



Weekly Update from the Texas Seed Trade Association

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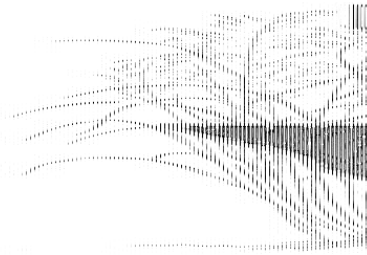


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The Texas Seed Trade Association Annual Membership & Policy Meeting Scheduled for February 11-13, 2024. Registration and Hotel Reservations

The room block is full. That does not necessarily mean we can't get you a room but you'll have to call Denise at 512-944-5052 and she'll do her best to accommodate you at our room rate. This is actually a good problem to have!

Senator Pete Flores will be with us on Monday as our special guest and speaker. Senator Flores has been a strong supporter of the Texas seed trade and will share his thoughts with us concerning Texas' future.

Dr. Paul De Laune, Texas AgriLife, will share his thoughts and research findings on applicability of cover crops in Texas agriculture. Cover crops are, finally, beginning to grab attention in Texas and may represent an opportunity for additional seed sales. How do they work in relatively dry agro-ecosystems? Come and listen to Dr. De Laune and bring your questions.

Katrina Horn will provide an overview of the Texas A&M AgriLife Research Crop Testing Program and its fit with seed companies.

Jeff Claxton from the Texas Department of Agriculture will lead a discussion on "variety not stated" small grain sales in Texas. TDA is a critical partner in combating VNS seed sales and we've got to find a way to all work together on this issue. Please come prepared to share your thoughts on this important topic.

Dr. Rick Vierling, Texas AgriLife Research, will provide an update on the Texas Foundation Seed Service facilities and programs. Rick plays a key role in our battle against VNS seed sales in Texas as well as administrate Foundation Seeds.

Jeb Owen, Texas Department of Agriculture, will provide an update on the certified seed winter growouts by location and share his thoughts on their future.

Pat Miller, American Seed Trade Association. will be with us to provide an update on ASTA activities, what's going on in other states that may find its way to Texas and the ongoing regulatory struggles with treated seed.

Monday morning will begin with our brief annual association business meeting chaired by TSTA President Chad Kriegshauser. We need to elect Board Members and Officers, we'll have a snapshot of how the association is doing, priorities for this year and beyond. Our new President of the association will outline his/her vision for the upcoming year and how you can help make it happen.

Senator Flores will address us as his schedule allows. We have tentatively scheduled the Senator for just before lunch and are planning on him having lunch with us. We may have a technical/informational presentation before lunch but it's likely most of our invited speakers will present following lunch.

Registration is open and [can be completed using this link](#).

The TSTA Board of Directors will meet on Tuesday February 13, in the morning.

Don't forget to **bring an auction item** for the scholarship fundraiser at the President's Reception & Dinner Monday evening.

AG ECONOMISTS FORECAST DOWNTURN IN *FARM JOURNAL'S* LATEST POLLING

By Tyne Morgan, Farm Journal



Agricultural economists' views on the ag economy took a dive in the first "Ag Economists' Monthly Monitor" of 2024. Lower commodity prices, along with the outlook for higher costs, continue to weigh on the agriculture industry.

However, ag economists think relatively strong balance sheets and working capital could provide a cushion for 2024 with no major concerns about immediate farm solvency issues.

"We certainly saw the results in the January numbers suggesting a downturn, probably the largest downturn since we've started the survey," says Scott Brown, an agricultural economist with the University of Missouri who also helps author the Ag Economists' Monthly Monitor.

Brown says from December to the latest survey in January, projections for corn prices fell 25 cents, just one sign that economists are growing more pessimistic at the start of the year.

"I don't want to make a trend out of just one survey, but if we continue down the path that we started with the January estimates, perhaps we're telling 2024 to be a less positive story than we would have just a few months ago," Brown says.

The January survey asked economists to pinpoint the two most important factors driving agriculture's economic health today, and in the next 12 months. Economists said:

*Declining commodity prices and complicated production costs, including stubbornly high interest rates juxtaposing reduced expenses in certain inputs.

*Commodity production and demand traveling in opposite directions.

*Macroeconomic factors domestically and abroad, as well as geopolitical factors.

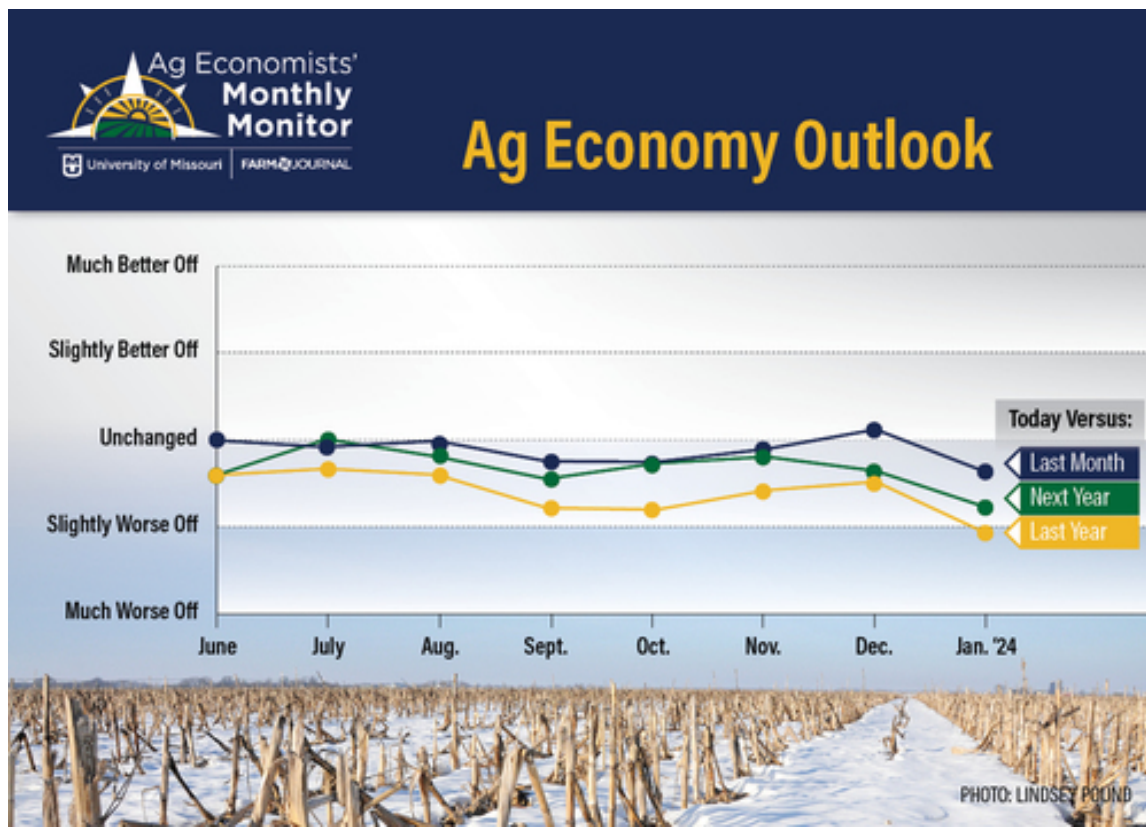
In contrast, economists say the most negative aspect regarding the outlook of U.S. agriculture includes:

Competition and expanded production in the global market paint an interesting export picture.

Political stagnation, which could impact biofuel and trade policy.

Compressing margins due to lower prices and higher expenses (including interest rates).

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



CONSERVATION REMAINS TOP PRIORITY FOR USDA AND CROP INSURERS

Source: National Crop Insurance Services news release

As America's farmers and ranchers continue to face immense climate and weather-related challenges, both the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and private-sector crop insurers are committed to strengthening the crop insurance program. Crop insurance serves as the first line of defense for American agriculture.

"We recognize that crop insurance is the core of the [farm] safety net," said Honorable Robert Bonnie, Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation at USDA, in his remarks this week at the crop insurance industry's annual convention. "We recognize the vital importance of crop insurance to manage the risks of U.S. agriculture."

Bonnie noted the investments that farmers have already made in sustainable farming practices such as conservation tillage, cover crops, and measures to improve soil health, all of which are practices that are compatible with the requirements of the crop insurance program.

"Farmers and ranchers have been doing [these conservation practices] for a long, long time - before we called them climate-smart," Bonnie said. "Crop insurance is already a critical climate tool; it already provides significant economic resilience and sustainability that is critically important."

One of the key strengths of crop insurance is that it can quickly adapt to meet the needs of farmers amid a changing climate. Congress, USDA, and crop insurers have worked together to improve the voluntary adoption of climate-smart farming practices that increase resiliency, improve conservation, and support a healthy environment.

USDA will continue to look at new and innovative ways to improve crop insurance and ensure the program works better for all farm producers, while maintaining its actuarial soundness, Bonnie said. He also commended the growth of the program, with an 83 percent increase in acres covered over the last decade, and its ability to quickly deliver aid when and where it's needed. Crop insurance paid out more than \$20 billion during the 2022 crop year to keep farmers in business after disaster.

"For us, crop insurance is a priority," Bonnie said. "We continue to budget strongly for crop insurance, recognizing that it is a vital part of what we do for the American farmer and rancher."



News Bits

TRUMP IS CONSIDERING 60% TARIFF ON CHINA

By Ryan Hanrahan, University of Illinois' FarmDoc program

CNBC's Rebecca Picciotto reported Sunday that "former President Donald Trump plans to escalate the U.S-China trade war he launched during his first term as president if he is elected to the office again in November."

"The GOP frontrunner

FRENCH FARMERS CALL OFF PROTEST FOLLOWING NATION'S AG MINISTER'S CONCESSIONS

Source: AP

PARIS -- France's two major farmers unions announced Thursday their decision to suspend protests and lift road blockades across the country, in a dramatic development shortly after the French prime minister unveiled a new set of measures they see as "tangible progress."

Farmers have been protesting for days across the country to denounce low wages, heavy regulation and unfair competition from abroad.

The President of Young Farmers union, Arnaud Gaillot, spoke alongside the head of France's biggest farmers union FNSEA on Thursday and said: "We call on our members to suspend the blockades."

"We have been heard on a number of points, with tangible progress," including emergency measures to financially support struggling farmers and wine

confirmed in an interview broadcast on Sunday that he is considering a plan to impose tariffs of 60% or higher on Chinese goods in his potential second term," Picciotto reported. "Beyond China, the former president has said he would impose a blanket 10% tariff on all U.S. imports, despite broad criticism over how that could hurt consumers."

"You know, obviously, I'm not looking to hurt China. I want to get along with China. I think it's great. But they've really taken advantage of our country," Trump told (Maria) Bartiromo in an interview that aired Sunday," Business Insider's Kwan Wei Kevin Tan reported.

"The US has been China's biggest export market for more than 20 years, including \$536 billion in exports in 2022," Bloomberg's Alicia Diaz reported Sunday.

To read entire report, [Click Here](#)

EPA RULES NO LINK BETWEEN PARAQUAT AND PARKINSON'S DISEASE Feb. 2, 2024

By Todd Neeley, DTN

LINCOLN, Neb. -- EPA has not found a scientific link between the use of the herbicide paraquat and Parkinson's disease (PD), according to the agency's latest report in the ongoing review of the chemical released this week.

EPA conducted a new review in response to a lawsuit filed by Earthjustice on behalf of farmworkers, public health, and environmental groups.

"After a thorough review of the relevant studies, the agency concluded that the weight of evidence was insufficient to link paraquat exposure from pesticidal use of U.S.-registered paraquat products to PD in humans," the agency said in a 63-page review released on

producers, said Arnaud Rousseau, president of FNSEA.

Earlier Thursday, Prime Minister Gabriel Attal announced a new set of measures, coming on top of other promises made in recent days.

His speech came as convoys with hundreds of angry farmers driving heavy-duty tractors created chaos outside the European Union's headquarters, demanding leaders at an EU summit provide relief from rising prices and bureaucracy.

"The question is currently being asked throughout Europe: is there a future for our agriculture? Of course, the answer is yes," Attal said.

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

Editor's Note: German farmers have not received similar news from their government concerning relief from current circumstances. And the farmer protests have now spread to Spain.

Several weeks ago, in the first installment of this on-going story, we warned against thinking this could not, or would not, happen here. Several breaking news stories over the last week have highlighted agri-lenders evaluation of individual farm "climate friendly" practices as an important criteria for operating loans. These stories were targeted at large U.S. banks and agricultural lenders and were specific to U.S. farming operations.

We are all accustomed to lenders taking various factors into consideration when contemplating a loan. What's concerning about this latest emphasis on carbon-reducing practices for farm operating loans is that few of them have any scientific basis and seemingly lean towards satisfying a political agenda.

Time was when loaning money was primarily based on a calculation of someone's ability to pay it back with interest. We're confident that's still in the equation but there appears to be additional hurdles forthcoming.

Juxtaposed with all the "concern" about food security, food deserts, high grocery costs, and equitable access to nutrition there seems to be a slight disconnect.

Factoids

USDA ANNOUNCES \$270 MILLION AWARDED TO BUILD FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCY

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack

Tuesday.

EPA issued a review decision in 2021 on the chemical primarily used in cotton, re-approving paraquat's registration. The EPA is in the middle of a routine 15-year review of the chemical.

The petitioning groups raised several issues about that decision, including potential connections to Parkinson's. At that point, EPA added several additional mitigation measures to prevent human exposure to paraquat.

In its latest review, the EPA said it is continuing to study the latest research on Parkinson's but issued the new report now because of court-imposed deadlines.

EPA said it plans to implement additional information on the disease as well as other information in a new review document slated for completion by Jan. 17, 2025.

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

USDA REPORTS CATTLE INVENTORY DOWN 2%, LOWEST SINCE 1951

There were 87.2 million head of cattle and calves on U.S. farms as of Jan. 1, 2024, according to the Cattle report published today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

Other key findings in the report were:

- Of the 87.2 million head inventory, all cows and heifers that have calved totaled 37.6 million.
- There are 28.2 million beef cows in the United States as of Jan. 1, 2024, down 2% from last year.
- The number of milk cows in the United States decreased slightly to 9.36 million.

announced today that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), to date, has awarded over \$270 million through cooperative agreements with state departments of agriculture to build resilience across the middle of the food supply chain and strengthen local and regional food systems. The funding is being awarded through the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure program which is administered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

Through a competitive grant process, states and territories will issue subawards of Infrastructure Grants to agricultural producers or processors, nonprofit organizations, local government entities, tribal governments, and institutions such as schools, universities, or hospitals. In addition to Infrastructure Grants, some states will use funding to support supply chain coordination and technical assistance to increase resiliency within the food system.

At the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture's 2024 Winter Policy Conference, Secretary Vilsack announced Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Utah, and West Virginia have now opened their Request for Applications for the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure program, joining the 28 states that are already offering grant funding for projects that support supply chain infrastructure. Currently, there is \$230 million available in Infrastructure Grant funding across the country.

"These unprecedented investments into our nation's supply chain infrastructure will not only benefit consumers by ensuring they have dependable access to fresh and locally produced food, the investments will benefit producers and rural communities by providing more options and creating more, new and better markets for small and mid-size producers," Secretary Vilsack said. "USDA also recognizes that the work through the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure program is made possible by the strong partnerships we maintains with state agricultural agencies."

Editor's Note: We cannot help but be a little suspicious of programs that do not possess self-explanatory titles. And we wonder how many things, to how many people, "food supply chain resiliency" can mean. We are impressed daily by the amount of money the USDA is giving away - it is without precedent and virtually all of it is targeted at what the state calls "historically under-served segments." We aren't so callous as to believe that all of this represents pandering but we aren't so naive to believe some of this is simple vote buying with your money.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA COURT OF APPEALS VACATES DICAMBA HERBICIDE'S REGISTRATION

Agri-Pulse reports:

EPA and dicamba registrants are left with difficult decisions to make in the wake of a court decision vacating registrations of dicamba, which had been approved for use on cotton and soybeans in 34 states.

Registrants Bayer, Syngenta and BASF intervened

· U.S. calf crop was estimated at 33.6 million head, down 2% from 2022.

· All cattle on feed were at 14.4 million head, up 2% from 2023.

To obtain an accurate measurement of the current state of the U.S. cattle industry, NASS surveyed approximately 36,300 operators across the nation during the first half of January.

THOUSANDS OF FARMERS CAUTION BIDEN ADMINISTRATION AGAINST SOLELY FOCUSING ON EVS AT EXPENSE OF BIOFUELS

Source: National Corn Growers Association news release

A letter signed by 3,466 farmers from across the country was sent to President Biden today expressing concern that his administration is taking a short-sighted approach to addressing climate change by prioritizing the use of electric vehicles over biofuels, such as corn ethanol, as it works to drastically lower the nation's greenhouse gas emissions.

"If we are going to address climate change and meet our sustainability goals, we are going to have to take a multi-pronged approach, that includes tapping into higher levels of biofuels, such as corn ethanol, which offers an immediate climate solution," the letter said.

The letter, which drew thousands of signatures in less than a week, comes as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency prepares to release its light- and medium-duty vehicle tailpipe emissions standards for 2027-2032. To help meet the standards, the president has set a goal that 50% of all vehicle sales will be electric by 2030. A similar rulemaking is also being considered through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

in the case and could appeal to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, as could EPA, but chances of success there seem slim considering it was the 9th Circuit that vacated dicamba registrations in 2020. EPA also could work quickly, as it did in 2020, to fully review the herbicide's environmental and economic impacts, but time is short before the growing season.

A bigger question involves whether producers can use existing stocks of the herbicide. In 2020, when EPA canceled the registrations after the court decision, it allowed continued use of the herbicides. Meredith Stevenson, an attorney with Center for Food Safety, one of the groups that sued EPA, said, "We think it's likely there could be an emergency stay filed to the Ninth Circuit any day. It is also possible EPA could authorize the 'emergency use' of the products."

In its statement Tuesday, Bayer said, "Our top priority is making sure growers have the approved products and support they need to safely and successfully grow their crops. We will keep our customers updated as we learn more from the EPA in advance of the 2024 growing season."

A federal court in Arizona on Tuesday vacated the 2020 registrations of three dicamba products previously approved by the EPA for over-the-top applications including XtendiMax, Engenia and Tavium. The court ruled the agency violated notice-and-comment mandates for new-use pesticide registrations. The ruling in the U.S.

District Court for the District of Arizona in Tucson effectively leaves farmers without dicamba products for the upcoming growing season pending action by the EPA.

ANALYST REPORTS ONLY 2% OF INVESTMENTS ARE IN AGRIFOOD TECH, SAYS 2024 WILL BE THE TOUGHEST YEAR

by Jennifer Marston, AgFunderNews

Venture capital money allocated directly to agrifood only accounts for about 2% of the entire global investment pool, says Roberto Viton at Valoral Advisors, who has been tracking the agrifood funding landscape for more than 10 years.

And while the number of agrifood-focused VC funds has grown worldwide from a mere 42 in 2013 to more than 280 as of the third quarter of 2023, that growth has slowed in the last few years.

"Growth was possible because we were starting from very low levels," Viton says of the rise in agrifood funds over the last decade.

Putting that growth in context, he says, "Typically when you talk to an institutional investor, like a pension fund, and you ask how much money they have directly invested in [agrifoodtech], they will tell

you anything between zero and 2%. Or maybe 3% if they include forestry.

Like others, he also believes 2024 is going to be another tough road for agrifood.

"This year is going to be the toughest one in my view," he says. "More companies will really struggle and many companies will close. But this will evolve. I see a lot of conversations between startup founders to merge businesses, to consolidate. I think that's what's going to happen next."

To read entire report, [Click Here](#)

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The articles, views, and opinions expressed in the Weekly Update do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Texas Seed Trade Association or the opinions of its members.

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