



Friday Notes is designed to enhance communication among various agricultural sectors, educators, students, and the public who are interested in a variety of plant, animal, food, and environmental issues. Friday Notes advocates the pursuit of credible, unbiased, science-based information. Material contained in linked articles is from the original authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of CAST.

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Announcements



The cherry blossom season in Japan peaked at the [earliest date since records began](#) 1,200 years ago. On the other side of the world, Washington, D.C., also celebrates the [ephemeral nature of this beautiful sign of spring](#).

[Julie Borlaug](#)—President of the Borlaug Foundation, Vice President of External Relations for Inari, and CAST Board of Trustee member—joined the World Food Prize Foundation Council of Advisors.

The USDA is requesting public input about the creation of a new [Rural Renewable Energy Pilot Program](#), and a public session will be held April 22.

According to this employment resource, more than 250 career profiles are available to [people interested in a job in agriculture](#).

As an [example of science careers](#), check out the path this North Carolina State University scientist-educator has taken.

CAST College Corner

April 2, 2021

Superheroes in the COVID Battle Women Scientists Play Major Roles

Biotech companies, universities, government agencies, and health care systems have emerged as [major players in the fight](#) against the global pandemic. [Women are leading the effort](#) at Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, and Oxford/AstraZeneca, [as well as playing important roles](#) at the National Institutes of Health and many other places.



Science is winning some key battles. Pfizer said its vaccine was 100% [effective in a study of adolescents](#), and research shows that [vaccines prevent infection](#) in first-line medical workers. Many universities are using science to help with vaccines and other components in the struggle. For example, Iowa State University scientists are using their understanding of animals to [test humans during the health crisis](#), and the University of Kentucky examined [how COVID-19 has impacted journalists](#) and communication.

Superheroes sometimes have warts, and society is dealing with problems that arise: Some nations are [not able to obtain vaccines](#), several European countries have had [issues with the AstraZeneca vaccine](#), and [millions of Johnson & Johnson doses were ruined](#) at the lab—but they made it clear that the public is not endangered, just inconvenienced by delay.

Scientists might be among the superheroes in the global campaign, but the world needs a united effort from everyone to win the fight against coronavirus.

News and Views

Crop Forecast Surprises: As this [story, video, and maps](#) demonstrate, the USDA planting report showed some surprises, especially for corn and soybeans.

Science Board Move: The [EPA removed more than 40 members of two science advisory boards](#) in a move that is considered part of the new administration's focus on "science integrity." Some disagree with the action.

[Tuskegee University](#) is participating in the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities' "Powered by Publics" initiative to receive investment and support to advance student-centered transformation.

[Penn State University](#) will receive support for summer research opportunities for students who want to work in Pennsylvania's grape and wine industry.

[University of Arkansas](#) soil and environmental sciences students achieved a combined 21 awards, including some earned at a Weed Science Society of America competition.

[University of Florida/IFAS](#) set new research publication records in 2020.

Check throughout *Friday Notes* to see more featured articles from member universities.

CAST Social Media

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CAST [welcomes ideas](#) for future publications and projects.

USDA and COVID-19: This update looks at USDA [activities to contain the pandemic](#), and this regularly updated site posts how [vaccination efforts are going in each state](#)

Trade Issues: (1) The USDA said a [Mexican plan to ban imports of genetically modified corn](#) applies to grain used for human food products, not livestock feed. (2) U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai said the [U.S. isn't ready to lift tariffs on Chinese imports](#) but might be open to trade negotiations with Beijing. (3) The [U.S. government cut trade ties with Myanmar](#), after the country's military staged a coup.

Far Side of the Barn

A Spring Ritual (videos): No, it's not an April Fools joke--Pepsi and Peeps will release a limited-edition soda [combining the two flavors](#). Peeps [seem to blossom](#) each spring, but not everyone gets thrilled by the [many Peeps-inspired products](#).



Get By with a Little Help from a Friend (video): A [young otter needs a lift](#) to scale a wall and stay with its family, and a mother bear [helps its cubs negotiate busy traffic](#).

Mouse Phobia (video): Some rural communities in Australia are suffering their [worst plague of mice in decades](#)

CAST Updates

A Focus on CAST Society Members



CAST is a member-supported nonprofit organization addressing important issues that impact our planet, such as how to feed the world's population; water and soil conservation; leading land use practices; and animal, food, and environmental science. Society members are a key component in the effort to fulfill CAST's mission—communicating credible, science-based information to a wide audience.

[Society members include](#) those representing medicine, plants, food, animals, and other types of science and agriculture. CAST's society members enjoy several benefits such as access to publications and a

weekly newsletter. But just as notable, these groups share information with others through CAST's publications and social media, and their members keep aware of credible, science-based research and information from the many sources available through CAST.

Member [societies have a voice on the CAST Board of Representatives](#), a group made up of the member societies, universities, commercial companies, nonprofit or trade organizations, and the Board of Directors. Each member of the board serves on one of three work groups—Animal Agriculture and Environmental Issues, Food Science and Safety, or Plant Agriculture and Environmental Issues. The work groups meet at an annual board meeting and hold monthly conference calls. These work groups also serve the critical role of helping CAST identify, clarify, and prioritize national issues it should address in its publications to support the science, technology, and innovation of food and agriculture.

Note: CAST also [offers individual membership](#) at various levels, including a free student membership for those currently attending an accredited college or university. After graduation, they are encouraged to continue their membership by joining at the young professional level for \$35.00.

CAST Impact Reports

CAST had two new impact reports in March. The first one was [Protecting Food Animal Gene Pools for Future Generations](#), which was released 18 months ago in September 2019. The second one was [The Importance of Communicating Empirically Based Science for Society](#), which was released in September 2020. CAST appreciates all of the work volunteers have put in to creating these publications.

Animal Agriculture and Environmental News

Genome-editing Survey: There will be a webinar on gene editing and a survey on how consumers feel about [changing livestock DNA--hosted by UC-Davis on April 17](#).

Veterinarians Lead by Example: The [veterinary-client-patient relationship](#) involves pig care and health—as well as worker safety.

Beef Matters: Agricultural economics expert Jayson Lusk (2017 BCCA) focused on the [impacts of the pandemic on the beef cattle sector](#) during a recent presentation.

Promoting Pork: This article looks at how the National Pork Board's funds have influenced [investments for pork producers](#).

Cattle and Grass: Kansas State University beef cattle experts caution producers about [grass tetany disease](#).

Suez Canal: At least 20 cargo ships carrying livestock were delayed in the [blockage caused by the Ever Given](#). World trade continued after an [engineering feat to free the ship](#). More than 100 such ships ply the world's waterways, some [carrying 10,000 cargo containers--mishaps occur](#).

Tick Fighters: A vaccine used in combination with safer pesticides has eradicated a [multi-pesticide resistant population of cattle ticks](#) in a herd in Puerto Rico.



It's tough to tell if a chicken is smiling, but this “conierge” of hen wellness and biosecurity [explains the importance of hen happiness](#).

A North Carolina poultry expert explains why swift communication between farm staff and veterinarians is [key to limiting the risk of poultry disease outbreaks](#).

Food Science and Safety News

Nutrition Goals: Texas A&M experts are emphasizing the [importance of individualized diet and precision nutrition](#) to meet specific health needs and goals.

Fresh Produce Trends (video): This report looks at consumer studies tracking [trends in the purchases and consumption](#) of fresh produce. Results include potatoes edging out tomatoes in the vegetable list, and bananas slipping past apples for fruit.

Urban Agriculture Potential: These researchers look at why it is [unrealistic to expect urban agriculture to provide](#) the majority of nutrition for the city's population.

New Packing Plant: A group of Nebraska cattlemen have announced plans to launch a beef [packing and processing facility in 2023](#).

A Meaty TikTok Tournament: The National Pork Board and The North American Meat Institute will host a tournament on



This study looks at the roles played by the nation's agriculture and food industries as [employers, taxpayers, and providers of the food](#) and sustenance required to power the entire economy.

University of Florida specialists look at the [costs and benefits of vegetable gardening](#).

TikTok where chef and nutrition influencers show off [deli meat dinner options](#).

Plant Agriculture and Environmental News

Economically Targeted Conservation: Mississippi State University researchers show farmers that [making money off their land](#) can be feasible even if the land isn't producing.

New Strawberries Named "Finn" and "Mojo": UC-Davis scientists have developed two varieties of [strawberries that are specifically bred for summer](#) growing.

Great American Outdoors Act: The USDA Forest Service is funding [projects to conserve critical forest and wetland habitat](#), support rural economic recovery, and increase public awareness of national forests and grasslands.

Intercropping: This agriculturalist is trying to [grow two or more crops simultaneously](#) on the same land—at this stage, industrial hemp and loblolly pine trees.

Coffee Rush: A new study finds that pulp—a waste product of coffee production—can be used to [speed up tropical forest recovery](#) on post agricultural land.

Bioenergy in the Willows: These researchers say shrub willow—a quick-growing woody crop—can be an excellent [source of renewable bioenergy](#).



Researchers at the University of Missouri are looking for a way to [pump gas from decomposing plants and animal waste directly](#) into a vehicle's fuel tank, and the technology could find its first home on the farm.

International News

Floating Gardens: Ohio State University researchers suggest that [floating gardens might help reduce food insecurity](#) and provide income for rural households in flood-prone parts of Bangladesh.

Organic Plastic: Japanese companies are teaming up with a leading university to produce a [new kind of plastic that should help cut CO2 emissions](#).

Plastic Opportunities: Eco-friendly packaging developed by Ugandan and British experts [could boost the incomes of female farmers](#) in the country and create job opportunities.

Women Farmers: The [number of women in the EU's farming sector](#) has been slowly increasing—Baltic countries have the highest proportion of farms managed by a woman.

Cutting Carbon Emissions: Two leading agricultural companies in Great Britain announced ambitious [plans to reach net-zero carbon emissions](#).

Crops in Sweden: This study considers the [impact of climate change](#) on growing seasons, rain, and irrigation in Sweden.



The number of [wild boar victims of African swine fever](#) in the border region of Poland and Germany is approaching 5,000.

With support from the Cornell Alliance for Science, Nigerian farmers are enthusiastic about their government's approval of [five new varieties of NextGen cassava](#).

General Interest News

Value of Extension Programs: Alexa Lamm—University of Georgia and 2020 BCCA—and colleagues published a paper about the [challenges of communicating the value of](#)

[extension programming](#) to stakeholders.

Post-surgery Biomarkers: University of Nebraska–Lincoln researchers are helping with a study that [identifies potential biomarkers for cognitive struggles](#) after surgery.

ASABE News: This site provides many reasons to be inspired by the transformational [possibilities of agricultural and biological engineering](#).

Sunny or Cloudy? Ohio companies are developing [large solar projects](#) throughout the state, but some farmers and residents have big concerns.

Hankering for Cheese in Space: A local cheese shop in Houston [received an email from NASA](#) asking them to send cheese into space per the request of an astronaut.



In a remote Canadian wilderness, this photographer focuses on the [sights—and the sounds—of the northern lights](#).

Photo Credits

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Societies, Companies, and Nonprofit Organizations Serving on the CAST Board of Representatives

- * Agricultural & Applied Economics Association
- * American Association of Avian Pathologists
- * American Association of Bovine Practitioners
- * American Bar Association, Section of Environment, Energy, & Resources-Agricultural Management
- * American Dairy Science Association
- * American Farm Bureau Federation
- * American Meat Science Association
- * American Meteorological Society, Committee on Agricultural and Forest Meteorology
- * American Seed Trade Association
- * American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers
- * American Society of Agronomy
- * American Society of Animal Science
- * American Society of Plant Biologists
- * American Veterinary Medical Association
- * Aquatic Plant Management Society
- * BASF Corporation
- * Cal Poly State University
- * Corteva Agriscience
- * CropLife America
- * Crop Science 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 Central Weed Science Society
- * Northeastern Weed Science Society
- * Poultry Science Association
- * Rural Sociological Society
- * Society for In Vitro Biology
- * Soil Science Society of America
- * Syngenta Crop Protection
- * The Fertilizer Institute
- * Tuskegee University
- * United Soybean Board
- * University of Nevada-Reno
- * U.S. Poultry and Egg Association
- * Weed Science Society of America
- * Western Society of Weed Science

CAST, through its network of experts, assembles, interprets, and communicates credible, balanced, science-based information to policymakers, the media, the private sector, and the public.

Members of CAST's Education Program

* Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo

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- * Cornell University
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- * Kansas State University
- * Mississippi State University
- * North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
- * North Carolina State University
- * Penn State University
- * Texas A&M University College of Ag & Life Sciences
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The Science Source for Food,
 Agricultural, and Environmental Issues

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