**Friday Notes**

Council for Agricultural Science and Technology

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**New CAST Commentary**

See page two below for details about CAST's new paper, webinar, and student study guide focused on Producing Food Products from Cultured Animal Tissues.

"Building a Legacy for a Brighter Future"
--the CAST 2019 Annual Report.

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**April 24, 2020**

**Science Says Your Food Is Safe**

*And so does the USDA’s Dr. Mindy Brashears*

Let's make one thing clear: Our food is safe. That confirmation comes from numerous authorities including Mindy Brashears, the Under Secretary for Food Safety at the USDA. In a recent message sent to CAST, she noted:

"There’s no doubt that we all have plenty to worry about during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Nation’s top-ranking food safety official, let me assure you that there is one thing that you do not need to worry about during this time—the safety of your food."

A recent CAST blog post cites numerous health authorities assuring us that the basic food supply is fit for consumption if we all use common sense practices as we get the produce from field to fork or from barn to takeout bag.

The agriculture sector does face many obstacles: Plant closings, vegetables rotting in fields, milk dumped on the ground, and food workers suffering from an alarming rate of coronavirus. The food supply chain is being tested to the limits, but it is worth remembering that the food itself is not contaminated.

As Dr. Brashears emphasized, "With science-based food safety systems at work and dedicated Food Safety and Inspection employees on the job, Americans can trust that their food is safe." Read Brashears’ complete essay here.

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**News and Views**

**Pandemic Hoaxes**: Professor Stuart Smyth notes that the agricultural industry delivers safe and nutritious foods, but some people are using the global pandemic to spread disinformation about modern agriculture and food production. Also check this CAST blog post about coronavirus misinformation.

**Farm Aid Package**: Last week, the Administration announced a 19-billion-dollar Coronavirus Food Assistance Program for the agriculture sector.

**Farm, Small Businesses, and Rural Hospitals**: This week, the House cleared a $484 billion COVID-19 relief bill that will replenish the Paycheck Protection Program with an additional $320 billion and make farms eligible for a separate disaster loan program for small businesses.

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The University of Pennsylvania encourages your participation in this survey about the role of food in different people's lives during the current pandemic.

The 50th anniversary of Earth Day has changed due to coronavirus. Check here for historical insights and reflections. This Animal Ag Alliance site looks at how agriculture is involved. As they point out, for farmers and ranchers, every day is Earth Day.
The USDA, ERS, and NIFA are partnering with the University of Missouri to host a joint Virtual Career Expo on April 28, 2020.

The USDA is engaging the public for input about its new Agriculture Innovation Agenda.

Tuskegee University's webinar "Real Talk About COVID-19: Facts, Updates and Actions" addressed many pertinent issues and is available on this video.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, FFA members and FFA Alumni and Supporters across the country continue to serve and feed America while helping others in their communities.

Send in Ideas
CAST welcomes suggestions for future publications and projects.

CAST Social Media

New Commentary Rollout
Cell Cultivated Meat--Paper, Webinar, and Study Guide

Cell cultivated meat is developing at a rapid pace, but there are many questions to address before it is ready for the dinner table. CAST’s new commentary, Producing Food Products from Cultured Animal Tissues, will examine many factors about this critical issue.

After the success of the food animal veterinary paper and webinar, CAST is preparing for its next online rollout:

A free download of the CAST Commentary will be available April 27 from the CAST website.

A free webinar featuring research from the commentary will occur April 28 at Noon Eastern, 11:00 a.m. Central, 10:00 a.m. Mountain,9:00 a.m. Pacific.

A Student Study Guide will be available with the paper's release on April 27.

Food Animal Veterinarians--Video of Webinar Available

An April 7 webinar hosted by CAST and featuring LSU's Christine Navarre focused on highlights from the important new publication, Impact of Recruitment and Retention of Food Animal Veterinarians on the U.S. Food Supply. A YouTube video of the webinar is available here, and the issue paper, a one-page Ag quickCAST:
On Earth Day, many pointed out that Frank Mitloehner (UC-Davis and 2019 BCCA recipient) is insightful about common misconceptions regarding livestock and the environment.

CAST Blogs Include Various Links and Updates

CAST's recent blog posts look at (1) the challenges for the food supply chain--and the fact that FOOD IS SAFE in this coronavirus era and (2) the growing trend to plant "victory gardens."

Check these recent blog posts for further information:

(1) Humans, animals, and the virus
(2) How the pandemic is affecting farming
(3) Hoaxes and misinformation
(4) COVID-19 and food safety/systems
(5) Resources for virtual learning

You can stay updated on CAST news and more by joining our mailing list and through our Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn pages.

Animal Agriculture and Environmental News

Animal Studies and Goals (video): This animal sciences major at North Carolina A&T State explains how her university program helps her learn how to run her own small-scale chicken business as well as prepare to practice medicine in a rural community.

Pork Production Challenges: As this Kansas State University expert explains, the global pandemic and subsequent closures of packing plants and processing facilities have created challenges for swine producers.

Impacts on Cattle Industry: Using existing market data and futures market data, the U.S. Cattlemen's Association estimated the economic impact of COVID-19 on the cattle industry.

Poultry Safety and Supply: The National Chicken Council president explains how chicken processors are doing everything they can to keep their employees safe while keeping chicken on the shelves.

Tough Choices: Livestock producers may face "horrible choices" as prices tumble, plants close, and supply chains are shifted. This could be especially painful for pork producers and those dealing with egg production.

Taming the Wild Horse Population: USDA Wildlife Services and the Bureau of Land Management are testing a new fertility control tool to help reduce wild horse populations in areas where they are overabundant.

Food Science and Safety News
As this 60 Minutes segment shows, world-renowned chef José Andrés and others are working hard to make sure Americans get fed during the pandemic.

Women are disproportionately affected by the pandemic. An average of 2.5 times more women than men die of COVID-19, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These women are more likely to be of color, more likely to be in their 60s, and more likely to have chronic health problems.

Controlled Environment Agriculture, commonly known as vertical farming, is a growing system designed to cope with weather and climate challenges.

The Johns Hopkins University COVID-19 Dashboard "interactive map" continues to update the world regarding coronavirus statistics.

Plant Agriculture and Environmental News

Practical Solutions: Many groups are working to link farmers with interested local buyers. Some sites--such as this one from the Practical Farmers of Iowa--serve as a directory of farms and consumers.

WOTUS Replacement: The Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers published the replacement for the "WOTUS rule," and it takes effect on June 22.

Ethanol Woes: The impacts from COVID-19 have crippled the ethanol industry, and adding to the tension, lawmakers are preparing to revisit the Renewable Fuel Standard.

Pima Cotton: There seems to be increasing interest in producing Pima cotton because it is supposedly higher quality, and it fetches higher prices at the market.

Cotton Genomes (related to above link): Texas A&M experts joined with a research team that unveiled the genomes of five cotton species, a situation that will help facilitate genetic improvements.

International News

Off the Shelf (video): The BBC features best-selling authors recommending their "lockdown reading lists."

Koala Comeback: Several koalas injured in the 2019 Australia bushfires have been released into the wild--including Anwen, a female whose photos went viral due to the severe nature of her burns.

Dire Warnings: U.N. officials said that the world is facing multiple famines of "biblical proportions" in just a matter of months due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Agriculture Resilience: This article focuses on olive oil prices and considers the European Union’s overall agricultural sector resilience.

Food Supply in India: The lockdown has disrupted India's agricultural sector, starving it of buyers and migrant laborers as the restrictions halt people's movements.
General Interest News

Practical Ways to Celebrate: A University of Kentucky water specialist suggested some activities that people can do alone or with their families to honor Earth Day.

Safety Needed: A child dies approximately every three days in an agriculture-related incident according to the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety. Machinery mishaps are the leading cause.

Testing Pigs and a Pandemic: An Iowa State University veterinarian used sophisticated DNA analysis tools to diagnose porcine epidemic diarrhea virus. Now, the same equipment and expertise are being used in COVID-19 testing.

Keeping Food Available: Penn State students and alum are embodying the "We Are" spirit by keeping campus food pantries open and donating to food banks.

Helping Out: The produce and allied industries are continuing to help during the COVID-19 crisis with efforts from growers, shippers, trade groups, wholesalers, and food service companies.

When You Actually Hope for a Rainy Weekend: With references to front loaders and blue corduroy jackets, Mark Parker gives you the top ten signs you’re farm folk.

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* American Bar Association, Section of Environment, Energy, & Resources-Agricultural Management
* American Dairy Science Association
* American Farm Bureau Federation
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* American Seed Trade Association
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  * Crop Science Society of America
  * Entomological Society of America
  * Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy
* Bayer
* National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a Contractor to the Beef Checkoff
* National Corn Growers Association/Iowa Corn Promotion Board
* National Milk Producers Federation
* National Pork Board
* North Carolina Biotechnology Center
* North Central Weed Science Society
* Northeastern Weed Science Society
* Poultry Science Association
* Rural Sociological Society
* Society for In Vitro Biology
* Soil Science Society of America
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