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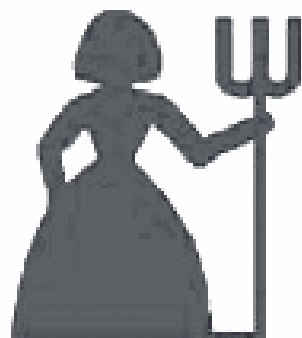
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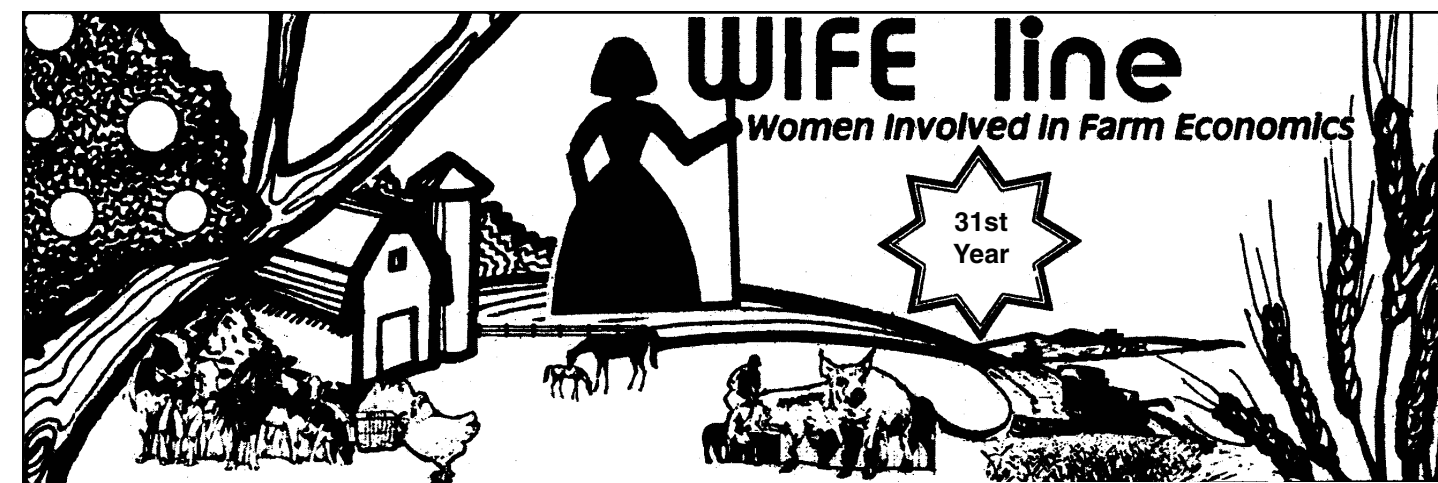
A publication of
Women Involved in Farm Economics
Marlene Kouba, Editor
6160 105th Ave. SW
Regent, ND 58650

Ph: 701-563-4560

FAX: 701-563-4560

email: mmkouba@ndsupernet.com

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2007 - The year to get the red ink out of agriculture.

WIFE MEETS IN WASHINGTON, DC

"Family Farmers and Ranchers Deserve More Than a Band-Aid Approach to Agricultural Legislation" and meeting with our Congressional delegations were the general themes of the annual Legislative Conference and Winter Board Meeting in Washington, DC, on February 24-28, 2007.

Members from across the nation braved weather of all kinds to meet at the Radisson Hotel in Washington. There were blizzards with bad roads, rainstorms, wind and tornadoes plus it was calving and lambing time for some. Runways in Denver had to be cleared on Saturday morning and the second vice-president got delayed by weather in Cleveland for much longer than she wanted. Several inches of snow in Washington on Sunday closed down the airport but the rest of the week was nice while there.

President Pam Potthoff kept the meetings and schedules running on time. There was enthusiasm and good discussion as the various issues, the farm bill, WIFE priorities, and visits with Congressional delegations were considered and reviewed.

A pizza party in the Longworth Building and a reception in a picturesque house helped members get acquainted with Congressional staff and dignitaries.

Band-aid handouts were assembled and distributed to the officials or aides in the Congressional offices where each of us had appointments.

Commodity and topic chairmen and various speakers presented an insight of their categories, the farm bill, rural development, renewable energy, new ethics rules and legislation. (Read details in their reports)

It was good to meet each other at this time to start the new year with fresh ideas and projects. Check the calendar for the next meetings and locations.

LARRY MITCHELL

By Marlene Kouba

Larry Mitchell, American Corn Growers Association (ACGA), is a fifth generation farmer but the second to use petroleum in farming. Urban sprawl has taken over his farm and the immediate area in northern Texas.

The Association grew out of the National Corn Growers Association due to differences. His entire board is farmers.

There are many things wrong with past farm bills so why should we continue with any of them. The next one will most likely be different. When do we compromise and when do we stand our ground? Commodity title—if the government pays, it is a subsidy but if someone else pays then it is a support program. Example: food stamps are subsidies while minimum wage is a support program. Farmers often have to sell their produce at harvest to pay bills. He summarized non-recourse loans, marketing assistance loans and loan deficiency payments as options to sell crops.

The CCC website does not show any food reserve as the whole crop is sold annually and not replaced. We need one for food and energy security. We need to decentralize the locations of the reserves so no calamity can destroy it all, such as storm Katrina. Is the price of corn too high now? Corn was \$5.85 in 1997. It costs \$3.85 to raise it. In Washington, the Golden Rule is 'them who has the gold makes the rules'. We now need energy crops as we move to cellulosic crops for fuel.

He does not think agriculture should be included in the DOHA Round talks or the World Trade Organization as there are no farmers on the boards. They are trading farmers' rights against intellectual rights.

What is a family farm? Do you supply the majority of the management and capital?

ACGA would like to have a WIFE member on their board. They have two meetings a year and would pay travel expenses.



Larry Mitchell

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ENERGY

By Marlene Kouba, ND

Senior American officials have warned several European oil companies that if they invest in new energy projects in Iran, they could face financial sanctions in the U.S. Energy analyst Robert Murphy reported that Iran has not signed any firm oil or gas contracts with foreign investors since Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected president in June 2005. Some Iranian fields are in decline and in desperate need of foreign technical expertise. Due to a decline in oil production and rapidly increasing demand, Iran may have no oil to export by around 2015. Iranian production now stands at about 3.9 million barrels a day, down from more than 6 million barrels in the mid-1970s. And Iran's lagging refining capacity forces the world's fourth-largest oil exporter to import 40 percent of its gasoline. To curb demand for gasoline, which costs just 35 cents a gallon, the Islamic Republic plans to begin rationing gas in March. India has resisted American pressure to cut off gasoline exports to Iran and to cancel a planned pipeline project that would take Iranian natural gas through Pakistan to India.

As of September, only two of the 43 ethanol plants reported under construction by the Renewable Fuels Association were farmer-owned and those two represent only about five percent of the new capacity. Several studies show that the higher percentage of local ownership the more effect the plant has on the local economy. Ex. One plant in Iowa opened in 2003 and now produces 52 million gallons of ethanol per year. It buys 1.4 million bushels of corn from local farmers and loads 80 to 90 trucks and wagons each day. In a three county area, there has been 182 new jobs, \$11.5 million in area household income gains, \$4.5 million in additional spending in area and \$1 million in tax revenues.

The new Farm Bill will be a tug of war between row crop production and conservation practices. Some people are even voicing a concern that corn ethanol is going to become obsolete.

Water is a big issue in making cellulosic ethanol. Sugar and corn processes take about 4-5 gallons of water for every gallon of ethanol produced. Some processes take only one gallon of water for one gallon of ethanol.

Farmers use about 1.7 quadrillion BTUs per year to produce the nation's food, fiber and fuel.

When ethanol plants turn corn into fuel, the process uses only the starch, which is about 70 percent of the kernel. The protein, fiber and oils left behind are concentrated into distillers grain.

A 56-pound bushel of corn produces about 2.8 gallons of ethanol and 17 pounds of distillers grain. A truckload of wet distillers grain weighs about 27 tons and a load of dry distillers grain weighs about 25 tons. The cost per loaded mile for shipping is the same.

The growth in U.S. ethanol production raises questions about impacts of continuing growth on agriculture. Iowa State University calculated that the incentive to expand ethanol



production disappears at \$4.05 per bushel of corn, if prices for crude oil, natural gas, distillers grain and the tax policy remains the same. At \$4.05 per bushel, corn-based ethanol production would reach 31.5 billion gallons per year or about 20% of projected U.S. fuel consumption in 2015. This would require planting 95.6 million acres of corn with a production of 15.6 billion bushels compared to 11 billion today. Most of the additional acres could come from reduced soybean acres.

Most of the distillers grain exported from the U.S. in 2005 went to Ireland, Mexico, Spain, Canada and the United Kingdom. The U.S. Grains Council is trying to expand markets for dried distillers

grain with solubles (DDGS) into Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam and China. Rising feed prices are helping to increase the usage of distillers grain—dried or wet. Most of the DDGS exported to Japan will go to the egg and dairy industries but they are also looking into it for hogs, poultry and cattle. Japanese consumers prefer more fat in their meat so they are studying a swine feeding trial to determine what effect DDGS feed will have on pork content.

Sorghum producers want their product to be included in government-supported research for biomass energy.

H.R. 197 would extend the Production Tax Credit for an additional five years and was introduced by Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-ND). The wind industry has sought a long-term extension to ensure certainty and stability. More co-sponsors are needed so contact your Representative to do so.

CEREAL GRAINS

By Ila Nelson

What's for dinner? Sandwiches! A national poll shows that approximately 53 percent of American households serve sandwiches as an entree. With so much attention placed on healthy eating these days, sandwiches are now being served for the main meal.

Convenience is the key. The American public is motivated by convenience first and healthy eating second. It used to be that sandwiches were for lunch, but not any more. Sandwiches are usually fast and easy to prepare with very little clean up so the family can be out of the kitchen, including Mom, and on their way to activities, doing homework or doing what needs to be done.

What does this have to do with cereal grains? The industry (wheat, oats, barley, etc.) are reacting to the public demands for fast convenient foods for the main meal. Consumers want whole grains, fiber, calcium and vitamins in their diets and they want them convenient to use. The industry keeps coming out with new foods that are healthy, different whole grain breads, etc. The magazines have more information with recipes for sandwiches and healthy, nutritious ways of fixing them. Thanks to the grain industry we are seeing more innovative ways to get our fiber and nutrition in our breads and cereals.

RURAL HEALTH

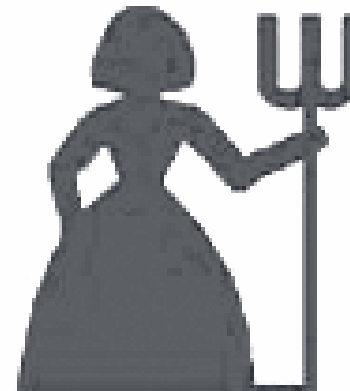
by Anita Maxwell, NY

The New York Center for Ag Medicine and Health has offered a deal to farmers in our area to get rollover bars put on their tractors. Farmers are given a substantial rebate so it doesn't cost so much to make a tractor safer if it should roll over. Many states have very level land and the chances of rolling over are slim, but in the Northeast, most farms have hills and gullies and every year several farmers get killed or hurt badly in rollover accidents.

NBC recently had a special during the national news about reversing caretaker rolls of parents and now the children have to take care of them. Many celebrities such as Tom Brokaw, Tim Russert, Ann Curie and others showed how they were coping with their elderly parents—some in nursing homes, some moved to be closer to their family and others were still doing well on their own. It is quite a dilemma today. Years ago there were two or three generations often living in the same household so they looked after each other. Also women didn't work away from the home much until World War II so they were readily available to look after elderly parents. The cost of putting elderly people in a nursing home is getting quite expensive and the residents are neglected in some homes. If you have anyone in a home, please check on them often to make sure they are getting proper care.

The cost of going into a nursing home is getting prohibitive. People are finding out that it is usually cheaper hiring someone to come into the home to take care of the elderly if at all possible. They feel more comfortable in their own home or staying with a relative. In 2006, the average daily cost of a private room in a nursing home in the U.S. was \$75,190 a year or \$205 a day. In 2007, the spouse of a Medicaid recipient living in a nursing home may keep as much as \$101,640 without jeopardizing the Medicaid eligibility of the spouse who is receiving long time care.

The AARP tells wives to become nags where their husbands, health is concerned and get them to have an annual rectal exam that can detect early signs of prostate cancer. Most men are embarrassed to do it on their own and need a little nagging but it's worth it if it saves their lives.



**“2007
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NAT RES/END SPEC/ PROP RIGHTS

By Cynthia Thomsen, NE

The United States Army says it will acquire as much as 418,577 acres of fragile grasslands in southeastern Colorado to expand the existing 240,000 Pinon Canyon Manover Site. If the Army succeeds, they will control over one thousand square miles of grasslands. So far the only controls given by our leaders is to say to buy the land from willing sellers, not by federal eminent domain powers.

This is not the point to be taken. Much of the land that the government wishes to take is in the hands of the Comanche National Grassland that is administered by the United States Forest Service. Local ranchers own some of the land within or adjacent to the federal holdings. Most of the ranching on the federal land is done through leased grazing rights. The government will not need to use eminent domain to get the land. Government can say land is needed to train armored brigades.

No matter how the land is acquired the difference in the environment has consequences. Consider a few cows grazing on the grassland to hundreds of 60-ton Abrams swerving wildly at 45 miles per hour and accompanied by other heavy equipment. Southeastern Colorado does not receive much rain but it does receive a lot of wind. If the tanks tear up the grasslands the wind will blow it to Oklahoma and leave a desert behind. This fragile land also includes irreplaceable parts of the United States patrimony (something inherited). The Pinon Canyon area contains 1,300 known dinosaur tracks and is estimated to harbor 20,000 more tracks as yet undiscovered. There are also prehistoric Indian pictographs, other artifacts and portions of the Santa Fe Trail.

The most active opponent to this new dust bowl is Representative Marilyn Musgrave (R-CO) whose sprawling 4th Congressional District adjoins the proposed training area and would bear the brunt of the economic and environmental disaster that would come from the end of ranching in this vast area. This one lone Congresswoman against the United States Army needs our attention. She is from Fort Morgan and eastern Colorado women don't quit without a fight. Denver Post 3-2-07

(A little background about the Canyon. Over one half of the adults living today were born less than thirty years ago so they have no memory about the land in dispute.)



Cynthia Thomsen

BEEF

By Linda Newman, MT

With the rapid insurgence of ethanol plants coming online



in the U.S., many livestock producers are becoming increasingly concerned about the rising costs of corn and how it is influencing the livestock markets.

This seems to be a "double-edged sword". Everyone in the livestock industry

realizes the need to be able to control their own destiny and not be reliant only on foreign oil. We haven't forgotten the record high fuel prices of just a few short months ago.

In the farming and ranching industry, many do not have the option of buying the latest fuel efficient little glorified golf cart to conserve their fuel usage. (They don't pull trailers or haul grain very well.)

However, they are mindful of the fact that increased corn prices will increase production costs of raising livestock which, in turn, lowers the producer's bottom line. There is a lot of "buzz" going around on the subject with a lot of possibilities coming to light.

Many new feedlot operations are springing up near ethanol plants to make use of the cheaper feed byproducts of ethanol (dried distillers grains~DDGS or wet distillers grains~WDGS). This is a "win-win" situation for both ethanol and livestock producers. The use of "hoop" buildings and roughage bedding is being suggested to assist northern operations to accommodate year-round feeding, while diminishing the environmental and weather impact.

Some feedlots are already making adjustments by incorporating wheat into their feeding rations in order to help offset the cost of higher priced corn.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association has approved a policy urging the phase out of government subsidies for ethanol production, to scrap the 54-cent-per-gallon tariff on imported ethanol and to transition from corn-based to cellulosic ethanol.

Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns, who attended the Cattle Industry Convention in Nashville recently, told U.S. cattle producers that the government would encourage alternative methods of making ethanol to protect them from rising corn prices. "That is why we propose to accelerate our research into cost-effective ways of producing cellulosic ethanol from biomass," he said, noting that ethanol can be made using grasses, woody plants, wood waste and sugar beets.

Research studies have also found that field peas may be substituted for corn in ethanol production which would also alleviate the great demand for corn in the future. During these studies, the fermented pea starch produced somewhat less ethanol than corn (1.7 gallons per bushel versus 2.8), because the legume had less starch but the pea starch fermented just as easily as corn starch. Potentially, the high yield of enriched protein, together with the fermentation leftovers, could be sold as livestock feed.

In a recent Senate Agricultural Committee, Ag Secretary Johanns, stated that he may allow contract holders to withdraw acreage from the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) earlier than they otherwise could to make available more acreage for corn production. He also stated that he will make a decision by early summer after watching to see how much additional acreage is planted to corn this spring.

U.S. farmers and ranchers are very innovative and will adjust their operations to meet the demands that are placed on them. Most of them have had a lifetime of adjusting to adverse conditions and this newest development is definitely not their "first rodeo" and certainly won't be the last!

There is the continued debate on mandatory COOL and some legislators think it is getting closer to being implemented. A bill is being drafted that would move the date of implementation up to September, 2008, instead of September, 2009.

Another great concern is the USDA considering allowing Canadian imports of cattle over 30 months of age. With the latest case of BSE in a bull in Canada that was born after the 1999 feed ban went into effect, this would be the fourth animal to be diagnosed with BSE born after that date.

The National ID System (NAIS) is running into all kinds of resistance from the livestock producers and after hearing all of their concerns, the USDA has realized that the system will probably not be effective unless they try to work with producers. They have changed the system to voluntary instead of mandatory and people who have already registered their premises may "un-register" them if they so desire.



Officers studying the website: www.WIFeline.com
Back Row: Ginger DeCock, Tammy Basel
Front Row: Melinda Sorem, Norma Hall, Pam Potthoff

LEGISLATION

By Norma Hall, NE

Congress has been in session addressing many time consuming subjects: ethic reforms, appropriations, Iraq war and getting acquainted with new leadership in the House and Senate. Assignments have been made to the Committees with Rep. Colin Peterson (D-MN) and Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) chairing the Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry Committee. Secretary of Agriculture Johannes has also released information concerning proposals for the Farm Bill.

A number of bills have been introduced addressing Country of Origin Labeling (COOL), renewable energy, taxes, disaster funding, Social Security and many other subjects. Some of the Commodity/ Issue Chairmen may also include some of these same issues in their reports.

S.284, The Emergency Farm Relief Act of 2007 has been introduced by Sen. Kent Conrad (D-ND) and has fifteen cosponsors. This Act directs the Secretary of Agriculture to provide financial assistance for: (1) crop disaster assistance for qualifying quantity or quality losses (other than sugar beets) for the 2005 and /or 2006 crop due to weather or related conditions, (2) dairy losses; (3) livestock assistance for 2005 and 2006 disaster-caused losses, including losses from blizzards that began in 2006 and continued into 2007; (4) livestock indemnity payments for 2005 and 2006 disaster-caused losses, including wildfires, hurricanes, floods, extreme heat, anthrax, and blizzards; (5) ewe lamb replacement and retention; (6) sugar beet disaster assistance for crop year 2005 or 2006; (7) sugarcane growers in Hawaii regarding transportation issues; and (8) flooded crop and grazing land in the Devils Lake basin, the McHugh, Lake Laretta, and Rose Lake closed drainage areas all in North Dakota. The bill also includes grants to small businesses that would qualify if they suffered weather-related agricultural losses. This legislation also directs the Secretary of Agriculture to have funds available to hire additional county Farm Service Agency personnel to deliver the assistance to producers. The bill has been referred to the Senate Agriculture Committee.

H.R. 357 was introduced on January 9, 2007 by Rep. Rehberg (R-MT), Rep. Herseth (D-SD) and Rep. Cubin (R-WY) that would implement mandatory COOL by September 30, 2007. A companion bill in the Senate is S. 404.

I have had some inquiries concerning self-employment tax on Conservation Reserve Acres (CRP). The Internal Revenue Service issued a ruling in December 2006 that stated that CRP rental payments (including incentive payments) to farmers actively engaged in the business of farming who enrolls land in CRP and fulfills CRP contractual obligations IS includible in net income from self-employment and subject to the self-employment tax. THIS ALSO applies to any individual not otherwise engaged in the business of farming but who enrolls land in CRP and fulfills CRP contractual obligations and hires a third party to perform what is necessary on the land. Both ARE includible in net-income from self-em-



Norma Hall is giving a report on legislation.

ployment and subject to the self-employment tax.

Some energy related bills that have been introduced are H.R. 80 and S. 672. Rep. Bartlett reports that H.R. 80 would provide for federal research, development, demonstrations, and commercial application activities to enable the development of farms that are net producers of both food and energy. Senator Salazar (D-CO) introduced S.672 that would provide investment tax credits of \$1,500 per [] kilowatt of capacity for small wind systems. Title of this bill is the Rural Wind Energy Development Act.

Rep. Baird (D-WA) introduced H.R. 60 that would amend the Internal Revenue

Code of 1986 to make permanent the deduction of state and local general sales taxes. H.R. 25, the Fair Tax Act of 2007, was introduced by Rep. Linder (R-GA). This Act would repeal the income tax, employment tax, and estate and gift tax. H.R.60 would impose a national sales tax on the use or consumption of taxable property or services in the United States. It sets the sales tax rate at 23% in 2009with adjustments to the rate in subsequent years. The bill would allow exemptions from the tax for property or services purchased for business, export, or investment purposes and for state government functions. Both bills have been referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Senator Harkin (D-IA) introduced the Competitive and Fair Agricultural Market Act of 2007. The Act addresses livestock concentration and marketing issues. At this time the bill number is unavailable.

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is proposing office cuts. Each state FSA was to submit a plan for each county in the state. To date, 24 states have submitted plans that call for the office cuts. Some county offices may be closed or combined with another county. Changing the structure, FSA hopes to become more efficient and to use more web-based services. Hearings are planned before the changes become permanent so keep abreast of the issue.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- March 21 National Agriculture Day
- June 1-3 Spring BOD meeting, Denver
- Nov. Convention - Rapid City, SD

The deadline for WIFeline articles is the 25th of each month except no paper will be printed in June and November.

TRANSPORTATION

By Nancy Skinner, MT

The Alliance for Rail Competition (ARC) will be holding its third annual meeting in Washington DC on March 14-15, 2007. For anyone interested, ARC has outlines of key information about this important event, including a proposed schedule, office and meeting locations, nearby hotels and airport information. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Meyers and Associates at (202) 484-2773 and ask for Sally Wright or Holly Meagher or email sally@meyersandassociates.com or holly@meyersandassociates.com.



Ethanol is expected to be the next lucrative opportunity for railroads. Shipments have nearly tripled since 2001 and are expected to continue in growth. Railroads are working to increase their own tracks and freight yards. Ethanol attracts water and other chemicals so it can't be transported through pipelines like gasoline, natural gas and oil. Railroads have pushed producers to use unit trains that carry 75 to 95 tank cars. Many producing plants aren't large enough or lack the track and facilities to fill unit trains themselves. The railroads are also concerned as whether the ethanol boom is durable. Oil prices could drop, corn supplies could dwindle and alternatives could crop up. Volatility in the ethanol market is a concern of most railroads.

The NAFTA Superhighway is still in the news. The Chinese are very busy trying to control as many deep sea ports in the Western Hemisphere as possible. Chinese goods will be transported across North America using the NAFTA highway.

The Port Authority of San Antonio has been working to develop shipping ports in Mexico to transport Chinese goods. Transportation costs of cheap Chinese goods will be about half by using Mexican ports. From Mexican ports, Mexican truck drivers and railroad workers will transport the goods across the Mexican border into Texas. From Texas, the route for Chinese goods will move north to Kansas City, the Smart Port, along the NAFTA Superhighway. The Kansas City Southern Railroad is considered to be the NAFTA Railroad.

By using Mexican labor and transportation, great savings is anticipated. This will eliminate U.S. labor unions and substantially reduce costs.

Hutchinson Whampoa, Ltd., a huge Chinese shipping conglomerate, is busy at Mexican ports. They already have a single-berth terminal in the deep-water port of Lazaro Cardena and are planning a large expansion.

Hutchinson controls 12% of all container port capacity in the world and employs 200,000 people. They have effectively controlled both ends of the Panama Canal, Cristobal and Balboa, for the past seven years. They are planning large expansions there as well. The Panama Canal is a strategic, century old, waterway connecting the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. It is considered to be the most strategic ocean chokepoint in the world.

The Kansas City Smart Port will be the major trade and U.S. Customs inspection hub where rail lines and the Superhighway will converge. Freight will be inspected by Mexican authorities and sealed in containers to be moved to destinations with fewer border delays. Mix in some Asian markets and it becomes even more interesting.

TRADE

By Ruth Larabee, NY

At a recent meeting in Brussels European Union (EU) Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson beseeched the EU foreign ministers and trade ministers from the twenty seven member states to work together in order to revive the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Round talks. To accomplish a breakthrough soon Mandelson is looking for the United States to expand its offer to reduce farm subsidies and says better offers in service sector and cutting industrial tariffs need to be addressed. According to Joe Kirwin in the Daily Report for Executives Mandelson said any delay would be fatal, that any agreements must protect geographical indications as countries like Spain, France and Italy have large farming interests at stake in the negotiations. Mandelson maintains that the EU has some margin to work with in its Doha offer in agriculture and implied they could increase its market access offer to fifty percent instead of the original thirty six percent. But the French Trade Minister Christine Lagarde disagreed stating, "the EU has no more leeway on its agriculture offer". She also took Mandelson to task for disclosure of EU negotiating strategies to the news media and business people before checking with the EU member states. Lagarde blamed Mandelson for being "too soft" in his talks with the United States and implied it resulted in the "weak proposals" on revised U.S. farm supports from the Bush administration. She said the U.S. farm plan is still tied to production subsidies and is unlike the EU Common Agriculture Policy. The EU and the U.S. have very different regulatory viewpoints. While the EU puts more value on consumer protection and environmental legislation the U.S. leans toward promoting a more market-based method.

A Commission policy paper seen by the Financial Times studies the future of the EU's "single market". The "single market" rules have inspired global standard setting in areas such as product safety, the environment, securities and corporate governance. It allows goods, services, people and capitol to move freely among the EU's 27 member states. It states "increasingly the world is looking to Europe and adopts the standards that are set here". The paper calls on the EU to "encourage other jurisdictions to follow suit by promoting European standards internationally through international organization and bilateral agreements" According to the Financial Times this paper claims "this strategy will help Europe businesses to beat their rivals abroad since it works to the advantage of those already geared up to meet these standards". Juliane von Reppert-Bismark in an article in The Wall Street Journal reports EU officials cautioned that United States modest cuts to market-distorting payouts send a bad signal to WTO negotiators. But it seems Washington made the point that if an acceptable agreement can be completed at the WTO, commitments made there will override any domestic farm plan.

Women Involved In farm Economics (WIFE) supports fair trade that protects our United States agriculture sector and consumers.

OILSEEDS

By Donna Bolz, NE

Soybean rust has not caused much damage the past two years. This year could be different according to Glen Hartman, US Department of Agriculture plant pathologist at the University of Illinois. He is advising farmers to be on high alert this coming season. "The current situation is different than it has been during the last two years," Hartman said. "There has been a marked increase in the size and location of the areas where the fungus occurs since moving into the upper Midwest late in the 2006 growing season and where it will potentially overwinter this year. That presents the real possibility that there could be an increased threat to the major growing areas during 2007."

In 2005, the fungus that causes the disease overwintered in a few areas of southern Florida. Last year, the fungus moved on to parts of Georgia, Alabama and the lower Mississippi River Valley. Late in the growing season it moved to the Midwest. Mr. Hartman states that a hard freeze could reduce the risk of a major outbreak. On the other hand, if we have a mild or even average winter, the rust could develop earlier. Another factor could be that if the spring is very dry, the rust could remain in check. What really happen will be determined by the early season weather in the south.

Mr. Hartman points out that a spread of the fungus into the Midwest soybean-growing region will most likely be preceded by a build up of rust in the South. If this happens, a huge amount of spores could be swept north with the prevailing moisture from the Gulf of Mexico. "It is important for growers to keep an eye on what is going on in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi during the spring and early summer," Hartman said. "If we see lots of rust building up in those areas of the country during that part of the season, the threat from the disease reaching soybean fields in much of the Midwest will go up considerably."

It is important to keep track of the progress of the rust. Growers can check a map located on the USDA's website at <http://www.sbrusa.net/>. This map should be checked frequently during the spring season. The disease could cause significant problems as late as the first part of August. The worst case scenario would be if the rust shows up during mid-season. The arrival of the disease when the plants are flowering in June or early July would be a major concern. If that happens, growers would probably have to spray twice with a fungicide to control the problem.

"There certainly is no reason for growers to overreact about the current situation," Hartman said. "The key is for them to maintain their vigilance. They should take the time to closely monitor the situation through the first part of the growing season. If a problem develops, they will have plenty of time to take whatever steps fall within their own risk tolerance."

Do you worry about the fat content of your foods? Is it good fat or bad fat? Let's look at how the views on fat have changed in the last 15 to 30 years.



Partially hydrogenated vegetable oil, which is the current villain of the food industry, was at one time used to reduce saturated fat intake. French fries were fried in fat and the effort at the time was to remove the saturated fats that they contained. Partially hydrogenated oil was cheap to produce and lasted much longer than regular oil.

Partially hydrogenated oils are created from liquid vegetable oil. The process is called hydrogenation that forces hydrogen into the oil until it reaches the proper consistency and changes its chemical structure. By hydrogenating, oils they become too solid to use easily in cooking. Partial hydrogenation makes a margarine that is easy to spread and won't go bad as quickly as butter.

Partial hydrogenation gives the oil molecules an odd shape and are called trans configuration (therefore the name trans fat). This causes them to act like a saturated fat as they increase "bad" LDL cholesterol and can clog arteries.

Many of the new margarines that are free of trans fat mix completely hydrogenated oil, which is very solid, with unsaturated oil, a liquid, to achieve a desired consistency without making the oil from trans configuration. Experts say the new oils and margarines should be more healthful but the experts also once thought that about partially hydrogenated oils.

U.S. News and Reports

DAIRY

By Dianna Reed, NE

U.S. produced dairy products and ingredients are becoming competitive globally, a trend that holds substantial opportunities for U.S. dairy producers. Our largest export market is Mexico and they account for 31 percent of the U.S. export sales. Exports to Mexico have increased up to 207 percent since 2000. This increase offers U.S. dairy producers a long-term value for their investment as exports help find a home for increasing milk production.

One organization that plays a large part in the exporting of U.S. dairy products is the U.S. Dairy Export Council. Dairy producers help fund demand-building market development and expansion programs through this organization. The U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC), founded by Dairy Management Inc., manages the national dairy producer checkoff program and provides 60 percent of USDEC's funding. USDEC also partners with dairy co-ops, processing and other industry manufacturing partners to develop and expand opportunities in Mexico and other international markets for U.S. dairy products and ingredients. USDEC assists export suppliers to locate and service international buyers.

Mexico is a milk-deficit country and a prime example of how the investment that dairy producers make in their checkoff has worked to increase export sales and to find new markets. Milk consumption in Mexico is on the rise and they only produce about 65 percent of their needs. While their milk consumption has increased about 6 percent per year, their milk production has only increased about 1 percent.

Producers, along with the help of USDEC, are helping to build the demand with the promotion efforts of creating U.S. cheese recipes for Mexican cooking shows as well as targeting untapped product categories such as mozzarella cheese, whey proteins and milk powder.

The goal of USDEC, while we currently supply 55 percent of Mexico's imports, is to supply and gain an even larger share of dairy products for them. Tom Suber, USDEC president feels the U.S. dairy industry can fill that need and increase export sales. (Agribusiness)

SUGAR

By Klodette Stroh, WY

Question: What is the benefit of the sugar program to the United States corn farmers?

A: It raises the price of corn 25 cents a bushels.

B: It saves the government 700 million dollars in deficiency payments to corn growers.

C: 760,000,000 bushels of corn nationwide each year are used for making sweetener. This represents over 8 percent of the U.S. corn crop.

D: Beets, cane and corn do not mix.

It weights heavily on my mind to think of changes to the sugar program in the next Farm Bill. In the 2002 Farm Bill, the sugar program received seventy-one of the 100 Senators and 60 percent of House members voted in favor of the current sugar program. In 2005 Sugar vote taken in the House of representatives showed

sugar policy support to be at an all time high, with 280 members voting in favor of the current no-cost sugar program. As a no-cost program, the USDA has a congressional mandate to administer U.S. sugar policy in a way that does not cost taxpayers a dime. We have to remember unlike many foreign sugar producers, American farmers do not receive government payments. Their total income is from the market.

To ensure sugar policy runs at no cost to taxpayers and to keep the market balanced, the USDA has two tools at its disposal. The agency can: 1) restrict foreign imports above our trade agreement obligations, and 2) control the amount of sugar American farmers are allowed to sell. The U.S. sugar program works on a loan system and uses the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) as the lender. Every year, the timely repayment of sugar producer loans with interest generates a profit to the U.S. treasury. In fact, since the 2002 Farm Bill took place, sugar policy has generated \$230 million in net revenues for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Sugar subsidy checks are unworkable, because a program shift to sugar subsidy checks would cost taxpayers \$1.3 billion a year. The sugar industry is structured differently than any other commodities. Sugar farms receive payment based on the weight and sugar content of harvested sugar beets. An entire infrastructure would have to be implemented. This alone will be costly and it will cause delays in payments. For example, sugar beets harvested in October of 2006 will receive two more payments in 2007. Subsidy checks are very unpopular among sugar farmers. There is a strong possibility that farmers will exit this industry and then our nation's sweetener industry will be in jeopardy.

Bear in mind that 372,000 jobs in the U.S. rely on a strong U.S. sweetener industry. Current U.S. sugar policy allows efficient U.S. corn, beet, and cane growers and processors to compete against unfair foreign subsidies and trade practices. The program provides for reliable supplies of sugar at fair and stable prices for consumers and operates at no cost to the taxpayer. Sugar and corn sweetener industries generate \$21.1 billion of economic activity in 42 states. Our lawmakers better look back and count the savings and benefits of the current Sugar program to the United States economy. In 1942, depending on foreign sugar led to sugar rationing during World War II. Feeding ourselves is the first rule of national security.

The answer to the above question is: A, B, and C.



SHEEP AND GOATS

By Gwen Cassel, NY

The size and differences in lamb production in the United States are as varied as the different "lambing seasons" in our country, its terrain and the markets available.



In the western states, lambs are often born early in spring and then fed by and with their mothers for several weeks at the home farm. At weaning, the ewe mothers are often shepherded to grazing areas, both public and private, to prepare to be bred later in the fall for their next crop of lambs in

the following spring. The lambs may then be sold or feedlot-raised close to home or in our Midwestern corn and grain states. In the winter or early next spring, these full carcass-large lambs are then shipped to market to fulfill supermarket store demand and specialty lamb-based markets.

Slight variations on this scenario are repeated across the U.S. Sometimes it is different only by lambing time due to weather, space, breed of sheep, or whether lambs will be raised with their moms on grass alone, or will be feed-raised. Other considerations in the lambing routine are affected by ultimate size needed of the lamb product.

Some producers serving the demand for smaller lambs throughout the year are using sheep that will lamb anytime during the year. In addition, some are combining breeds of sheep to produce good meat but also to maximize the number of lambs per ewe. In the Northeast, the combination of the production Dorset breed (excels in out-of-season lambing), is combined with Fin sheep (Finnish Landrace), a breed, though finer boned, tends to produce "litters" of lambs~triplets, quads and more!

On the surface this sounds like a bonus but several considerations can affect the bottom line or the actual income from these additional lambs.

Already mentioned is the tradeoff of carcass size for multiple births beyond twins. Ewes carrying twins will need to have the quality of feed increased during the last four to six weeks of gestations. Ewes successfully carrying a high number of multiple lambs to term will need additional weeks of increased nutrition.

Some ewes easily "count" to three or more, and are able to raise these additional lambs. However, often on farms specializing in multiples, one or more of the "extras" must be hand raised or grafted onto other ewes. Both of these actions cause additional management needs and the purchase of replacement milk, bottles, nurser buckets, pens, etc.

In the small farm situation, producing high numbers of lambs per ewe can be a real benefit if labor to manage them is available. In larger farms and ranch situations twins, or in some cases, one good strong single lamb can cause the financial bottom line to balance or benefit. Knowing your market, your situation, the probabilities, and weighing the possibilities all come together to affect the economics of lamb production.

If you are lambing now, take some time to watch the lambs—they sure do enjoy life!

PORK

By Frances Rohla, NE

A simple question by a veterinarian "Why doesn't someone invent a one-time-use, biodegradable mat?" set a pork producer thinking "why not". He contacted an inventor friend, Tony Schmitt, who began the patent process. After looking for a manufacturer he came up with Mat, Inc., of Floodwood, Minnesota, that makes quality wood and corn fiber mats, such as the hydroseeding mats used along highways. The new hog mats last 10 to 14 days, are 30" x 36" and 1" thick. They are made of 50% corn byproducts plus wood byproducts and the mulch is heated to kill bacteria. The mats absorb moisture and heat lamps dry them. The cost is about \$2.36 per mat. The company is also making smaller mats for kennels in pet stores.

Smithfield will be phasing out gestation stalls but it will take ten years. They claim they have not caved into animal activists but PETA says otherwise. Gestation stalls keep sows separate so they don't fight. Some sows nibble their grain while some eat like a pig~that is why they are called pigs. This causes uneven weight gains in sows and also uneven piglets.

Smithfield and Premium Standard Farm have merged and been approved.

Porcine Circovirus Associated Diseases (PCVAD) deplete the lymph node system leaving a pig with no defense against other diseases. K-State scientists are conducting field studies and laboratory diagnostics. K-State received \$70,000 in research grants from the National Pork Board to try to find a vaccine for this disease.

Swift and Company announced in January that they are looking for financial alternatives including a possible sale so they hired J.P. Morgan to do this study. In the meantime they laid off 58 corporate employees in cost-cutting steps. Swift is the second largest in beef and pork processing of fresh meat and have sales of \$9 billion.

Meat exports are very important for livestock producers as 14 percent of pork is exported to other countries. Pork producers use 217,000 bushels of corn and 50,000 bushels of beans per day that are marketed through pork. In 46 years the growth in fresh meat around the world is 387 percent while the United States has seen an increase of only 58 percent. Trading of fresh meat products in other countries are mainly specialty cuts because of ethnic beliefs or traditions. Mexico likes hams, Eastern Europe and Russia like picnics or trimmings, China uses a variety of meats, Japan wants loins and tenderloins, Korea uses bellies and butts. The countries will pay a premium for these cuts which makes U.S. pork worth more in this country.

The United States has 26 percent of the world's pork exports which adds \$25 premium per hog. This has increased every year for the past 15 years. Consumers are more confident in meat products when they are labeled or traceable and can be source verified.

The latest news is that pork producers have found pseudorabies-infected wild hogs. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has informed the Nebraska Department of Agriculture of wild pigs in the Genoa, Nebraska, area. There are three types of hogs~domestic, feral and Eurasian. The

Commission funds testing of wild pigs and 75 have been removed from five counties since 2000 and have been tested for pseudorabies since 2004. Symptoms in hogs are respiratory distress, nervous systems signs (trembling, poor coordination and paralysis), sudden death of young piglets and females aborting before birth. Humans cannot get the disease but cats, dogs, bobcats, raccoons, skunks, opossum and foxes can.

High Plains Journal, U.S. Meat Export Federation and Nebraska Farm Bureau

FEED GRAINS

By Alice Fairfax, MO

Corn-on-corn seems to be what most feed grain articles are about and I have read so many of them that I don't know if I can do any of them justice.

Here is a taste of most:

Recent estimates from Purdue University show that continuous corn has an average 9 percent yield reduction compared to corn rotated with soybeans and this range of yield reduction is almost universally accepted by agronomists across the Corn Belt.

High corn prices push growers to plant more corn. Iowa, Nebraska, Illinois and Kansas seem to be better suited to continuous corn than Missouri, because of higher organic matter soils and irrigated corn production environments, according to Dr. Paul Tracy in "Today's Farmer".

Mono-cropping almost always puts more insect, disease and weed pressure on the crop. For example, continuous corn provides a host home for corn rootworms, most of which do not flourish during an alternate host soybean year. Disease and insect pests that flourish in continuous corn include

corn rootworm, seed corn maggot, gray leaf spot, corn blight and anthracnose. Continuous corn residue also attracts mobile insects like thrips, cutworms and armyworms, especially if winter annual weeds are present.

An example of added costs associated with insect pressure in continuous corn would be the move toward corn rootworm-resistant hybrids, especially in regions where corn acreage outnumbers soybean acreage. The additional cost can be \$45 to \$75 per bag of seed corn, or approximately \$15 to \$25 per acre, to plant corn rootworm-resistant hybrids. Without these hybrids, additional costs associated with in-furrow applied insecticides would be necessary. Weed control needs to be modified when switching to continuous corn. For example, Johnsongrass is a major problem in continuous corn. When soybeans are grown in the rotation, there are many good grass control products that can kill Johnsongrass. Another issue with continuous corn that many forget to consider is the heavier harvest load. Grain transportation, fuel costs and grain storage will increase along with the overall higher grain volume of corn. This can be a major factor for growers, grain handlers, marketers and end users. If growers make the move to continuous corn, do so after evaluating the total program. Consider the risks and rewards carefully.



RECEPTION

By Marlene Kouba

Wining and dining in Washington, DC, is a challenge and an experience. A reception for House and Senate members, some of their office staff plus corporate sponsors and other dignitaries was held in a small private house just a block from the Senate Hart Building. WIFE members brought food items representative of their states to serve as the meal. Some of the items included beef summer sausage, cheese curds, wheat crackers, buffalo meat snacks, toasted pecans and peanuts, cherry-chocolate chip cookies, huckleberry cream cookies and mustard, chocolate candy and maple sugar candies. Other foods and some drinks were purchased to round out the array of snacks. Billy Senter, his mother, and Mary Ann Sheppard were in charge of the purchases, attractive food arrangements and name tags for the guests.

With the new lobbying rules in place, staff of some of the Congressional delegation are not even allowed to accept a cup of coffee much less a meal. This reception was permissible and a nice crowd was in attendance. Many guests lingered just to visit and this provided a good opportunity for WIFE members to make a lasting impression.

The narrow house was built for workers to live in while they built the present Capitol building. The original structure is the front of the building but it has been extended about three or four times to make it more open and comfortable. The house is very homey and provided an unusual atmosphere for a reception.



Team work with an assembly line for the Band-Aid brochure.

JACK GLEASON

By Kay Zeosky

Jack Gleason, Administrator for the Rural Development Business and Cooperative Programs at USDA, spoke to WIFE regarding rural development, and renewable energy programs and initiatives on Monday morning.



Gleason stated that they have 83 different plans with unique programs available to increase opportunities and improve the quality of life in rural areas. Since 2003, they have helped fund 406 programs, 460 efficiency projects and over 800 other projects. He said, "There is money available to build a town from the bottom up." This money is available to help rural areas with a population of 50,000 or less. Over 95% of the people do not live on farms and rely on other jobs. You never see a clearance rack in Walmart as they rotate goods to areas that could use them. Plans for a project need to be market driven with help from government funding.

Energy is a big concern. We import 300 billion gallons of crude oil every year. As well as our fuel requirements, our average metropolitan home to be heated is 5,000 square feet for two and a half people. We need to educate builders to conserve space and all that is needed to operate such houses. We lead the world in our development of wind energy but transmission is a big issue. We are two to six years away from profitable cellulosic ethanol plants. A business in Washington puts garbage sludge on their fields, then grows canola for a biodiesel plant. Unusual byproducts are being produced with the new sources of energy.

Gleason is extremely concerned that fewer and fewer of our Congressional representatives have any direct contact with farming. At the present time 50 percent of our exports are livestock, so farming is extremely important to our balance of trade.

BAND-AID APPROACH

By Donna Bolz

A stranger walks into the WIFE meeting. There is a big box of Band-aids on the table. Things must get pretty wild if they need all those Band-aids she decides. It is not the way it seems.

National WIFE printed a brochure titled, "Family Farmers and Ranchers deserve more than a Band-aid approach to Agricultural Legislation." Included in this brochure is WIFE's position on a variety of subjects from Food Safety to Conservation. Also included is a contact number for more information. These brochures were distributed to the Congressional delegates during our hill visits on Tuesday. They will also be given to the general membership. A Band-aid was attached to the front of each brochure to stress the theme.

In order to save WIFE's resources, the members attending the meeting assembled the brochures. It turned out to be a fun task that was enjoyed by all. For more information on these brochures, contact President Pam.

LEGISLATIVE PANEL

By Mary Ann Murray

Stephanie Mercier, Senate Majority Economist, Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry and Clark Ogilvie, Staff Director, Subcommittee of General Farm Commodities and Risk Management, US House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture addressed the WIFE Board of Director's meeting on February 26, 2007. Ms. Mercier discussed the topics she felt were going to receive the greatest amount of attention concerning the reauthorizing of the farm bill. Fresh renewable energy will be very important and there will be a huge expansion in ethanol. Cellulosic materials for ethanol production will be put on the front burner as will biodiesel. There will be an effort made to eliminate the conflict between the needs of corn for the feeding industry as well as the ethanol community.

Ms. Mercier predicts higher commodity prices with little or no payments with the exception of direct payments. EQUIP will probably receive more money and Senator Harkin wants to be careful on how the CRP is raided for renewable energy. Senator Harkin is supportive of mCOOL. There is also a need to protect the delivery system for the programs through the Farm Service Agency (FSA). She expects eight billion dollars per year for commodities with more of that money aimed towards the cotton and rice producers. Corn will not get any payments. Additional funds will be sought from the budget to go into the farm bill; however those funds will have much competition. There is very little chance to do much else in the farm bill and what money there is will be fought over as to who gets what. They would like to see the farm bill finished by September of this year.

Mercier also stated that \$250,000 gross sales is what is considered a commercial operation with possibly one person working off the farm to provide health insurance. The average farm size in the United States is 400 acres.

Clark Ogilvie, with House Chairman Collin Peterson's (D-MN) office, expressed great satisfaction with the 2002 Farm Bill. Ogilvie also believes renewable energy will be a big priority and is looking for cellulosic ethanol to be viable in every part of the country so everyone would receive a part of the action. He sees a priority for a permanent disaster program as part of the farm bill to take it away from the political issue. Ogilvie stated that the specialty crops have a long list of wishes as well. He thinks the farm bill



will go to the floor by July.

There is a possibility of a proposal to raise the loan rate or a target price increase. Disaster aid for 2005 to current 2007 is likely. This money is hoped to come from emergency spending and not out of the farm bill. He did not think the payment is likely to be very generous. Doha Rounds talks are not expected to be finished by the time the farm bill is complete, therefore if adjustments need to be made, it would be on a phased-in process. He also thinks there will be much better oversight for FSIS inspectors.

WIFE Women Involved in Farm Economics

Priority Issues

Implementation of Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (COOL)
No authorization of Fast Track
Disaster Aid for '05, '06 and '07

Farm Bill

Competition Title
Enforces Anti-Trust Laws
Ban on packer ownership of cattle

Commodity Title
Provide an adequate safety net through:
Increasing the loan rates
Maintain MILC, Wool Program,
Counter Cyclical and Direct Payments
Fully funded with no loss to conservation programs.

General
Track Farm program payments by individual person
No means testing
Maintain Person Status
Permanent disaster aid

Trade

Oppose USDA/APHIS proposal to import cattle over thirty months old into the US from Canada.

Oppose USDA/APHIS regionalization of Argentina, a country with foot and mouth disease and other contagious diseases.

Support harmonizing food safety standards, pesticide and antibiotic standards with US standards.

MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND: WIFE SPRING BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING Denver International Airport Courtyard.

June 1 All members arrive
EC at 4:00 EC meal at 6:00
BOD convenes at 7:00.

June 2 8:00 am Reconvenes
Farming for Fuel Symposium

June 3 8:00 am Reconvenes
Adjourn after lunch.

2007 NATIONAL OFFICERS

President:

Pam Potthoff
35807 Drive 714
Trenton, NE 69044
308-276-2548 CST
308-276-2424 FAX
coyotepp@gpcom.net

First Vice-President:

Ginger DeCock
HC 72 Box 875
Hysham, MT 59038
406-342-5349 MST
406-342-5349 FAX
gdc@rangeweb.net

Second Vice-President:

Tammy Basel
16079 Minnehaha Place
Union Center, SD 57787
605-985-5205 MST
605-985-5205 FAX
dbasel@gwtc.net

Recording Secretary:

Norma Hall
1813 250th St
Elmwood, NE 68349
402-781-2098 CST
402-781-2098 FAX
dh33148@futuretk.com

Treasurer:

Melinda Sorem
RR 1 Box 92
Jetmore, KS 67854
620-357-6346 MST
msorem@starband.net

Area Directors:

1. Mary Ann Murray
HC 69 Box 15
Jordan, MT 59337
406-557-2400 MST
406-557-2402 FAX
lige@midrivers.com

2. Sheila Massey
PO Box 70
Animas, NM 88020
505-548-2420 MST
505-548-2613 FAX
massfarm@vtc.net

3. Mary Ann Sheppard
4966 Co Rd 30
Shorter, AL 36075
334-727-7737 CST
334-727-5758 FAX
marygo29@aol.com

Past President

Barb Bonhorst
30910 SD Hwy 34
Pierre, SD 57501
605-224-1156 CST
BLBonhorst@aol.com

Parliamentarian:

Nita Bramble
1926 West 10th St
Hastings, NE 68901
406-462-6247 CST
nramble@inebraska.com

WIFE ACTIVITIES

Texas WIFE meets monthly, usually the second Wednesday, to discuss pending legislative news, WIFE alerts and concerns and plan our future projects. On occasion we have speakers from various agricultural entities. One of our state representatives recently gave us a program on our taxation. Our Congressional representative's aide also presented us with needed information regarding the next farm bill. It gives us a chance to let them know about WIFE and what we can do to help.

March will bring Ag Week and for the past two years, we have volunteered as a chapter at the local food bank. We load boxes of food for needy families to pick up after they have been given vouchers by various agencies. The South Plains Food Bank serves 26 counties with nutritional food items to help provide for their qualifying families. As we pack these boxes, it is easy to be thankful for our own families and their wellbeing. It brings to mind that simple thought that we must all eat good nutritional food. Agriculture will always be the backbone of any country because its people have to be fed and nourished.

The year ahead brings several important items to the state of Texas. Pending legislation will affect us all as eminent domain is a very important subject, especially with the Trans Texas Corridor being built and crossing prime farmland. Our appraisal issue is of great importance as property taxes are always on farmer's minds.

Texas has several ethanol plants being built as a new venture, so this again will affect the agriculture of the state. Many farmers will consider changing to growing grains for these plants as they will be in demand.

Texas WIFE is watching the development of the pending farm bill

hoping for the needed safety nets to keep producers in business. The proposed USDA farm bill eliminates some much-needed factors for our producers. Hopefully the House Ag Committee will bring forth some better points to be considered.

We are approaching another crop year and unfortunately all needed supplies are increasing in price. We are told fertilizer is in a shortage status and also more expensive. Our fuel prices have begun another escalation just in time for the spring planting. Hopefully we will be blessed with bountiful moisture to help with energy charges.

Pat Jones
Texas President

Alabama WIFE will have an ag poster contest in four schools. The posters will be picked up on March 9. They will be judged and awards will be given out on Ag Day, March 21. Awards will be \$15, \$10, and \$5 for each of the four schools. WIFE will have radio spots on two stations. Fact cards will be given to the school children and posters will be placed in businesses.

Mary Ann Sheppard,
Alabama President

Montana WIFE has been extremely busy with informational booths at the Ag Shows around the state. Glendive had the GATE, Sidney had the MON DAK Ag Days and Billings had the MATE (Montana Agri Trade Exposition). Our main topics of concern were the farm bill, private property rights and water rights. Our booths were very successful. We had the opportunity to visit with bankers and others involved with agriculture. Our 'Ag Chat' conference calls continue to be successful as well. It's a great opportunity to share with each other any new developments in the ag industry while it's still current.

Nancy Skinner,
Montana President

Nebraska WIFE will visit the Nebraska Unicameral this month. March is also a focal month for contacting Associate Members as the Ag Month posters are distributed while the fund raising is discussed.

Doris Ourecky,
Nebraska President

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

By Pam Potthoff

I personally thought this was the most productive DC meeting I have attended. The atmosphere in Washington, DC, seemed so much more open and friendly this year. There is a sense of cooperation and hope of achievement in the air. It made for great meetings on the Hill. Please check over our Priority Statement from elsewhere in this WIFEline.



President Pam doing her job.

Thank you to those who worked to put the 2007 Legislative Forum together: Mary Ann Sheppard—reception, Billy and his crew—meeting coordinators, Mary Ann Murray—pizza party, Norma Hall—Legislative Panel, Pat Torgerson—band-aid project, Sheila Massey—invitations, corporate visits and all the other things she handles, Melinda Sorem—the financial details, Tammy Basel—details at the hotel.

Thanks to all those who went to DC and all who cheered us on from home. WIFE is still recognized as a dynamic force in DC. Let's keep it that way by keeping in contact with our own Congressional Delegations.

Ninety-one guests showed up for the pizza party. We increased the number of pizzas and still ate every last piece. During our Hill visits on Tuesday, many offices expressed pleasure at attending the pizza party that always seems to be a highlight of our DC time.

There was not a big attendance at our reception but the quality was great and the food was wonderful! The guests seemed to hang around longer so we had more opportunities to chat with them.

We just barely made a quorum for our Board of Directors' meeting. The tough winter weather, family obligations and the expense were the most often cited reasons for not attending. We recognize those as legitimate reasons but we would like to find ways to increase the attendance. If you have ideas, please let me know.

Six of the Executive Committee stayed longer in DC for corporate visits and to attend the USDA Ag Forum. This was possible through a \$15,000 cooperative agreement with the USDA/Rural Development Agency. These six will also attend leadership training and visit renewable energy facilities in Minnesota in May. Networking was a big part of the Ag Forum. It was discouraging to me that agriculture was the focus but very few producers were included in either the attendees or the presenters. Once again, the importance of producers seems to be second to the importance of those profiting from our products. However, the six WIFE members attending thought it was worth the time to interact with the other attendees and get a chance to challenge some of the views expressed there.

New lobbying reform bills have created some questions on how WIFE handles contact with our Congressional Representatives. As we prepared for our pizza party, reception and Hill visits, Billy and Joan Senter (our meeting coordinators) kept an eye on new interpretation of lobbying reform. It isn't hard to understand why reform

was needed. In 2005, agribusiness spent over \$95 million to influence Congress. It is estimated the number of lobbyists in DC have doubled since just 2000 and now there are near 35,000 lobbyists in our nation's capitol. The not-for-profit Center for Responsive Politics estimates a total of \$2.28 billion was spent on DC lobbying in 2005.

Now, let's just put that into perspective. The senators and representatives who were the recipients of that \$2.28 billion have consistently been uninterested in providing that much disaster aid for farmers and ranchers hit by natural disasters in the last two years. Why don't we just get rid of all paid lobbyists and use the money to improve farm gate agricultural prices? Wouldn't that be a simplistic solution?

Ag Columnist Alan Guebert in a recent opinion column listed the following big ag lobbying groups: the American Farm Bureau Federation—\$7.9 million; The National Farmers Unions—\$1 million; the National Cattlemen's Beef Association—\$420,370; the National Pork Producers Council—\$404,125; the National Corn Growers—\$550,000. They certainly make the meager outlay by WIFE seem insignificant. However, it does emphasize the need to get farm groups together and speak with a united voice. The sad part of these outlays is often one farm group lobbies against another farm group. Remember, one of the WIFE objectives is to work to promote unity in Agriculture. Guebert also reported lobbying activities by agri-businesses as follows: Dean Foods, \$1.6 billion; Dairy Farmers of America—\$620,000; Tyson Foods—\$1.08 million; Monsanto Company—\$3.04 million; Crop Life of America—\$1.9 million; Smithfield Foods—\$880,000; and Syngenta—\$960,000.

It is with great regret that I acknowledge the decision of Washington State WIFE Association to disband. The members there will remain members-at-large but we will lose this talented and enthusiastic group of women from our pool of active members.

Agriculture Women's Leadership Association (AWLA) has also been disbanded. WIFE has been a member of the group for many years and various WIFE members have served in leadership positions. The group has been inactive for the past few years. The treasury was disbursed to the remaining members. WIFE received \$4761.21. We have determined to use that money for special projects like the posters for the Fourth of July and the placemats for fall. We will continue to look for funding elsewhere and will use these funds as backup.

A decision has been made to hold the 2007 National Convention in Rapid City, South Dakota. No state has offered to host so the Executive Committee will be overseeing the process as the states are asked to cover various aspects. It will be a "no frills" convention. The tentative date is the second weekend in November but that will depend on availability of facilities. Look for an official announcement soon and start to make your plans to attend!

We have an internal problem with the dual identity of our Treasurer Melinda/Linda Sorem. It seems that when Linda Sorem and Linda Newman were elected Secretary and Treasurer of WIFE, Linda Sorem graciously agreed to be called by her full name "Melinda" to help avoid confusion. This has forced her to live her WIFE existence as "Melinda" and her other life as "Linda". Now that this problem no longer exists on the Executive Committee, "Melinda" has asked to be allowed to return to her former alias of "Linda". That seems like a small wish to grant considering her big contribution to WIFE. Therefore, I am requesting that all of you join me in re-programming your minds. Now, what are we going to do on the Executive Committee with Mary Ann Murray and Mary Ann Sheppard??

Let's all get moving on contacting our members of Congress concerning the issue discussed in the leave-behind from DC. They need to know that WIFE is still out here working for family farmers and ranchers. Thanks for all of the hard work.