



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 the CAST organization.

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National Teach Ag Day September 22

The [National Teach Ag Campaign](#) is an initiative to bring attention to the career of agricultural education, get students thinking about a possible career in agricultural education, and support current agriculture teachers in their careers.

Education Resources

The American Farm Bureau Foundation and the Beef Checkoff put together a new website containing [beef education resources](#), some of it especially designed for teachers.

Ag School Boom

Several universities in the CAST Education Program experienced increased numbers of ag students in fall classes. New enrollment records were set at the University of Nebraska this fall, including a 2.5% [increase in full-time students enrolled in the agriculture college](#).

September 16, 2016

Merger Fever

Companies seem to be in the mood to match up

As [this news video points out](#), agriculture consolidation is becoming more common. Recently, two mergers worth billions are moving forward: The Canadian fertilizer companies Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Incorporated and Agrium Incorporated announced a merger worth \$36 billion. And Bayer evidently clinched an agreement to buy out Monsanto for \$66 billion dollars.



Bayer's plan to take over Monsanto is [raising concerns](#) with some of the nation's largest farm organizations--and lawmakers are taking note, as other major industry players like Dow and DuPont, as well as ChemChina and Syngenta, are also planning to join forces. Others [think that consumers could benefit](#) from the transactions; they predict more-affordable and healthier food options, as well as the efficient use of company expertise.

News and Views

****TPP Limping In?** The National Pork Producers organization is confident that Congress will brush away pervasive anti-trade sentiments in this election year and [approve the TPP](#) in a lame duck vote before a new president takes office (related article below).

****Mixed Opinions Regarding Trade Agreements:** While the major political parties speak against the TPP, a Chicago Council Survey conducted in June found that a majority of the American public believe [free trade is beneficial to the U.S.](#) economy and consumers.

****Trade Action:** The USDA and others are launching [enforcement actions against China](#) in the World Trade Organization for violating "market price support for three key crops--rice, wheat, and corn."

****In the Pipeline?** The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and certain Iowa

2,300 Ag Scholarships

Scholarship funds awarded annually by the Iowa State University's [College of Agriculture and Life Sciences](#) have topped \$3 million.

Research Pays Off

The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences [has been tackling many issues](#)--including battling citrus greening, developing improved turf grass and crops, as well as combating agricultural pests.

Smart Irrigation

Experts at North Carolina State University have developed a "smart system" for irrigation scheduling to [better match plant water demand](#) as affected by precipitation and plant growth stage.

Ode to the Harvest

This blog revisits the "[cosmic ritual](#)" involved with the fall grain harvests.

CAST Social



Media

Click here for [links to CAST sites](#): Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, LinkedIn, videos, and blogs.

farmer groups continue to [protest against the Dakota Access pipeline](#).

****Antibiotic Resistance:** The IFIC Foundation brought together various stakeholders to identify opportunities to [improve the understanding of antibiotic resistance](#). The group evaluated the global impact of antibiotic usage, the challenges different disciplines encountered, and opportunities to better communicate with the public.

****Conservation Innovation:** Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the investment of \$26.6 million by the USDA into 45 [projects that will spur innovative conservation initiatives](#) on both rural and urban farms across the country.

News from the Far Side of the Barn

Sly Like a Fox? In the 1950s a Soviet [geneticist began an experiment in guided evolution](#). He wanted to use foxes to show how domestication works.

Sonic the Hedgehog Would Be Happy (video): A man in Poland found [eight baby hedgehogs](#) alone on the side of the road--and even though they might not be huggable, they are genuinely cute.



How baby hedgehogs belly up to the bar.

Move Over Bacon: Rodent meat could be a hot item at upcoming food festivals. Seven states and more than 30 teams were represented at the 2016 [World Championship Squirrel Cook-off in Arkansas](#).

Borlaug CAST Communication Award Event Will Feature Dr. Folta

CAST's World Food Prize Breakfast Session on October 12



The Council for Agricultural Science and Technology and DuPont invite you to honor the 2016 Borlaug CAST Communication Award winner on the occasion of the 2016 Borlaug Dialogue hosted by the World Food Prize Foundation.

Dr. Kevin M. Folta, Chair of the Horticultural Sciences Department at the University of Florida, will speak on *Unveiling Our Halo--Building Trust with a Concerned Consumer*.

The [award presentation will be followed by a panel discussion](#) and preview of the forthcoming CAST Issue Paper series *The Need for Agricultural Innovation to Sustainably Feed the World by 2050*.

Note: CAST EVP Kent Schescke will introduce Kevin Folta as one of the keynote speakers at the [Agricultural Bioscience International Conference 2016](#)--Sept. 18-21, Fargo, North Dakota.

Space, Earth, Tech, and a Conference

SpaceCom 2016 is a conference and exposition exploring business opportunities and technologies involved with space and terrestrial industries--such as agribusiness and energy--with an emphasis on common technology challenges. The organization offers a significant discount to CAST friends and members. The conference will take place November 15-17, 2016, in Houston, Texas. Those interested in attending may use these discount codes: CASTSAVE75C for \$75 off full conference registration; CASTSAVE20E for \$20 off expo only registration.

The exploration of the synergies and convergence of technologies across many sectors is the central theme of this conference. It will focus on innovation and application of existing technologies into new and different areas. This is the first time that agriculture and agribusiness will be a part of this discussion. Visit the [website to learn more](#) about the conference and industries involved.



Friday Notes News Categories

Photos courtesy of the Agricultural Research Service (top masthead); TopLatest News (globe at right). P. 1 merger graphic from cbsnews.com and hedgehog pic from buzzfeed.com. P. 2 space graphic from messagetoeagle.com. Animal Sec. dog pic from twitter.jpg. Food Sec. carpet pic from sodahead.jpg. Plant Sec. grain pic from npr.org. Inter. Sec. fire pic from cdn.turner.com. Gen. Sec. painting from smithsonianmag.com. Unless otherwise noted, photos courtesy of the USDA Agricultural Research Service.



Animal Agriculture and Environmental News

Dogs, Service, and Ag (videos): Elanco is sponsoring [Canine Assistants and its service dogs](#), and the [Missouri organization, PHARM Dog USA](#), provides pet partners to farmers with disabilities.

Notice of Proposed Rule Making: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is amending its domestic (interstate) and foreign quarantine regulations in the United States. [Public comments will be accepted](#) until October 14.

Another Comment Opportunity (as with the above post): The USDA announced their [new position on labeling of genetically engineered foods](#). If you feel inclined to do so, you may provide comments to the USDA by reading the information at this link.

Science-based Research (related to above): Check out the recent CAST Issue Paper, [Process Labeling of Food: Consumer Behavior, the Agricultural Sector, and Policy Recommendations](#).

His Hand Prints Are All over the Beef Industry (video): This site provides the [profile of a beef rancher](#), insightful teacher, and lifelong learner.



Dogs are known more for their service skills than their research abilities.

Wag the Pig (opinion): Tail docking is applied to young piglets to avoid a potential tail-biting problem later. This article looks at the [possible use of preemptive measures](#) instead.

Animal Care (opinion): This farmer/blogger says [animal care has always been a top priority](#) for livestock handlers, and she is excited about the improvements that are occurring.

Animal Welfare (related to above): This Texas rancher continues a family farm tradition that is almost 100 years old, and each generation commits to [creating the best environment](#) for their turkeys and cattle.

DNA Genotyping: According to this site, the [technological advances in DNA genotyping](#) and how it relates to cattle production seem endless.

Zoonotic Disease Awareness (opinion): Zoonotic diseases can [naturally be passed from animals to humans](#)--and in the reverse direction, also. Awareness of this will help efforts to contain harmful viruses.

Size Matters: It pays to be a small fish in the big ocean. A new study says the larger the fish or marine animal, the [greater the risk it will become extinct](#).

Move Over Methuselah: A scientific longevity database says these animals have [longer life spans than humans do](#).



Food Science and Safety News

Food Heists: From exotic cheeses to nuts and caviar, products ripped off in food heists form [a strange, ill-gotten smorgasbord](#).

Retail-host Restaurants and Food Safety: Eateries are gaining popularity in supermarkets and convenience stores--along with this growth in popularity comes [an increase in foodborne illnesses](#).

So I Can't Eat Off the Floor!? Rutgers researchers have supposedly [debunked the widely accepted notion](#) that it's OK to scoop up food and eat it within a "safe" five-second window.

Gluten-free Goods and Bads (opinion): Gluten-free sales are up, but celiac disease cases are not. This writer says [gluten free helps some but also misleads others](#).

Grants for Safety Rules: The FDA will award \$21.8 million to 42 states to help with food programs--and [compliance with new safety rules](#).

Healthy Food in Schools: This survey says more school [cafeterias are using strategies](#) to increase consumption of fruits, vegetables, and other healthy choices.

Nutrition Deficit (opinion--related to above): Children need basic nutrition to concentrate, learn, and mentally develop. Too many students attend school [without receiving proper nutrition at home](#).

Instagram on the Menu: This article provides [ten Instagram sites that might appeal](#) to those looking for exciting food ideas.



Apparently, fuzzy tootsie roll pops and watermelon squares with lint attached are not as healthy as we thought.



Plant Agriculture and Environmental News

Grain Bin Safety (video): This is a [good time of year to revisit the safety video](#) regarding grain bins--provided by the National Corn Growers Association.

Call for Comments: The USDA issued a request for information --an informal request for public comment--to get input about the design of a study [to establish a National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard](#).

Record Soybean Crop? The U.S. Agriculture Department said that record U.S. [soybean yields and production](#) would be higher than previously forecast due to improved crop conditions.

Fungal Power: Plants have a lot to deal with--weather, disease, pests--but many have fungal helpers called endophytes living inside them, and [researchers are working to harness their power](#).

Sorghum Strength: A USDA/ARS plant geneticist has developed genetic resources that allow the breeding of sorghum varieties with [higher grain yields and greater resistance](#) to diseases and pests.

Organic Panic: While organic vegetables are popular, growing them is notoriously high-maintenance for farmers. Researchers are trying to [identify the best ways to grow these crops](#).

The Potential of Algae (opinion): This expert says algae proponents have [not yet delivered because](#) of the organism's unlimited potential and the limited ability of current technology to realize that promise.



Rescuers work to free trapped farmer in grain bin.



International News

Fighting Superbugs: A United Nations program pledged to help countries develop strategies for [tackling the spread of antimicrobial resistance](#) in their food supply chains.

Water Wars: Tempers flare in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu as the Supreme Court ordered the release of 15,000 cubic feet of water per second per day from its reservoirs to [relieve drought-stricken farmers](#).

Smoked Sheep's Head, Anyone? Icelanders have always been resourceful, and while some of [their heritage foods might be quite exotic](#) for a visitor, for locals they provide a direct link to the past.



Water disputes lead to riots in India.

Ag Ed for Tourists and City Folks: A [working farm near Dublin](#) gives visitors an unvarnished taste of rural life--with dairy and meat animals, poultry and fish, and organic vegetable and flower gardens.

Ag Equals Development: An Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa report says that the countries paying attention to farmers and food production are [achieving the most successful development](#) in African history.

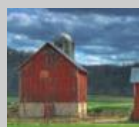
Anthrax-like Disease: Scientists have identified a bacterium--related to anthrax--that is [causing lethal](#)

[infections](#) in parts of Africa.

Naturally Vietnam: This Vietnamese [company sources all its products from six farms](#) that are veterinarian-supervised and "chemical-free."

Pigs--Naturally--in Vietnam (related to above): This Netherlands-based animal feed company started the [construction of a demonstration farm](#) for 400 sows and 800 finisher pigs in Vietnam.

Good-bye Lake "Fluffy Balls": One of the world's most [unusual plants is disappearing](#) from a lake in Iceland.



General Interest News

Helping Those Who Help Others (video): An 89-year-old street vendor in Chicago might have a lighter step during his route, as a fundraising [campaign brought out many supporters](#) for the hardworking man.

Ag Art: American artists have long been drawn to agrarian subjects in their work, and this fall museums around the country will [celebrate when art meets agriculture](#).

Greenhouse Gas Goals: California Governor Brown added to the nation's [toughest greenhouse gas reduction goals](#) by signing two bills that require the state to cut emissions at least 40% below 1990 levels by 2030.

Farm Worker Pay (related to above): Although some disagreed with the action, California will become the first U.S. state to [require farmers to pay overtime to field workers](#) and fruit pickers under a bill signed recently.

From Football to Farming: This former NFL star defensive end [hopes to one day create a self-sustaining food system](#) that can feed the nation's hungry and homeless.

Cleaning Up the Bay (opinion): With the help of the USDA, agricultural producers have implemented nearly \$1 [billion worth of conservation practices](#) on 3.6 million acres in the Chesapeake Bay area.

Sustainable Energy: [Renewable electricity generation](#)--hydro sources, wind, geothermal, biomass, and solar--surpassed levels from previous years in every month this year through June.

Cheerleading for Composting: According to these North Carolina State specialists, [composting beats taking out the garbage](#), and it is a lot more fun.



Several U.S. exhibits will feature agrarian art this year.

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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