

NIFA in the News – Week of July 25, 2011

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In the News

Stephen F. Austin researchers find invasive plant might have cancer benefits (News Journal-TX 7/14). A thorn in the side of area boating enthusiasts may provide a ray of hope for some cancer patients, according to recent research findings at Stephen F. Austin State University's National Center for Pharmaceutical Crops. Researchers at the center have discovered that giant salvinia, one of the most noxious invasive species in the world, has promising medical potential that could provide a novel approach to controlling the species. Part of the NCPC project is funded by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. [Link](#)

MSU Nets \$5 Million Dairy Production Efficiency Grant (Lancaster Farming-PA 7/16). As human populations increase and available arable land decreases, agricultural systems are under pressure to produce more food more efficiently. Michigan State University researchers believe that breeding dairy cows that produce milk with less feed can help meet this goal. The grant was awarded through USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative and administered through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. [Link](#)

Back in St. Louis after a stint in Washington, Beachy continues to champion agriculture and science (St. Louis Beacon – 7/22). But whatever trajectory NIFA (pronounced Niffa) manages to reach, it will do without Beachy. He quietly left the agency in May, where his appointment as its founding director was announced with great fanfare in 2009. His departure was not even announced in a news release, which he acknowledges created a vacuum that led to speculation about why his tenure was so short. [Link](#)

South Dakota State University Researchers Explore On-Farm Production of Biochar and Bio-Oil From Biomass (Biofuels Journal 7/22). A major new study by South Dakota State University researchers working with a U.S. Department of Agriculture colleague explores how to get the most from such a production system.

The USDA is funding the project with a grant of \$1 million — \$200,000 annually for the next five years — to help scientists design a feedstock production system for optimum energy production of “bio-oil,” and also to explore the possible ecological benefits from the use of biochar. The grant was selected by the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s flagship competitive grants program called AFRI, or the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative. It was selected in the sustainable bioenergy challenge area. Typically fewer than 10 percent of proposals are funded, with awards based on external peer reviews of a proposal’s scientific merit. [Link](#)

New Student Enrichment Program Aims To Make Learning Fun (Fort Hunt Patch 7/23). Young kids in Mount Vernon looking for some hands-on leadership experience this summer have a new outlet. A group of Mount Vernonites have started a 4-H club that aims to help kids grow developmentally and help their community. The 4-H club was originally created and administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to help members understand the importance of agriculture farming, animal sciences, and the use of natural resources in science and technology. Now, it has expanded to a network of clubs that boasts 540,000 volunteers, 3,500 professionals, and more than 60 million alumni, according to its website. [Link](#)

Clemson University graduates first class of ‘New Farmers’ (The Times and Democrat 7/25). After 30 years as a national television executive, Dale Snyder is the textbook definition of a new farmer. In fact, as little as a year ago, his agricultural skills were limited to potted plants on the front porch of his house. But no more. Snyder and his 26 classmates will graduate Thursday from the first class of Clemson University’s New and Beginning Farmer program. S.C. New and Beginning Farmer is a statewide multi-agency partnership supported by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture Grant No. 2010-03113. [Link](#)

Farms of the future: bio-oil, biochar from biomass (The Collegian 7/25). A major new study by South Dakota State University researchers working with a U.S. Department of Agriculture colleague explores how to get the most from such a production system. The USDA is funding the project with a grant of \$1 million — \$200,000 annually for the next five years — to help scientists design a feedstock production system for optimum energy production of “bio-oil,” and also to explore the possible ecological benefits from the use of biochar. The grant was selected by the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s flagship competitive grants program called AFRI, or the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative. It was selected in the sustainable bioenergy challenge area. Typically fewer than 10 percent of proposals are funded, with awards based on external peer reviews of a proposal’s scientific merit. [Link](#)

Climate-Change Research Grant to Support Study of Nitrogen, Water Use Efficiency in Farming (Ag Weekly 7/26). A collaborative Washington State University study of how nitrogen and water availability vary within Palouse wheat

fields will ultimately help farmers better manage nitrogen fertilizer application on their croplands and reduce one of Earth's top four greenhouse gases, nitrous oxide. U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture awarded a \$4.6 million, five-year grant through its Agriculture and Food Research Initiative to researchers from WSU, University of Idaho and the USDA Agricultural Research Service to conduct the study. [Link](#)

Government Grants to Start Up a Farm (Chron Small Business-TX 7/26). New buildings, equipment, land and livestock are a few expenses that government grants can pay for on farms. Agriculture, like any business, comes with a long list of challenges and expenses when beginning. Many farmers turn to loans to start up, but those come with repayments with interest. Grants, on the other hand, don't require repayment. Although applicants often must compete for grants, the funding type can help farmers get through the initial stages. Agricultural producers can find training, education, outreach and technical assistance to help them start farms and ranches through the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture, a division of the USDA, gives the grants to government offices and nonprofits at state, local, tribal and regional levels. [Link](#)

Coburn outlines plan to cut \$9 trillion from the U.S. debt (Tulsa Beacon 7/28). U.S. Senator Tom Coburn has a plan to reduce the \$9 trillion federal deficit and balance the budget over the next 10 years. A 614-page report, titled "Back in Black," outlines Coburn's roadmap for fiscal responsibility. No area of government escapes scrutiny in the report. - Reduce funding for USDA's national institute of food and agriculture by 20 percent to save \$3.2 billion over ten years. [Link](#)

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