Alts, Farm Bureau Victorious in Lawsuit Against Environmental Protection Agency

The U.S. District Court for the Northern District of West Virginia has ruled in favor of Lois Alt in her lawsuit against the Environmental Protection Agency.

Alt, operator of Eight is Enough Farm in Old Fields, filed suit against the EPA in 2012, following an EPA visit to her poultry operation in Hardy County. The EPA claimed that under the Clean Water Act, a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit was required for stormwater runoff from her farm, because it came in contact with dust, feathers or tiny bits of manure on the ground. Alt, who has been recognized numerous times by Pilgrim’s Pride for her environmental stewardship, contended it was a normal occurrence in farming, and that agricultural stormwater is exempt from permitting under the Clean Water Act. She was threatened by the EPA with fines of up to $37,500 per day if she did not obtain a permit.

West Virginia Farm Bureau and the American Farm Bureau Federation were granted intervenor status in the case, believing that any decision rendered would be felt across agriculture.

In April of this year, the federal court rejected efforts by EPA to avoid defending its position by withdrawing the order against Alt. In opposing EPA’s motion to dismiss, Alt and Farm Bureau argued that farmers remained vulnerable to similar EPA orders, and the important legal issue at stake should be resolved. The court agreed.

In his decision handed down October 23, Judge John Preston Bailey wrote, “This Court declares that the litter and manure which is washed from the Alt farmyard… by a precipitation event is an agricultural stormwater discharge…thereby rendering it exempt from the NPDES permit requirement of the Clean Water Act.”

“This is not only a victory for the Alts, but for farmers everywhere,” said Steve Butler, West Virginia Farm Bureau administrator. “Lois Alt stood her ground because she knew she was right, and she knew it was the right thing to do, not just for herself, but for all farmers.”

Farm and Dairy editor Susan Crowell wrote that all farmers should send Alt a thank-you note. “It could’ve been your farm,” she said.
table of contents

8  The Importance of Pre-Planning
11  Sharing
12  Young Farmer & Rancher Update
13  WVU Insert
19  Food & Farm Coalition Seeks to Help Producers
22  The VC2 Initiative
26  Holiday Brunch

On the cover
Turkey Bone Road
Eric Thomason
Another Executive Order to Bypass Congress

Charles Wilfong, President, West Virginia Farm Bureau

On November 1, 2013, President Obama issued his latest executive order. In this order, he grants himself sweeping new powers to control climate change policy. He knows that he can’t get his radial policies enacted through Congress, so once again, he is bypassing our representatives on Capitol Hill and giving himself dictatorial powers to impose totally unrealistic environmental measures.

This executive order claims that we are seeing the impacts of man-made climate change because of extended periods of high temperatures, increased numbers of severe droughts, more frequent downpours of rain, an increase in wildfires, alleged permafrost thawing, ocean acidification and rising sea levels.

Bob Stallman, President, American Farm Bureau Federation

On November 1, 2013, President Obama issued his latest executive order. In this order, he grants himself sweeping new powers to control climate change policy. He knows that he can’t get his radial policies enacted through Congress, so once again, he is bypassing our representatives on Capitol Hill and giving himself dictatorial powers to impose totally unrealistic environmental measures.

The order calls for new federal measures to prepare the nation for the effects of purported man-made climate change. It also calls for more control of lands and resources through this process. However, the executive order fails to make mention of a number of facts. First, it ignores the effect that solar activity has upon climate change, even though we are witnessing an extremely volatile period of solar activity, and which run in unpredictable cycles. Second, the executive order fails to acknowledge that the increase in wildfires is primarily due to mismanagement of federal lands by the federal government. Current policies do not allow for the removal of dead and dying trees or undergrowth. Third, the order overlooks the recorded fact that we are actually in a period of global cooling and have been for a number of years – so much so that the ice caps are actually growing in size, not decreasing as we have been lead to believe. But it seems the Obama administration doesn’t allow...
Something to Think About

Don Michael, WVFB Director of Governmental Affairs

Do You Believe in Magic?

Magic, as defined in my *Random House College Dictionary*, is the “art of producing a desired effect or result through the use of various techniques . . . any extraordinary or irresistible influence, charm, power etc.” *Merriam-Webster* describes magic as “a power that allows people (such as witches and wizards) to do impossible things by saying special words or performing special actions.” Do these definitions ring a bell when you think of the political processes associated with Congress, our State Legislature, Farm Bureau, your local board of education, or even your church business meeting – producing a desired effect/result through influence, power, saying special words or performing special actions? They do for me. Let me share some recent examples of such magic.

Last month my wife and I joined a crowd of 800+ participating in the “Rally Around the Lakes.” There was certainly magic in the air – positive testimonies at the rally, coupled with the many contacts made by numerous stakeholders to inform education leaders and decision-makers at all levels, resulted in some encouraging developments in the short term: Cedar Lakes staff have been given the green light to schedule activities for the coming year; consideration is being given to a slight increase in fees to improve the revenue picture; the Cedar Lakes Foundation has been expanded to include local legislators, and given the task to develop a future plan for the Lakes, including the expansion of stakeholders . . . stay tuned!

In October I joined Farm Bureau members and friends in two other significant events where positive magic is always in the air – Farm Bureau’s Resolutions/Policy Development Process and the Constitution Advocates’ Annual Dinner Meeting. In both cases the participants consisted of Democrats, Republicans and Independents working in a very cooperative manner, putting politics aside and letting common sense prevail while focusing on two of America’s greatest strengths – agriculture and the Constitution of the United States. One of the shared topics/concerns addressed at both meetings was the federal overreach of state education programming via Common Core. A resolution detailing Farm Bureau member concerns was approved by those participating in the policy development process and forwarded for consideration by the voting delegates at this month’s WVFB Annual Meeting. The resolution will also be submitted for policy consideration by the American Farm Bureau Federation. Given the increasing concern expressed by many states about this federal intrusion in education through Common Core, perhaps it would be more appropriate to identify the initiative as Common Sore!

Politically speaking I would offer a revised definition of magic – “the art of producing a desired effect or result through an extraordinary process of integrity that crosses party lines and is driven by the common good and common sense.” Do I believe in that kind of magic in political circles? You bet! But it doesn’t reveal itself nearly as much as it should. One of the best environments for witnessing such magic is our 45+ member House Rural Caucus, led by Delegate Bill Hartman (D-Randolph).

In closing I reflect on the Lovin’ Spoonful’s 1965 hit tune entitled, “Do You Believe in Magic?” It started with the words – “Do you believe in magic, in a young girl’s heart” – Again, you bet! With Thanksgiving approaching I am thankful for so many blessings, among the richest being that magic from a Ritchie County farm girl’s heart . . . for 44 years and counting. Until next time, here’s wishing you and your loved ones God’s richest blessings for an enchanting Thanksgiving and CHRISTmas Season ahead – KEEP SMILING FRIENDS.
Nationwide Claims offers Unique Training to Benefit Members

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Steve Uhlman | Sponsor Relations Sales Manager
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A school supply list usually consists of pencils, pens and a backpack. For several Nationwiders, their school supplies consisted of an iPad and — manure boots.

Over the summer, Nationwide’s new Commercial Farm and Agribusiness School made its debut to help claims associates develop technical expertise, as well as better establish relationships and the business confidence to drive improved outcomes for farm and agribusiness members.

The school was developed in partnership with The Ohio State University College of Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Sciences. Claims adjusters from Nationwide’s Claims operation and those from Nationwide Agribusiness Claims attended the sessions.

“The new farm technical school was enlightening, but the experience was somewhat surreal as we trekked through barns filled with animals at different stages of their productive lives,” said Barbara Davies, commercial property claims manager. “We saw the industry from the farmer’s eyes. It certainly changed my perception of what a farmer is today as well as what the farmer needs from a claims perspective.”

Part of the training includes a “Farm to Fork” dinner. Each dish is brought to the attendees separately and all the ingredients are labeled. Before the diners are allowed to eat, they are presented with the location where the ingredient was grown, the distance it took to ship the item to Central Ohio to prepare, and the cost breakdown of each food item including how much a farmer earns per dish.

At the conclusion of the dinner a local farmer participates in the panel discussion with agricultural experts and local chefs to discuss the decisions and challenges involved in meeting consumer demand for safe and affordable food. Leah Dorman, the Director of Food and Animal issues for the Ohio Farm Bureau presented to one of the classes. Nationwide has benefitted from the expertise brought to the partnership by local farmers, the Farm Bureau and Ohio State.

“Agribusiness is really an important component for Nationwide. We are a company founded by farmers looking to solve their own problems. And that’s what we still do — we solve people’s problems,” says Dave Bano, Chief Claims Officer. “This is an extension of that concept. This program and education is all part of the evolution of our helping others.”

Technology often found in use by farmers has been integrated into the school. Student activities are completed on iPads loaded with the participant guides and applications routinely used by farming operations. The topics the school covers are:

- Farm terminology
- Farm machinery
- Grain and livestock identification
- Metal coverings
- Farm structures
- Commodity market
- Grain bins
- Grain handling equipment
- Confinement structures

“This school is about where the rubber meets the road — at every level,” said Shannon Hagan, commercial claims manager. “Equipment cost, food cost, food production, equipment maintenance, farm life, farm smells, farm animals bundled up and presented to you by people who love to teach it, work with it, and live in it every day. It was an awesome experience and a well orchestrated school from start to finish.”

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The Importance of Pre-Planning: Safeguarding the Family Farm

Emily R. Lambright
Operating a successful farm requires pre-planning. Farmers have to plan what crops to plant, where to plant them, how much seed to buy and dozens of other details to ensure that their farms run smoothly. Without that planning, the farm would be less productive and the farmer and his family would suffer. The same concept applies to passing the family farm on to future generations. With some advance planning, farmers can help safeguard their farms so that their children and grandchildren can continue the farming tradition for years to come.

Each farmer’s succession plan will be unique to that farmer because it is based on that family’s wants and needs, but the first step in making a succession plan is the same for every farmer. They need to picture what they want for their family in the future and how the family farm fits into that picture. For some farmers, there may be one child who is involved in farm operations and other children who have moved away. For others, all of their children may be working the farm. Some farmers may be concerned about how they will support themselves if they retire from farming and have their children take over the farm. Others may be thinking about selling the farm, but are concerned about the taxes.

Once a farmer has a picture in mind about the future of the farm, the next step would be to sit down with a lawyer to talk through the farmer’s options. For some people, talking to a lawyer can seem like a big step to take, but it is an important step. A lawyer can help the farmer put together a plan to achieve the future that the farmer has in mind. The purpose of creating a plan is to make the farmer’s wishes clear, to protect the farmer’s loved ones, and to protect the farm. Having a plan in place can help accomplish those goals.

Pre-planning also can help prevent the family farm from being swallowed up in federal estate taxes. Estate tax is a tax on the transfer of property to others, usually children of a decedent. These are separate from probate expenses and final income taxes owed on income a person earned or received in the year a person dies. In 2013, the estate (and gift) maximum tax rate is 40 percent. The estate tax exemption (or amount that a person can pass free of tax to anyone other than a spouse or charity) is $5,250,000. That amount may seem like a large amount, but keep in mind that it includes all the farm acreage, crops, livestock and equipment. Also keep in mind that most farmers are land rich and cash poor, so paying death taxes can put a strain on the family. Pre-planning can help farmers prevent losing the family farm to estate taxes.

There are events in life, just as in farming, that cannot be controlled, but having a plan in place can help manage the events that can be controlled. Pre-planning can mean the difference between passing on a farm to the family or losing it to pay creditors or taxes. Farmers interested in learning more about how they can protect their farms for their children are encouraged to attend the 94th annual meeting of the West Virginia Farm Bureau at the Days Hotel & Conference Center in Flatwoods on November 8, 2013. David A. DeJarnett, an attorney and partner in the law firm of Bowles Rice, LLP and I will be giving presentations on pre-planning techniques that farmers can use to safeguard their farms for their family. We look forward to seeing you there.

Emily R. Lambright is a senior associate in the Charleston office of Bowles Rice LLP. Licensed as a certified public accountant (CPA), she has experience in wills, trusts, estates and business succession planning. For more information, please contact Ms. Lambright at (304) 347-1100.
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I can only imagine the knowledge that 20-thousand agricultural specialists in West Virginia must have. Much of this knowledge has been self-taught, passed down from generation to generation or learned by trial and error until the best, most efficient way was found. How much of this information is shared? A relevant question is – “How can this information be shared?” Sharing this expertise and knowledge with our own farming communities could help all of us become even more productive. Let me give you some examples.

This spring at a regional Farm Bureau meeting, I asked WVFB Field Services Representative Bill Aiken about a product he grew on his farm. Bill shared the information with me, and I tried my hand at growing it. The crop I raised was way beyond my expectations! The original reason for this project was to level a field with a crop and return the field to hay. A little better marketing plan on my part would have made the financial side of the project better. However, the crop covered all the cost of the project, including the field leveling, and I had some leftover cash. That is the good news, but the best news is the abundance of the crop helped feed several hundred homeless and needy people. Many friends, neighbors, and people I didn’t know took advantage of the abundance of the crop also. Thanks to Bill Aiken and his knowledge and willingness to share, a lot of people benefitted.

Brett Jarrell (a local Nationwide agent) brought Steve Uhlman (Sponsor Relations Sales Manager for Nationwide Insurance) to our Wood County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting at the Wood County 4-H Camp. Uhlman gave a short talk on the advantages Nationwide offers. Brett also shared that he posted information on his Facebook page about saving pop tabs for the Ronald McDonald House, and he is collecting them for us. Thanks Brett and Steve, for sharing with us. Farm Bureau folks, please remember to thank your Nationwide agents. They can supply safety information for your meetings and are obtaining memberships for your Farm Bureau.

Farm Credit provided the speaker for our Annual Dinner – Steve Cavender. Steve shared information on tractor and farm safety. We learned about the hazards of tractors, machinery, chemicals and confinement suffocation. You can never learn too much about these topics. Thanks to Steve, our safety speaker; and Dave Wise, our local Farm Credit representative who helps many farm organizations; and especially Farm Bureau. They support us – please support them.

I would like to share one more safety topic - yellow jackets, bees and other stinging insects. Be especially vigilant in the fall during farm clean-up and mowing. Many people are extremely allergic to insect stings. Oftentimes when tractors are in precarious places and drivers are unaware, yellow jackets attack. Please keep this in mind.

Thanks Joan Harman and West Virginia Farm Bureau for letting Wood County Farm Bureau share this information with all our farming and rural friends.

Sharing by everyone makes a better farming experience.
Susan Wilkins, YF&R Vice-chair

It is hard to believe that autumn really is here and Thanksgiving is upon us. It makes me sad that Thanksgiving is almost like a forgotten holiday anymore. As soon as September gets here, the Halloween decorations hit the stores. And before the trick-or-treaters even arrive, the Christmas goodies are out. Thanksgiving, though, is one of my favorite times of year.

When sitting down for Thanksgiving dinner, there is so much to be thankful for. By Thanksgiving, our corn has been chopped and all of the hay has been baled, ensuring that our livestock will be fed well during the coming winter months. By Thanksgiving, the last of our cows and calves have been hauled home from the pasture in the “mountains.” The surprise winter snow that might have rushed us in getting the cattle out is now just a memory. The cellar shelves will be full of the produce that was canned from the garden and the deep freezer equally full of the beef that we had butchered over the summer. The woodshed will be (almost) full of cut wood to keep us warm.

But more than anything, I am so thankful that I was born into this farm life. I am extremely proud of the fact that I am a fourth generation farmer; and I am thankful that a farming heritage is something that I inherited from not just one parent, but from two. I am so grateful that my parents have always encouraged me to be involved with the farm. Growing up, it might have sometimes been by force, but I can’t imagine having been raised anywhere else.

As farmers, it seems like we see more than our fair share of struggles and challenges, but God has given us all so much to be thankful for. Sometimes, we just have to slow down a little to see His many blessings. So, as you sit down to roasted turkey and pumpkin pie, take a moment to think of all the wonderful ways God has blessed you and your farm.

As Psalm 95:2-3 says, “Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms. For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods.”

Have a truly blessed Thanksgiving!
West Virginia sees increased sightings of harlequin bug

The harlequin bug, Murgantia histrionica, is an insect pest of vegetable crops such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, kohlrabi, mustard, radish, and turnips (vegetables from the Brassicaceae family).

Description
Harlequin bugs are in the stink bug family and are black with bright red, yellow, or orange markings.

Damage
This pest injures host plants by sucking the fluids from plant tissue. This can result in yellow or white blotches at the feeding site and wilted or deformed plants. Heavy infestations can cause plants to turn brown and die.

Lifestyle
This insect can be found throughout the southern regions of North America, with their range rarely exceeding north of Pennsylvania. In West Virginia, this insect likely has two generations per year. Adults remain throughout the winter, often seeking shelter in crop residues and other organic debris such as dead leaves, mulch, or bunches of grass. Adults begin depositing eggs about two weeks after becoming active in the spring.

Management
Cultural and chemical controls can be used to manage harlequin bugs. Destroying crop residues in the fall is an important cultural practice in limiting harlequin bug damage for the following year. Because this insect can also feed and reproduce on wild, weedy mustards (e.g. pepperweed, shepherd’s purse, wild mustard), it is important to keep weeds under control in fields and along field edges. In the southern United States where the harlequin bug is a serious pest, trap crops consisting of early planted horseradish, kale, mustard, or rape have been used to divert overwintering populations. These crops are then sprayed or destroyed before the primary crop becomes susceptible to attack. Chemical options for control of harlequin bugs include numerous compounds in the pyrethroid (e.g. beta-cyfluthrin, bifenthrin, lambda-cyhalothrin) and neonicotinoid (e.g. acetamiprid and clothianidin) class of insecticides; pyrethrins are permissible in organic production.

In West Virginia
Recently, the harlequin bug has been observed more frequently in West Virginia. Although it is unclear why these insects are becoming increasingly problematic, growers introducing fewer vegetables from the Brassicaceae family during the season and/or growers not practicing strong weed prevention may be contributing to infestation on farms.

By Daniel Frank, Entomology Specialist, WVU Extension Service
Use these tips to prevent flue fires

As temperatures fall and your family spends more time around the fireplace, it’s imperative that your fireplace and chimney are functional, clean, and safely exhausting smoke and other gases. In 2011, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reported 24,400 fireplace or chimney fires that resulted in 30 deaths, 90 injuries, and $88 million dollars in property loss.

To make sure your fireplace is safe:

• **Use seasoned firewood**
  Ensure that your firewood is properly seasoned. Fresh cut wood can have 60% or more of its weight in water, which results in the fire’s energy going to evaporate water, rather than heat your home. Seasoning wood is easy – stack and loosely cover the wood, allowing air to circulate and dry the wood. A typical seasoning time period is 12 months.

• **Inspect your chimney**
  When burning non-seasoned wood, a tarry substance called creosote will condense on the interior of the chimney. Thick multiple-inch layers of creosote can coat your chimney after a single season, restricting the airflow and acting as a flammable fuel that can lead to chimney fires. An annual professional inspection is important to detect creosote buildup and other potential problems with your chimney. It is critical to correct any problems before using your fireplace again.

• **Inspect your fireplace**
  A preliminary do-it-yourself inspection is easy. Be sure to use safety goggles and a disposable dust mask. Confirm that air is moving up through the chimney. This can be tested using a hanging tissue taped to the top front of the fireplace and visually seeing which way the air is moving. With a powerful flashlight and the fireplace poker (or similar tool), scratch the black surface of the smoke chamber (area above the damper). A shallow 1/8 inch or smaller groove in the creosote indicates that cleaning is probably not necessary. If the groove is 1/4 inch or greater, do not use the fireplace until it has been cleaned, as this level creosote could ignite at any time. Of course, if you are unsure that you are checking the correct place or the actual depth of the scratched groove, contact a professional before using the fireplace.

• **Manage creosote promptly**
  A creosote-filled chimney can be swept using special tools that scrape the residue from the chimney walls and knock off any other soot and dust in the chimney. This is a messy job that requires tarps, buckets, vacuums, and personal safety equipment. We recommend professional chimney sweeps that are certified, knowledgeable about building construction methods, trained on deterioration and venting identification, and have the tools to do the job quickly, cleanly, and accurately.

With a safe, well-functioning fireplace and chimney, your family will be ready to enjoy the upcoming cold, winter nights!

By Ben Spong, Forest Operations Specialist, WVU Extension Service
Reflections on the 2013 gardening season in West Virginia and what we can learn

The 2013 growing season was marked by gardening challenges in many regions of West Virginia. Below average temperatures coupled with wet weather had a negative impact on most vegetable crops; however, the season was productive for peppers and sweet corn, which thrived in the abundant rainfall and cooler temperatures. Cultural practices, such as mulching, proper spacing, and other preventative methods for disease infection, were especially important this year but are also good practices to use regularly.

Mulching

Either organic or synthetic mulch can have a tremendous impact on how well a vegetable crop grows. Mulching reduces fertilizer or nutrient leaching and protects the crop from rain-splashed soil, which can trigger disease infection. Organic mulches keep the soil cool, whereas synthetic plastic mulches generally warm the soil. Therefore, it is important not to apply organic mulches too early for heat-loving vegetables planted early in the season.

Fungicides

When weather conditions are wet and cool gardeners should be prepared to spray protectant fungicides containing chlorothalonil (Daconil, Fungonil) or liquid copper to prevent blight from destroying their tomatoes, peppers, and bean crops. These sprays should be applied to the plants at flowering and every 7 to 10 days thereafter. Remember to read the label and follow the directions for spraying the specific crop being treated.

Multiple plantings

To avoid the problems of diseases and insects, one strategy is to make multiple plantings of the same vegetable throughout the growing season. The planting window for many vegetables starts in the spring and extends to mid-summer or fall. Expanding the planting and harvesting season can reduce loss of an entire planting due to a pest outbreak.

Disposing of crop residue

Fall is an ideal time to prepare the garden for winter and for next year’s gardening season. After most annual vegetable crops have produced their season’s yield, the residue can be removed and either composted or tilled into the soil. Discarding or tilling-in plant residue prevents many diseases and insects from overwintering. Diseased plants and all weeds should always be removed from the garden site and discarded. The residue can be placed in the trash, burned, or buried. Do not compost diseased plants, since this may allow the disease to reappear in the garden the following season.

Soil test and soil health

Fall is also a good time to conduct a soil test. The soil nutritional status after a crop has been removed is an accurate indicator of soil health. If the garden soil is too acidic (low pH), lime can be applied in the fall, allowing time for the lime to adjust the soil pH. Compost, manure, and other organic materials can be applied and tilled into the soil in the fall. A winter cover crop (e.g., rye, triticale, winter wheat) can be seeded in early November to prevent nutrient and soil erosion from winter rains. As an added benefit, the cover crops provide a boost to the soil’s organic matter when they are tilled-in the following spring.

By Lewis Jett, Commercial Horticulture, WVU Extension Service
Prepare cattle for winter to maintain a healthy herd

With fall upon us and winter not far behind, cattle are grazing in fall pastures and will soon be feeding on hay. To prepare for winter, farmers need to implement two fall management practices: body condition scoring (BCS) of cows and forage testing of hay. By implementing these practices, farmers can get their cattle through the winter with the least possible cost and keep the cows in the best health for calving next spring.

To get the cows in good condition for the upcoming calving, farmers need to BCS cows in the fall. The WVU Extension Service “Body Condition Score Description of Cattle” fact sheet provides a detailed written and visual description of BCS. It is available from your WVU Extension agent or at http://anr.ext.wvu.edu/r/download/47551.

Cows calving in a BCS 6 rebreed better than those calving at a lower score. The most economical way to get thin cows to a BCS 6 is to wean the calves, then fatten the cows on well-grown fall pastures.

With this summer’s wet weather a lot of hay was cut late, resulting in low nutritional quality. Some of the late first-cut hay was actually first- and second-cut taken at the same time. The only way to determine the nutritional quality of the hay is by forage testing. The WVU Extension Service “Sampling Hay and Haylage” fact sheet explains hay sampling in more detail. It is available from your county WVU Extension agent or at http://anr.ext.wvu.edu/r/download/175226.

Forage testing is the only way to know if any supplement is needed, and if so, what type and how much supplement should be fed. In the Low Cost Cow-Calf Project, farmers reported a $10 return on each $1 invested in forage testing. This was accomplished by reducing the amount of supplement fed to cows. Several local conservation districts cost-share on forage testing. Check with your conservation district to see if they have this program. Sample and run a forage test on each field of hay. Then, compare the forage test values for total digestible nutrients (TDN) and crude protein (CP) to that required by the cattle across age classes and production status. The WVU Extension Service “Nutrient Requirements for Beef Cattle” fact sheet provides the requirements of different production classes of cattle. It is available from your county WVU Extension agent or at http://anr.ext.wvu.edu/r/download/175227.

Match the hay quality to the cattle’s nutrient requirements based on the forage test. If the weather is extremely poor (as some weather forecasters are predicting this winter), energy requirements will increase and cows will draw on their body reserves to get through the stress. This is why observing the cow’s BCS is important and why we should have the cows in a BCS 6 before hay-feeding.

By Ed Rayburn, Agronomy Specialist, WVU Extension Service
One emergency generating system comes with this standard equipment

While conventional emergency generators can cost you $10,000 or more installed, a solar array with sealed battery backup pays you thousands more.

In federal and state tax credits or grants. In electric bill savings. In added property value.

And with no moving parts, a sealed high-tech battery bank and a 25-year manufacturer’s warranty, you should never have to pay a penny for repairs, maintenance or refueling.

So why pay thousands for an emergency generator when there’s an emergency generator system that pays you?
The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA, pronounced “fis-ma”) was signed into law in 2011 and gives the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) new and expansive authority to regulate most aspects of food production with the stated goal of reducing foodborne illness.

The West Virginia Food & Farm Coalition is working to help identify what types of farms and businesses will be impacted by FSMA and help those affected understand the new rules. We also encourage farmers, eaters, and business owners to submit comments to the FDA regarding how FSMA will affect them, and how the rules might be better written to encourage a safe and sustainable local food system. The comment period is open until November 15.

Because the rules are still being developed it is unclear exactly what affects FSMA will have on small farms, but analysis from the small farming community indicates that the law and associated rules should be of concern to anyone who enjoys local food and local food economies:

• According to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition many of the requirements of the Produce Rule are in conflict with the National Organic Program and existing conservation and sustainable agriculture practices and regulations.

• The Carolina Farm Stewardship Association informed its members that applying industrial-scale rules meant for factory farms to small producers and distributors will reduce the number of new farms entering business and cause local food distributors to close or never open up in the first place.

• The Cornucopia Institute warns that, “Unfortunately, the FDA’s draft regulations designed to implement the new law appear to ignore the will of Congress. Instead, the regulations would ensnare the country’s safest family farmers in burdensome regulations...the FDA’s new food safety rules have the real potential to force some of the safest local and organic farms out of business!”

FDA is accepting comments on two major rules that will affect farmers and food businesses in West Virginia: the Produce Rule and the Preventative Controls Rule.

To learn more about the rules, find links to analysis on the impact FSMA will have on farms and food businesses, and sound off to the FDA about how the law will affect food and farming, visit our new FSMA page at http://www.wvhub.org/wvffc/food-safety-modernization-act.
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While U.S. ports on average were last updated around the same time the Beatles cut their first album, our international competitors are continually investing in their trading future. The Port of Vancouver, for example, is undergoing a nearly $900 million infrastructure improvement program that will be completed next spring.

While on the West Coast, the AFBF leaders saw how critical the ports are for farm products and local jobs. For example, Washington is the nation’s most trade-dependent state, where trade is responsible for 40 percent of all jobs. Agriculture products are Washington’s third-largest export. In Oregon, one in five jobs depends on trade of farm products, accounting for 10 percent of Oregon’s gross domestic product.

Further, the Port of Oakland supports 73,000 local jobs and 827,000 jobs across the country. Last year, nearly half the value of exports leaving the Oakland port were farm products. East Coast ports, too, are just as critical to farm exports and are in dire need of improvements.

There are other issues that affect global exports, such as state efforts to prevent coal transport and export, which could affect rail investment and potentially raise transportation costs to all rail customers, including farmers. Rails play a significant role in trade. For example, 40 percent of all activity around the Seattle port is tied to rail, making its infrastructure maintenance essential.

Another growing challenge for ports, shippers and farmers is the cost of keeping pace with the loading and handling requirements for larger vessels that shippers are using, along with federal regulations for exporters. In other words, a lot of red tape.

The U.S. wine industry is faced with such strict export rules and regulations that it takes a month on average from the time an international order is placed until it leaves the U.S., making us the smallest exporter of wine by percentage in the world.

To maintain our edge in the global market, we need to invest more in our ports and waterways infrastructure, as well as alleviate prohibitive regulations that are forcing farmers to leave opportunities on the table.

Those of us who dare to question the motives behind these decisions are referred to as stupid or uninformed by most of the media. But our failure to protest will only result in more management and control over our lives. Freedom-loving Americans must speak out and say we’ve had enough, or these policies will continue to stall our economy and further erode our rights and freedoms.
Food Business Development from “Field to Fork”:

The VC2 Initiative

Meet Ben Walsh, one of the farmers working with the Value Chain Cluster Initiative (VC2) to grow his WV-based food business: Ben is the owner-operator of Green Glades Creamery, a 70 cow dairy and cheese production business in Terra Alta, WV. Green Glades produces a cornucopia of artisanal cheeses like Havarti, cheddar, mozzarella, farm cheese spreads and feta, which he sells at area farmers markets and to small restaurants. Ben came to VC2 for assistance because he is interested in expanding his sales into new, larger retail markets. These larger buyers require food safety certifications he doesn’t yet have in place. “I love selling directly to customers, but I need to scale up in order to grow my business,” says Walsh, “In order to move my product into those locations, I need a HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) plan.” That’s where VC2 comes in.

Launched early this year, the Value Chain Cluster Initiative (VC2) provides hands-on business development and coaching services to strengthen local food and farm businesses in four regions of West Virginia. The VC2 program can provide businesses and organizations with free business planning help, legal assistance, web technology, consulting services for marketing and branding, flexible loans, and more. For farmers and food business owners like Ben Walsh, this means that the VC2 staff can help identify and pay for expert help needed to grow their operations. In Walsh’s case, the staff worked with him to select a consultant who is currently helping him with the HAACP plan for Green Glades.

The VC2 program serves 17 West Virginia counties and is operated by Natural Capital Investment Fund, a business lender based out of Shepherdstown, in partnership with the West Virginia Food & Farm Coalition and other partners. The counties covered are: Doddridge, Tyler, Ritchie, Gilmer, Barbour, Preston, Randolph, Tucker, Upshur, Fayette, Greenbrier, Monroe, Pocahontas, Calhoun, Clay, Roane and Wirt. (More info on eligibility is available at www.vc2.org)

To date, VC2 has provided free one-on-one help for over 25 businesses. In addition to Ben Walsh and Green Glades Creamery, the program has served grass fed beef operations, vegetable farmers, farmers markets and co-ops. “Sometimes the help they need is already out there,” said Jill Young, VC2 Technical Assistance Coordinator,
“In which case, we help actively connect them to the existing resources. We aren’t here to reinvent the wheel, but rather to fill in the gaps in available training. If they need help, we find it for them.”

In addition to Young, VC2 has four other staff working in the field to help match folks up with needed assistance. The staff has a wide range of experience in business and in the food sector, and over half are farmers themselves. “I think it really helps,” said Young, “that our business coaches can tell a Jersey cow from a Guernsey cow. It shows that we know farming and we’ve done our homework – and that builds trust. Our staff is also available to come speak at meetings, so let us know if you are interested. We are committed to helping and we are working our tails off to let folks know!”

One strength of VC2 is its flexibility in matching each individual business or group with the right consulting expertise. For example, VC2 enabled one producer to hire a marketing consultant to design professional-looking labels, which will enhance the marketability and profitability of that farmer’s value-added products. Another family farm, which is scaling up and hiring employees, is getting help from VC2 on a new payroll system, a better accounting system, and a plan to transition the farm to the younger generation. Still another producer received business coaching to analyze financial information and put together a loan application for farm equipment.

When asked about the impact that VC2 will have on his business Ben Walsh said, “VC2 will allow me to better assure my customers of the safety and quality of Green Glades products, as well as to open up new markets like larger chain grocers in WV. It is going to really help us grow.”

To get your food or farm business started with the program, contact: Jill Young, statewide VC2 Technical Assistance Coordinator, at: jillyoung@vc2.org | 304-661-4951; or visit the website at www.vc2.org.

VC2 is funded by USDA Rural Development, the Economic Development Administration, the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation. VC2 also has a broad array of local and regional partnerships, including the West Virginia Food & Farm Coalition, the Collaborative for a 21st Century Appalachia, the WVU Extension Service and its WV Small Farm Center, the West Virginia Department of Education, the Entrepreneurship Law Center at WVU College of Law, the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, the Small Business Development Center at WVU Institute of Technology, Doddridge County Economic Development Authority, the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department, Greenbrier Valley Economic Development Authority, Heart and Hand Inc., and Tygart Valley Growers Association.

Photos, from left: Dairy cattle grazing at Green Glades Creamery; top right, VC2 and WVDA partnership meeting; above, part of the cheese making process at Green Glades.
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What a spread!

A holiday celebration at home should be as much fun for the hosts as for friends and family. With a little advance planning, the goal of effortless entertaining is suddenly within reach.

First, make it brunch, typically lighter and simpler to prepare than dinner. Buffet style is another smart choice — just arrange the dishes on pretty holiday linens and invite guests to serve themselves.

Half of the work is done when you go with full-flavored imported Italian cheeses like Parmigiano Reggiano, Grana Padano and Montasio, and air-cured hams like Prosciutto di Parma and Prosciutto di San Daniele. As PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) products, they belong to a special group of high-quality European foods that can be made only in specific geographical regions.

Four dishes that add up to a no-stress brunch buffet:

- A frittata with the deeply savory flavors of Prosciutto di Parma and Parmigiano Reggiano cheese. It’s equally delicious warm or at room temperature, whichever is more convenient.
- Thumbprint biscuits featuring melted Montasio cheese in the indentations on top — a clever touch for biscuits made with ready-made dough.
- Another brilliant two-ingredient recipe consists of eggs baked in Prosciutto di San Daniele “cups.” They are crisp, creamy and irresistible.
- Festive garnishes for a salad of deep green kale leaves, tossed with orange vinaigrette, include Grana Padano shards, pears and pine nuts.

For more information on the PDO system and holiday recipes using these legendary cheeses and hams, visit www.legendsfromeurope.com.

Think About Drinks

One way to keep it simple is to settle on a house drink for your brunch buffet, such as a Poinsettia Cocktail made with one part cranberry juice and one part Grand Marnier to four parts prosecco. For the nonalcoholic version, combine the juice with sparkling water or lemon-lime soda.
**Prosciutto di Parma and Parmigiano Reggiano Frittata**
Yield: 4 to 6 portions
- 8 large eggs
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 3 ounces thinly sliced Prosciutto di Parma, torn into 1-inch pieces
- 6 scallions, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup (2 ounces) coarsely grated Parmigiano Reggiano
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

Preheat oven to 350°F.

In a large bowl, beat eggs and milk with an electric beater until frothy; add pepper. Stir in the Prosciutto di Parma, scallions and cheese. Heat oil in an 8-inch oven proof skillet; add egg mixture and cook over medium heat until edges are set, about 8 to 10 minutes. Place in oven and bake until firm, 15 to 20 minutes.

**Kale Salad with Grana Padano and Citrus Dressing**
Yield: 5 cups
- 1/2 pound kale
- 1 large Anjou or Bartlett pear, sliced
- 1/2 cup Grana Padano shards
- 1/4 cup pine nuts or sliced almonds, toasted
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 2 tablespoons white wine or balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

Remove ribs from kale and cut into 1-inch ribbons; place in a large salad bowl. Add pear, cheese and nuts.

Whisk together orange juice, vinegar, olive oil, salt and pepper. Pour over salad and toss.

**Eggs Baked in Prosciutto di San Daniele Cups**
Yield: 12 portions
- 12 slices Prosciutto di San Daniele
- 12 large eggs

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Fold one slice of Prosciutto di San Daniele in half crosswise to make a rectangle. Fit into a muffin cup.

Crack egg into lined cup.
Repeat with remaining ham and eggs.
Bake 10 to 12 minutes to desired doneness.

**Montasio Cheese Thumbprint Biscuits**
Yield: 8 biscuits
- 1 package store bought ready-made biscuit dough
- 1 cup coarsely grated Montasio cheese

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Separate biscuits onto a parchment lined or lightly greased baking sheet. With your thumb, press into center of each biscuit to form a small well. Fill each well with 2 tablespoons of the grated Montasio. Bake until tops are golden, about 8 minutes. Serve immediately.
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