



Weekly Update from the Texas Seed Trade Association

Member News

EU unable to approve new gene-editing plans in current mandate

By [Sofia Sanchez Manzanaro](#) | [Euractiv](#)

The approval of much-anticipated legislation relaxing the EU's strict rules on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs), will have to wait until the next legislative mandate, Belgian Agriculture Minister David Clarinval confirmed in the margins of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council (AGRIFISH) on Tuesday's (26 March).

"We do not have enough time left to finalise negotiations with the European Parliament," said Clarinval in a press conference after the AGRIFISH meeting.

He stressed, however, that the Presidency would continue to work towards reaching a common position among EU countries during the remainder of its mandate.

These advanced scientific methods, frequently hailed as a sustainability breakthrough, enable targeted and fast changes to the genome of crops, with the potential to make them more resistant to extreme weather and pests, along with other uses. But negotiations on the NGTs regulation, unveiled by the European Commission in July 2023, have been stuck at Council since December.

At the time, the Spanish Presidency of the EU Council **failed** to broker an agreement among member states, as concerns over traceability, labelling and patents of gene-edited food persisted.

The issue was raised during Tuesday's ministerial meeting by Spain's Agriculture Minister Luis Planas, a staunch advocate of NGTs for food and feed production. During the discussion, Planas told his counterparts that NGTs could be the solution to the challenges currently faced by the bloc's farmers, notably climate change, rising production costs and geopolitical instability.

"We need to have all the tools at our disposal [that] allow us to provide solutions to problems such as the lack of water, pressure from new diseases and pests..." he stressed, describing the Commission's proposal as "scientifically sound."

Some national representatives supported the Spanish stance, with the Dutch delegation calling for a launch of negotiations with the Parliament "as soon as possible."

"Other countries outside the EU already have regulations in place for these plants or are in the process of developing, the risk of lagging behind is that [the EU] will lose its leading position," stated the Dutch Agriculture Minister Piet Adema.

Remaining concerns

A blocking minority of member states – including Poland, Austria, Croatia and Slovakia – are still reluctant to endorse the legislation.

Among the most contested points is the patentability of NGTs, which some countries say should be banned to ensure equal access to breeding material among farmers. Other key questions are the criteria to divide NGT-based products into two categories (NGT 1 and 2) and labelling requirements.

“The lack of labelling for products falling into NGT1 [would] represent a huge attack on the freedom to choose for our consumers,” said the Austrian delegation during the discussion in the Council.

Upcoming opinion

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is expected to give an opinion on the EU executive’s proposal, after the European Parliament sent a letter on 22 February, asking for an examination of a [report](#) published in December by the French health authority (ANSES).

ANSES’s study questioned some of the European Commission’s criteria for classifying plant varieties obtained with NGTs.
[Edited by Angelo Di Mambro and Rajnish Singh]

Editor's Note: Disappointing news. Perhaps approval will come in the near future.

AVIAN FLU INFECTS MAN DAIRY WORKER IN TEXAS

by Rachel Schutte, Content Producer, *Feedstuffs*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports a person in Texas tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza, commonly known as bird flu, after exposure to dairy cattle presumed to be infected with HPAI.

The National Veterinary Service Lab confirmed the H5N1 strain of Influenza A caused recent outbreaks of avian influenza in dairy cattle across at least five U.S. states. This is the same strain contracted by the patient in Texas.

The patient describes eye redness as their only symptom and is recovering. The individual is being treated with an antiviral drug for flu while they isolate.

This is the second person with a confirmed HPAI case in the U.S. A previous human case occurred in Colorado in 2022 when an inmate contracted the virus during a work assignment with poultry. Human infections with avian flu are uncommon but have occurred sporadically worldwide.

Texas issued a public health alert Monday asking health care providers in the state to be on the lookout for people with symptoms of avian influenza who may have been exposed to an infected person or animal.

Preventive measures

Despite this infection, the CDC still considers the risk to the U.S. general public to be low. However, people with close or prolonged exposures to infected animals or to environments contaminated by infected animals are at greater risk.

The CDC encourages people to avoid exposure to sick or dead animals including birds, animal carcasses, raw milk, feces, litter or any other materials contaminated by animals with a suspected HPAI infection.

Farmers and workers should wear recommended personal protective equipment such as

an N95 filtering facepiece respirator, eye protection and gloves when coming into contact with any exposure risks. Anyone exposed to HPAI infected birds or other animals should monitor themselves for symptoms, including eye redness, for 10 days following exposure.

The CDC notes that preliminary analysis of the virus suggests FDA-approved flu antiviral medications should be successful in treating H5N1 in humans. Seasonal flu vaccines do not provide protection against these viruses.

USDA states there are no concerns with the safety of the commercial milk supply because products are pasteurized before entering the market. Pasteurization has continually proven to inactivate bacteria and viruses, like influenza, in milk. In addition, milk from impacted animals is being diverted or destroyed so that it does not enter the human food supply.

Dr. Justin Smith, Kansas State Animal Health commissioner, says the confirmation of Influenza A in dairy cattle, itself, is unique. "Our ruminant animals don't tend to be affected by the influenza virus," he says. "They're one of our species that we frankly haven't had a lot of historical reports of influenza affecting cattle worldwide, let alone in the United States."

The main concern among dairy producers is "nose to nose" direct transmission of the virus between cattle. However, that does not appear to be the case. Smith says all the testing and reporting shows that the virus spreads through unpasteurized milk, likely via equipment in the parlor.

To read the entire article [click here](#).

The number of farms producing wheat for grain declined substantially from 2002 to 2022, according to new data from USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) 2022 Census of Agriculture. In 2022, the number of U.S. farms reporting wheat production was 97,014, a 43-percent decrease compared with the 2002 census, when 169,528 farms reported wheat production.

The reduction in the number of farms producing wheat was spread across all classes of wheat. The number of farms producing winter wheat--84 percent of U.S. wheat farms in 2022--dropped by nearly 60,000, or 42 percent, between the 2002 and 2022 censuses. Farms producing durum wheat decreased by the largest percentage, down 59 percent from 2002. The number of farms growing spring wheat (other than durum) declined 43 percent from 2002 to 2022. During the same time period, total volume of U.S. wheat produced trended down slightly, largely because of less acreage being harvested.

As the profitability of other crops rises, wheat is increasingly planted in rotation with more profitable corn or soybean crops. Among major wheat-producing States, Kansas, which accounts for 15 percent of all U.S. wheat farms, saw a reduction of 9,716 farms--a 40-percent decrease from 2002 to 2022. Texas and Oklahoma reported decreases of 54 and 47 percent, respectively, between 2002 and 2022.

Together, these 3 States harvested nearly 32 of percent of the volume of winter wheat produced in 2022, according to data reported by NASS in the Small Grains Annual report. For more details on the 2022 Census of Agriculture, see the NASS Census of Agriculture website.

Information on trends in the wheat production sector can be found in the special article, "U.S. Census of Agriculture: Highlighting Changing Trends in Wheat Farming" in USDA, Economic Research Service's March 2024 [Wheat Outlook](#)



News Bits

The U.S. winter wheat crop is in much better shape than this time last year.

The USDA says 56% of the winter crop is in good to excellent condition, below pre-report expectations, but will be above the 28% a year ago thanks to improved precipitation while the crop was in dormancy.

4% of winter wheat has headed, compared to the five-year average of 2%.

2% of the U.S. corn crop is planted, compared to 1% on average.

11% of sorghum is planted, all of that in Texas, compared to 13% normally in early April.

3% of cotton is planted, all in Arizona, compared to 4% typically this time of year.

12% of rice is planted, matching the five-year average, and 7% has emerged, compared to 5% most recent Aprils.

1% of spring wheat is planted, in-line with the usual pace.

The USDA says most of the U.S. has adequate to surplus soil moisture, but that does vary widely, even within some states.

Source: USDA news release

MANKATO, Minn., - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced the availability of an historic \$1.5 billion in fiscal year 2024 to invest in partner-driven conservation and climate solutions through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) as part of President Biden's Investing in

Source: G & S Business Communications news release

NEW YORK - A recent survey conducted among 313 U.S. adults, who are the primary decision-makers for household groceries, has unveiled pivotal insights into the public's perception of the food system's sustainability. The study, conducted on February 3, 2024, by G&S, an integrated marketing communications agency, was designed to reflect the U.S. demographic based on the Census and with a margin of error of +/-5.7%, sheds light on the urgent need for increased education and more transparent communication from the food industry.

Key Findings:

Limited Understanding with a Desire to Learn More: Approximately 69% of respondents have only a slight to moderate understanding of the food system, yet an equal percentage expressed a keen interest in deepening their knowledge, indicating a significant opportunity for educational initiatives. **Sustainability Misconceptions:** Only 21% of participants claim to have a robust understanding of what a sustainable food system entails, pointing to a widespread need for clarity and outreach on this critical issue.

Identified Priorities: Enhancing soil health (67%), minimizing environmental impacts (62%) and reducing waste in the food chain (59%) were identified as the top elements of a sustainable food system, suggesting these areas should be focal points for communication and action.

Shared Responsibility with a Call for Leadership: While 69% of respondents believe in a collective responsibility toward sustainability, they primarily view farmers, the government and food processors as the key players, indicating a gap between consumer responsibility and industry accountability. **Barriers to Sustainable Choices:** Cost (70%), availability (47%) and lack of information (45%) are the main obstacles preventing consumers from choosing more sustainable food options, highlighting areas for industry improvement.

Implications for the Food Industry:

These findings underscore a clear demand for greater transparency, education and accessibility regarding sustainable food practices. There is a critical need for the food industry to demystify sustainable practices, making it easier for consumers to make informed choices that align with their values and concerns, particularly regarding climate change and its impact on food security.

Implications for Agriculture:

The survey's findings have profound implications for the agriculture sector, emphasizing the crucial role of farmers and agricultural businesses in

America agenda. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting project proposals now through July 2, 2024, that will help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners adopt and expand conservation strategies to enhance natural resources while tackling the climate crisis. These projects in turn can save farmers money, create new revenue streams, and increase productivity.

The investments in climate-smart agriculture that USDA has made since the beginning of the Biden-Harris Administration, and will continue to make through the Inflation Reduction Act and Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, are estimated to support over 180,000 farms and over 225 million acres in the next 5 years.

Today's investment is made available through the Farm Bill and the Inflation Reduction Act, the largest climate investment in history, which has enabled USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to boost funding for RCPP. Additionally, NRCS is announcing progress on its effort to streamline and simplify RCPP and improve processes and implementation.

Editor's Note: There is, seemingly, no end of tax money available to buy your vote.

Cal-Maine Foods, Inc. (NASDAQ: CALM) ("Cal-Maine Foods" or "Company") today reported that one of the Company's facilities located in Parmer County, Texas, tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza ("HPAI"), resulting in depopulation of approximately 1.6 million laying hens and 337,000 pullets, or approximately 3.6% of the Company's total flock as of March 2, 2024. Production at the facility has temporarily ceased as the Company follows the protocols prescribed by the USDA. Cal-Maine Foods is working to secure production

addressing sustainability challenges. With 83% of respondents reporting low to moderate awareness of the sustainability efforts undertaken by farmers, there is a compelling need for increased visibility and communication of these practices. Agriculture must rise to the occasion, showcasing innovation and stewardship in soil health, resource management and eco-friendly farming techniques. This presents an opportunity for the agriculture community to lead by example, fostering a deeper connection with consumers and reinforcing the value of sustainable practices from farm to table.

Call to Action:

The survey results serve as a call to action for all stakeholders in the food system - from farmers to distributors, retailers and policymakers - to collaborate in making sustainability an accessible and understandable priority for all. This includes not only improving sustainable practices across the supply chain but also ensuring that consumers are informed, engaged and empowered to contribute to a more sustainable food future.

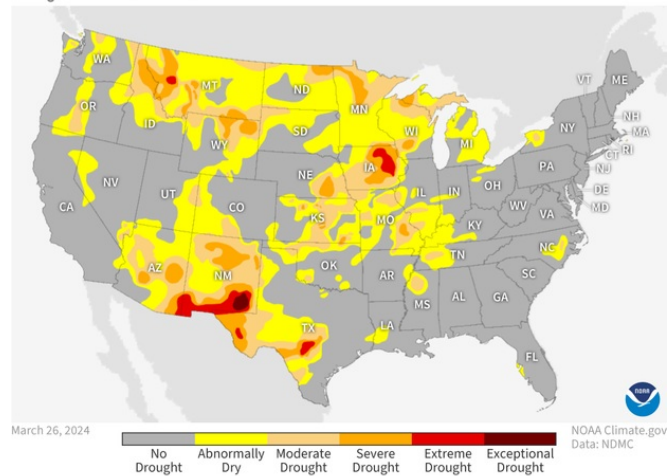
Editor's Note: Please do not miss an opportunity to discuss where food comes from with the unknowing. It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to tell the story of what modern genetics and seed production contribute to food security, safety, and affordability.

Factoids

U.S. DROUGHT AREA SMALLEST SINCE 2020

by Ryan Hanrahan, University of Illinois' FarmDoc project

Drought conditions at the end of March 2024



The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported Tuesday that "after a wet winter and early spring across much of the country, drought across the continuous United States had decreased to around 18% by the end of March, down from 20% at the end of February, and from about 36% at the beginning of winter."

"This is the least amount of drought across the

from other facilities to minimize disruption to its customers.

The Company remains dedicated to robust biosecurity programs across its locations; however, no farm is immune from HPAI. HPAI is still present in the wild bird population and the extent of possible future outbreaks, with heightened risk during the migration seasons, cannot be predicted. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the human health risk to the U.S. public from HPAI viruses is considered to be low. Also, according to the USDA, HPAI cannot be transmitted through safely handled and properly cooked eggs. There is no known risk related to HPAI associated with eggs that are currently in the market and no eggs have been recalled.

The Company continues to work closely with federal, state and local government officials and focused industry groups to mitigate the risk of future outbreaks and effectively manage the response.

The APHIS division of the USDA and individual states track and publicly report individual incidents of HPAI by location. The Company will provide updated information in its next quarterly report to be filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission and does not expect to provide interim updates unless material.

About Cal-Maine Foods

Cal-Maine Foods, Inc. is primarily engaged in the production, grading, packing, marketing and sale of fresh shell eggs, including conventional, cage-free, organic, pasture-raised, free-range and nutritionally enhanced eggs. The Company, which is headquartered in Ridgeland, Mississippi, is the largest producer and distributor of fresh shell eggs in the United States and sells the majority of its shell eggs in states across

country since May 2020," NOAA said. "Additionally, the percent of the country in the two most intense categories (D3-D4, representing extreme and exceptional drought) was only about 1% at the end of March, also the lowest amount since May 2020."

Where the Worst Drought Conditions Still Exist
Some of the most severe drought conditions in the United States currently exist in New Mexico, where 3.51% of the state -- mostly in the Southwest corner -- is experiencing exceptional drought and 16.72% of the state is experiencing at least extreme drought.

Extreme drought also exists in Iowa, with 11.09% of the state currently experiencing extreme drought conditions. That percent of extreme drought in Iowa is, however, "down from 35% of the state at the start of 2024," according to reporting from We Are Iowa's Brandon Lawrence.

"Recent soaking rainfall is the cause," Lawrence reported. "From March 1 to March 26, Des Moines received 2.38" of rain, which is above average for that timeframe. Since Jan. 1, Des Moines has seen about a half inch of precipitation more than normal. Other parts of Iowa benefited from healthy rains as well, especially over the western half of the state."

Drought Decreases Come Before Spring Planting
Progressive Farmer's John Baranick reported Tuesday that this spring, an "active storm track has continued and during the last week, we have started to see some real gains in the subsoil moisture profiles according to a lot of measurements."

"The barrage of storm systems is more likely to fill up some of the dry soils out there that still exist, and set up the early growth of the coming crop with good soil moisture as we head to a potential hot and dry summer thanks to that building La Nina in the Pacific," Baranick wrote.

"While there are concerns about planting being delayed this spring, the concerns are probably a bit unfounded," Baranick reported. "The active pattern may lead to some precipitation delays, but significant setbacks due to waterlogged soils are unlikely to occur."

Drought Outlook

NOAA reported Tuesday that "the drought outlook for April also has less coverage, with a mix of drought persistence and improvement and no regions predicted to develop drought."

"With equal chances for above-, below-, or near-average precipitation forecast for the northern part of the nation from the Great Lakes westward, drought currently in areas across the northern Rockies and western Great Lakes is expected to persist," NOAA said. "The Southwest is more of a

the southwestern, southeastern, mid-western and mid-Atlantic regions of the United States.

Source: Syngenta Group news release

After careful consideration of industry environment and the company's own development strategy, Syngenta Group has decided to withdraw its application for IPO on the main board of the Shanghai Stock Exchange.

As an agricultural technology innovation enterprise operating globally, Syngenta Group will always adhere to its original aspiration of continuously improving its strength and market competitiveness. It is committed to promoting the sustainable development of global agriculture through technological innovation and high-quality services, so as to create greater value for society, business partners, customers, employees and shareholders.

Syngenta Group will continue to pay attention to China's capital market and is willing to contribute to its healthy development. The company deems it best not to maintain an open IPO application. The Company will continue to consolidate its market share and enhance its leading position in the global agricultural technology field. It will look to restart the listing process, either in China or a different global exchange, when the conditions are right. It will also explore alternate sources of funding.

Delay of Mexican ban on glyphosate Nieuwsbericht

In 2023, the Mexican government published a decree that called the phase-out of the herbicide glyphosate and the elimination of genetically modified corn.

The Mexican ban on glyphosate was expected to come into

mixed bag, with those regions favored to be wetter than average in Arizona and central Texas likely to see drought improvement (or even removal), but with the regions in New Mexico and West Texas that are in drought expected to persist."

"Finally, drought is expected to improve (with some removal) across the Central Plains and western Corn Belt, with wetter-than-normal conditions favored in the monthly outlook (as well as in CPC's Week-2 outlook), certainly good news for agricultural concerns in this region," according to NOAA.

WHO IS A "FOREIGN PERSON" IN THE EYES OF USDA?

By Todd Janzen, Janzen Ag Law

Midwestern politicians are drumming up support for increased oversight of foreign ownership of US agricultural farmland. At the state and federal level, there are bills seeking to reduce or increase reporting obligations for foreign ownership of farmland. Arkansas even went so far as to order Syngenta (whose parent company is Chinese) to divest 160 acres of Arkansas farmland used for research and development. Although these efforts may seem new, the reality is that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been requiring "foreign persons" to identify themselves when purchasing farmland in the US since 1978.

Who is a "foreign person" in the eyes of USDA?

The Agriculture Foreign Investment Disclosure Act, passed in 1978, requires all "foreign persons" to report land acquisitions to the USDA. The Act defines who is a foreign person, or who has to report land ownership. From a natural person standpoint, a foreign person under the Act is an individual who is not a US citizen. That is simple enough, but a lot of farmland is purchased by legal entities, not individuals.

Under the Act, corporations, limited liability companies, partnerships, and other organizations may too be considered "persons" (which is generally consistent with US law). The Act also defines "foreign persons" to include any "person" which is created or organized under the laws of a foreign government or which has its principal place of business located outside of all the states. Thus, a corporation organized or headquartered in another country is a "foreign person."

There are also many companies that are incorporated in a US state but owned by foreign persons. Under the Act, some of these companies may be considered "foreign persons" too, even if every officer, employee, and asset is located inside the US. The Act states that USDA may consider a domestic corporation to be a foreign person if "significant interest or substantial control is directly or indirectly held" by foreign individuals, foreign

force on the 1st of April 2024. End of March though, President Lopez Obrador postponed this measure until further notice.

corporations, or foreign governments. The regulations go deeper to explain what "substantial control" and "indirectly held" mean.

Why does it matter? Many USDA programs prohibit participation by or funding to foreign persons.

If you are wondering whether these definitions apply to you, you should consult an attorney. The explanation above is a summary, and many exceptions and nuances apply.

More Information: [USDA AFIDA](#)

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