmers, ranchers and research scientists must, again, lead the way to a new 21st century new Green Revolution, following the vision President Lincoln established 150 years ago.

## ALASKA LAW REGARDING OPERATION OF FARM EQUIPMENT ON HIGHWAYS (SEC. 19.10.065)

(a) Implements of husbandry, as defined by regulation under AS 28.05.011, are not subject to restrictions adopted under AS19.10.060(a) (1) unless the implement is the load of another vehicle. Implements of husbandry may be operated on highways subject to the department's jurisdiction without obtaining a permit, as provided in this section.

(b) The incidental operation of an implement of husbandry up to 12 feet wide on a state highway is authorized without a permit if the implement

- (1) Is operated only during the period from one-half hour after sunrise to one-half hour before sunset;
- (2) Displays a slow-moving vehicle emblem on the rear of the implement;
- (3) Displays a red flag on the implement in a location that affords greatest visibility; and
- (4) Is moving from one farm operation to another within 50 miles of the home base of the implement of husbandry.

(c) An implement of husbandry that is more than 12 feet wide may be operated on a state highway without a permit if it meets the provisions of (b) of this section and is preceded by a pilot car during operation on the highway.

### ALASKA FARMERS UNION

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