Informing a Skeptical Public
More about the biotech food debate

In an effort to promote facts over fear, scientists and food experts produce a steady flow of information to explain that food products made from biotech crops are safe, but the public is also influenced by those who distrust the use of genetically modified organisms. Case in point: This site touts what it calls the "dangerous side effects of consuming GMO foods."

Despite overwhelming scientific evidence that genetically modified foods are safe for human consumption, many Americans are distrustful of GMOs. However, the relative lack of outrage over the forthcoming release of nonbrowning biotech apples could signal a change.

Note: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is requesting comments on the topic of genome editing in the production of plants that would be eaten by both humans and animals.

News and Views

**Global Grain Supplies:** Carryout stocks of corn, soybeans, and wheat continue to get larger both in the United States and around the globe, according to the USDA's latest World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates.

**Voicing Preference:** Hundreds of agriculture organizations submitted a letter of endorsement for Secretary of Agriculture nominee Sonny Perdue.

**Delay on Rulings:** The effective date for a new Agriculture Department rule that sets standards of proof for market practices in the...
organizations, technologies, and practices of America's past.

How to Succeed at Farming by Really Trying
Insightful interviews with women who are big-time farm operators.

A Donkey with Spunk
The UC-Davis community recently lost a much-loved member—the 29-year-old donkey Action Jackson. With an outgoing personality and a love for attention, the animal entertained countless visitors—especially children. The gregarious donkey also found time to sire at least 500 donkeys and mules—no wonder he was called "Action."

International Livestock Congress
Check out this Texas A&M AgriLife Extension information about the 2017 International Livestock Congress, March 8-9 in Houston.

CAST Social Media
Click here for links to CAST sites: Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, LinkedIn, videos, and blogs.

livestock and poultry industry has been delayed two months. The USDA is accepting public comment on the rule until March 24. Also, the USDA is delaying the effective date of a new rule on organic livestock and poultry practices to comply with a Trump administration directive.

**Information Availability?** The USDA recently removed public access to tens of thousands of reports that document the numbers of animals kept by research labs, companies, zoos, circuses, and animal transporters—and information related to the Animal Welfare Act. Reaction to the move is mixed.

**What Makes Farmers Tick?** This recent ISU graduate has been traveling the United States for the Beck's Why I Farm Roadtrip.

News from the Far Side of the Barn

Trapped on Thin Ice (video): Yes, plenty of good people walk this world. These folks worked to save a moose trapped in a frozen lake.

BFG of the Sea (video): The larger species of manta ray often reaches 23 feet in width, and this snorkeler goes up close to swim with the big friendly giant.

Throw Those Ragged Things Away (video): Farmer Derek Klingenberg creates a parody of a Florida Georgia Line tune to show off his “Holy Jeans.”

Creating an Ag Masterpiece--One Colorful Story at a Time

ISU student and CAST intern Hannah Pagel explains how her interests combine into a passion for agriculture—and she invites you to add your colors, brush strokes, and perspectives

A Personal Story--Related to Agriculture
We've all heard the saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Each picture tells a story—a journey of one's life and trials. We all have a story that explains our passions, our interests, and our achievements. These elements create the story, and for many of us, that story relates to agriculture.

**Combining Passions—and Painting the Story**

My passion for agriculture runs deep, but I also have a love of painting. I have combined my passions to tell my story of agriculture. Each painting has its own creative way to tell the story of agriculture or one of my personal stories of the industry. For example, one painting tells the story of the first heifer I ever showed. [Click here to read the full version of my "Ag Story."]

I may use a brush to tell my story, but others tell theirs in different ways—some ride horses, some drive tractors, some fit cattle, some teach Ag classes, some plant a garden. There are many ways to tell the story of agriculture—you just have to start sharing. So tell me—what's your "Ag Story?"

**Send in Your Part of the Masterpiece**

We would love to hear other "Ag Stories" and continue this masterpiece by adding in new colors and perspectives. If you would like to be featured on the CAST blog site, send a copy of your Ag Story to dgogerty@cast-science.org. Include a digital image and a brief bio also.

Be a part of the Ag Story Masterpiece.

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**Friday Notes News Categories**


**Animal Agriculture and Environmental News**

Goats in Too Many Places (video): These young farmers create a musical homage to life with goats by doing a parody of Garth Brooks' "Friends in Low Places."

Pig Pride (photo essay and audio): This hog farmer says the hours are long and the work is hard—but he takes pride in a solid day's labor.
DNA To Track Wild Pigs: These animals will eat anything, from rows of corn, to sea turtle eggs, to baby deer and goats. The feral pigs number 6 million in 35 states.

Analyzing Dairy Myths: A group of British experts—including Jude Capper—debunk 13 myths about dairy cows. Note: click here to access the beef sustainability paper Dr. Capper chaired for CAST.

Milk Label Law? (opinion): The National Milk Producers Federation backs a legislative move for the enforcement of dairy labeling standards.

Against a Law (opinion--related to above): Soybean producers and the makers of soy food products are fighting back against draft legislation that would restrict the marketing of soy milk.

Homes for Horses: In South Dakota, volunteers are scrambling to find homes for hundreds of wild horses that were spared a possible trip to the slaughterhouse but are now suffering through a harsh winter.

Egg Plan: The American Egg Board released its 2017 "Export Marketing Programs Plan." The mission to increase demand for U.S. eggs will be executed in cooperation with the USA Poultry & Egg Export Council.

Beef Hearts: The USDA has made it okay to use beef hearts in ground beef—ending a 40-year prohibition on the use of hearts and tongues in ground beef.

Poultry in Court: Former chicken farmers in five states filed a federal lawsuit against several giant poultry processing companies. The National Chicken Council says they are frivolous, unwarranted lawsuits.

Food Science and Safety News

Regulations and Food Safety: According to this article, federal food safety agencies do not plan on drafting many new regulations in 2017—and the government's policy is to drop two regulations for each new one.

What Would Willy Wonka Say? Craft chocolate—like beer and coffee before it—is ready to go mainstream. But that doesn't mean it's ready to sell out.

Postprandial Somnolence: The "food coma" phenomenon refers to the sleepy feeling many experience after eating a big meal—the causes are based on different theories, some more plausible than others.

Killing Foodborne Pathogens: Cornell food scientists are putting the squeeze on the microorganisms that spoil food and make people sick, with the installation of a new high-pressure food processor.

Flavored Tofu: This Iowan is determined to bring flavored tofu into the mainstream—trying to make a savory food item into a popular sweet option.

Meat Day—and How It Gets Its Name: Butchers, supermarkets, and barbecue restaurants in Japan are gearing up for the national meat trade's busiest day of the year—dubbed "Meat Day"—on February 9.

Wrap It Up: Some researchers say there may be potentially harmful chemicals in fast food wrappers.
Miniature Food Rings: Last week we provided a link about the tiny food craze--seems it can go even tinier and crazier.

Ending Global Hunger (opinion): This group is focused on efforts to end hunger--including a look at the effects of food waste.

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**Plant Agriculture and Environmental News**

High-tech Farm Therapy: To help disadvantaged teens and young adults land jobs, an Anchorage mental health provider is staking out ground in the high-tech farming fields of hydroponics and vertical gardening.

Organic Information: Using USDA information and other research, this article addresses some misconceptions about organic farming practices.

Strong Start for Soybeans: These agronomists recommend three steps that will help growers get a strong start with soybeans this season.

A Perennial Wheat? These university researchers have developed a cross between wheat and its wild cousin, wheat grass. It apparently grows back annually.

Precision Fertilizer: This Kansas State University study looks at precision nitrogen management for wheat when using optical sensor technology.

Wetland Study: This study evaluated the impacts of wetlands on phosphorus reduction--looking at the size and location.

New Varieties of Alfalfa: This seed company is promoting 45 new varieties for the alfalfa seed market, including types developed for multiple pest resistance, forage quality, and yield.

Groundwater Research: Increasing the water table could help slow down global warming, boost crop yields, and preserve peat soils, according to a British study.

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**International News**

No Twinkies on the Beach? This South Pacific island province will ban foreign snack food to ward off the "infiltration of junk."

Turning Off the Oil Spigot? Ireland is set to become the world's first country to fully divest money from fossil fuels.
"Party for U.S. Beef": The U.S. Meat Export Federation held events in Taiwan to showcase American-style beef--hoping to attract a younger generation of consumers with slogans and events.

Food Safety in Africa: North Carolina State scientists and USDA experts are working to make corn and peanuts in Africa safer.

Unwanted Visitors: The Bolivian government declared a state of emergency in a vast agricultural area affected by a plague of locusts.

Containing Livestock Disease: South Korea raised its foot-and-mouth disease alert status to the highest level as a second strain of the disease was confirmed three days after a first outbreak was reported.

Mountain Whales (related to link in Animal Sec. above): Wild boars in Japan were once called "mountain whales," a euphemism coined to rationalize meat eating in a Buddhist vegetarian society. Three years ago, wild boars attacked 8 citizens in a rural area.

Stopping a Scourge: Scientists are calling for urgent action to halt the spread of a pest that is destroying maize crops and spreading rapidly across Africa.

Biotech Solutions for Food Insecurity? This scientist from Nigeria has identified food insecurity as a major cause of some of the greatest challenges in the country.

General Interest News

Lighting Up the Night (video): This thrill seeker paddles a kayak down the White Salmon River in the pitch dark.

Designing His Own Drone: This farmer uses his drone to check plant health, look for pests, and count the number of trees that need to be ordered for replanting.

Crashed Ice in a Farm Setting (video): This Minnesota farmer took five years to create a mini-replica of a "crashed ice training course," and participants love to speed on its jumps and icy paths.

The Many Costs of Food Waste: This National Geographic report looks at the social, economic, and moral implications of food waste.

Food Waste Across the Supply Chain (related to above): For further insights about this topic, check out this UPenn/CAST publication, Food Waste Across the Supply Chain: A U.S. Perspective on a Global Problem.

Ag in Paradise (opinion): This article says Hawaii agriculture has advantages and disadvantages that make it a good place to experiment with ag technology and innovations.

An Ironic Slowdown: As the climate warms, there is actually a slower snowmelt--both in timing and rates--according to this University of Nevada-Reno study.
Just Say No to Crack? A rapidly advancing crack in Antarctica’s fourth-largest ice shelf has scientists concerned that it is getting close to a full break.

Cats and Dogs Join Forces: This University of Florida researcher says cats and dogs may be longtime enemies, but when teamed up, they keep rodents away.

CAST Information

Check out CAST’s page at the YouTube site to view highly regarded ag-science videos about probiotics, food safety, and water issues—or the latest video dealing with proposed mandatory labeling of GMO food items.

If you have a good idea for a CAST publication, contact us by clicking HERE for the “Proposal Format and Background Information Form.”

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Dan Gogerty (Managing Communications Editor)
The Council for Agricultural Science and Technology
4420 West Lincoln Way
Ames, Iowa 50014-3347
Phone: 515-292-2125, ext. 222; Fax: 515-292-4512; E-mail: dgogerty@cast-science.org

** With assistance from Carol Gostele (Managing Scientific Editor), Hannah Pagel (Student Administrative Assistant), and Mikayla Dolch (Student Administrative Assistant)