

news

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President signs healthy forests bill

President Bush last week signed into law a Farm Bureau-supported bill intended to reduce the threat of catastrophic forest fires while improving grazing conditions and water quality.

The House on Nov. 21 passed the final version of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (H.R. 1904) in a 286-140 vote. The Senate approved it by voice vote the same day.

"Although it took three years for this bill to make it out of both houses of Congress and onto the president's desk, we believe it is a good first step toward expediting priority forest reduction projects in some areas," said American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman.

Farm Bureau supports the healthy forests law and believes it will provide relief from devastating wildfires for at-risk rural communities.

"Recent fire seasons have proved that the overgrown conditions of America's forests have made them highly susceptible to large-scale, catastrophic wildfires and massive outbreaks of insect, disease and invasive species infestations," Stallman said.

The October fires in California killed 22 people as they burned nearly 750,000 acres and destroyed 3,600

homes in the southern part of the state. And during the 2002 fire season, *See Healthy forests, page 6*



Honolulu bound

Farm Bureau members from around the country are preparing to head to Honolulu, Hawaii, for the American Farm Bureau Federation's 85th annual convention. A top attraction there is the U.S.S. Arizona National Memorial at Pearl Harbor, which sits atop the sunken ship and honors the 2,388 military and civilian personnel who lost their lives Dec. 7, 1941, the "Day of Infamy."

Appropriations details are coming out

Congress recessed for the Thanksgiving holiday without passing the omnibus appropriations bill that includes agriculture and six other funding packages. In the process, Congress postponed the final outcome of several issues, such as country-of-origin labeling and funding for conservation programs. But a 1,400-page conference report became available last week, revealing what shape the final bill might take.

The House is expected to pass the omnibus on Dec. 8 and the Senate could take up the bill later the same week, although it could be delayed until January in the Senate if senators cannot agree on various provisions. Portions of the government that have yet to be funded for fiscal 2004 are currently funded at the fiscal 2003 level under a continuing resolution that goes until Jan. 31.

Although the omnibus bill could still change up until the time it is passed, some details involving agriculture were worked out in the conference agree-

ment between House and Senate leaders. For example, the omnibus bill would delay until Sept. 30, 2006, implementation of mandatory country-of-origin labeling for meat, meat products and fruits and vegetables.

The new language is much more restrictive than the House agriculture appropriations bill, which would have only prohibited the Agriculture Department from using fiscal 2004 funds to implement mandatory labeling for meat. The Senate bill did not include any restriction on country-of-origin labeling.

Current American Farm Bureau Federation policy supports mandatory country-of-origin labeling.

"We're disappointed about word of the delay in implementing country-of-origin labeling," said Caroline Anderson Rydell, an AFBF director of congressional relations. "This is an important issue to farmers and ranchers, and something that Farm Bureau members have worked hard to accomplish."

The omnibus agreement strikes lan-

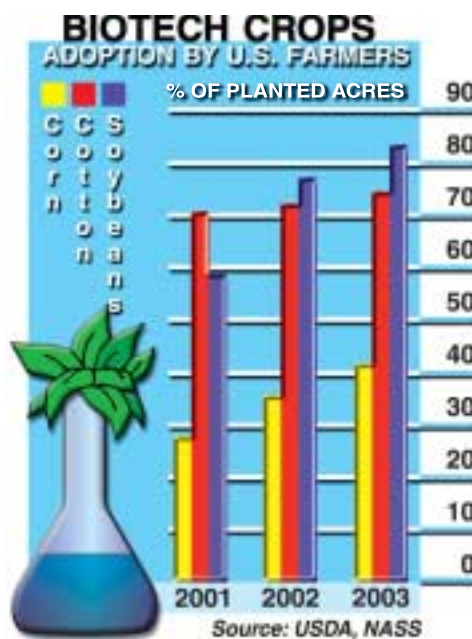
guage in the agricultural disaster bill signed into law earlier this year that took money away from the Conservation Security Program (CSP) authorization to help pay for weather disaster assistance. As a result of the omnibus appropriations agreement, the budget authorization for CSP would be unlimited, as it was under the 2002 farm bill, and the program would be funded at \$41 million in fiscal 2004. CSP is a completely new program created in the 2002 farm bill.

The omnibus bill would fund the popular Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) at \$975 million in 2004, \$25 million less than the \$1 billion authorized in the farm bill but still significantly more than the \$700 million available in fiscal 2003.

The conference report does not include the amendment by Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) that became part of the Senate agriculture appropriations bill reducing the EQIP payment limit from \$450,000 to \$300,000 over the 10

See Appropriations, page 6

Corner Post



CAPITAL UPDATE

Interior issues grazing rule, lauds healthy forests law

Interior Secretary Gale Norton Dec. 5 announced the release of a proposed grazing rule that she said would improve the Interior Department's working relationship with ranchers, bring more certainty of the forage amounts available to them and help maintain the benefits of ranching on public lands.

"We believe that public land ranchers help us in managing our lands," Norton said in an interview with *Farm Bureau News*. "They help us in stopping the spread of invasive species, they help provide stock watering ponds for wildlife, they help as our eyes and ears to know what's happening on the land. We want to have a strong working relationship with ranchers. We want to keep ranchers on the land."

Under the rule, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) would phase in grazing decreases and increases of more than 10 percent over a five-year period whenever possible, to provide more predictability for ranchers and their lenders.

In addition, the rule would expand the definition of "grazing preference" to include an amount of forage on public lands attached to a rancher's private land or "base" property, assuring livestock producers of available forage amounts and returning the system to how it operated from 1978 to 1995,



Interior Secretary Gale Norton, speaking with *Farm Bureau News* last week, said her department's new grazing rule would help maintain public land ranching. She also discussed healthy forests legislation the president signed into law last week.

Norton said. A specific number of animal unit months would be tied to the grazing permits.

The rule would also allow BLM and grazing permit holders to share title to certain permanent range improvements, such as fences, wells and pipelines, as was allowed prior to regulatory changes the Clinton administration made in 1995.

"It discourages people from making investments if they have no ownership in those investments," Norton said. "We think it is much better for our lands to have that investment coming from the ranchers."

The new regulation would require assessment and monitoring of grazing allotment conditions and remove the current three-consecutive-year limit on temporary non-use of a grazing permit by allowing ranchers to apply for non-use for up to one year at a time, whether for conservation or business purposes.

"There are often questions about the effects of grazing on our lands. We want to be able to answer those questions with real, on-the-ground information from people who actually understand what the conditions are on the land," Norton said.

The Interior Department is encouraging ranchers to comment on the proposed rule over the next 60 days. More information about the rule is available on the department's Web site, at www.doi.gov.

Norton also talked about the importance of the healthy forests law President Bush signed into law last week and the key role that Farm Bureau played in getting the legislation through Congress.

"We have needed help in getting

the word out about the importance of improving our process for thinning the forests," Norton said. "Too often our plans for thinning projects got bogged down in the courts and in paperwork, which prevented us from responding quickly when there were insect infestations or dire fire dangers. "The Farm Bureau understands the importance of caring for forests in the same way farmers care for other plants. Farm Bureau helped us in communicating that this is commonsense legislation."

An estimated 190 million acres of public lands are at elevated risk of severe wildfires because of overly dense growth, dead trees and insect infestation. There were 88,458 forest fires last year that burned seven million acres, destroyed 800 structures and killed 23 firefighters, according to the Interior and Agriculture Departments. For New Mexico, Oregon, Colorado and Arizona, it was the worst fire season ever. California this fall suffered its worst fire season, with more than 739,000 acres burned, 3,600 homes destroyed and 22 civilians killed.

Norton said the reductions in paperwork requirements and streamlining the process of appealing forest project permits would help to replace catastrophic wildfires with more normal, natural and manageable fires.

VIEWPOINT

Bridging the gap of understanding on farm programs

By Al Christopherson

In an effort to assess public understanding about farm policy and farm bill discussions, and to evaluate agriculture's communication messages, the American Farm Bureau Federation conducted qualitative research in three areas across the country.



The locations were Boston, Kansas City and San Diego. Qualitative research uses focus groups and in this study the people targeted were "influentials." This 10 percent of the population are those who make society, culture and the marketplace run. We generally call them the movers and the shakers.

To summarize the findings of the study:

- Farm spending is not a high priority. Of greater concern is spending for education, national defense and security. This also included Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

- Awareness of provisions of the current farm bill is low and the concern even lower. If they have a perception, they feel it only benefits the "corporate farms." Some of the participants appeared sentimental about the family farm, considering it a part of culture and wanting it preserved. Others, however, were "bottom line" oriented, valuing safe, low-cost food. They felt that larger and "corporate farms" are more likely to make that happen for them. The stated key benefit of farm subsidies to the participants was lower grocery prices.

- They want to limit farm subsidy payments; however, they disagree on how to structure those limits.

- They were not aware that the WIC and food stamp programs make up a major part of the farm bill's costs. However, most felt helping the poor was necessary.

- They don't trust the federal government to effectively enforce safety standards for the use of pesticides, hormones and antibiotics.

This is only a portion of the findings. However, the other rather interesting revelation is who and what they would believe. There seemed to be value to connecting the various messages given

to the respondents to a face, i.e. a producer. To relate how it affects a real farmer achieves credibility.

The messages also have to have relevance to the reader, i.e. higher prices at the grocery store or threatening the safety of the food supply.

The research emphasizes local relevance and the importance of communicating through local channels, such as producers appearing before Lions Clubs or other gatherings. Local special interest stories in publications and one-on-one conversations also help.

The ensuing discussion by the AFBF board members following this presen-

tation underscored several items. Education by farmers to all groups of people is an ongoing necessity, whether it's Ag in the Classroom, Ag Pen Pals, Ag Spokesman or Epcot Center.

We, as producers, need to understand that every demographic group has its own list of concerns and priorities, often at odds with our ideas or importance. Anything we can do to bridge the gap in understanding between farmers and our non-farm cousins will be in our best interest.

Al Christopherson is president of the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation.

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WTO rules against Japan on apples

A World Trade Organization appellate body determined in late November that quarantine measures Japan imposed on imports of U.S. apples are inconsistent with WTO rules. Within 30 days of the decision, Japan must report on whether and how it will comply with the ruling.

The appellate body, as expected, upheld a dispute settlement panel decision in July that Japan's quarantine restrictions were not based on a proper risk assessment and were maintained without sufficient scientific evidence to justify them.

"The decision is significant in that it establishes the trade standard upon which scientific risk analysis needs to be conducted for protective measures that other countries may establish to

comply with the WTO agreement on sanitary and phytosanitary measures," said Ron Gaskill, American Farm Bureau Federation trade specialist.

"This ruling reinforces one of the WTO's basic rules—health and safety requirements must be based on sound science," U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick said.

Japan had imposed the quarantine to prevent the introduction of fire blight, a bacterial disease of apples, pears, quince and some garden plants. However, the United States maintained that mature apples have never been implicated in transmitting fire blight, and the bacteria would not likely survive commercial handling, storage and transport.

The restrictions included a prohibition on imports of apples from orchards where fire blight was detected, or within a 500-meter buffer zone surrounding the orchards.

Orchards exporting apples to Japan also had to be inspected three times a year, and all apples imported from the United States had to be treated with chlorine.

The United States exported more than \$1 million worth of apples to Japan in 2000, before the quarantine restrictions went into place. The following year, U.S. apple exports to Japan dropped to a mere \$377,000 worth, and to only \$102,000 worth in 2002. U.S. apples exports globally are worth more than \$390 million.

Rep. Bono links COOL and hepatitis

Rep. Mary Bono (R-Calif.) in a news release said the recent outbreak of Hepatitis A that has been linked to imported green onions shows why mandatory country-of-origin labeling should be implemented on schedule, rather than delayed two years under the pending fiscal 2004 omnibus appropriations bill.

Raw or undercooked green onions served in a Chi-Chi's restaurant in Monaca, Pa., about 25 miles from Pittsburgh, are the apparent cause of a Hepatitis A outbreak that is blamed for killing three people and making another 575 people sick. The outbreak was confirmed Nov. 3.

Although officials have not determined the source of the green onions or how they became contaminated, the source of a smaller outbreak in Tennessee, North Carolina and Georgia in September appears to be green onions imported from Mexico, according to the Food and Drug Administration.

Officials from FDA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Pennsylvania government are continuing to investigate the Pennsylvania outbreak.

"At a time when people have died or been taken ill due to the Hepatitis A outbreak in Pennsylvania linked to imported produce, Congress should lead the way in ensuring our health and safety rather than taking actions to weaken those standards," Bono said. "What some people do not consider is that while chain restaurants may not be hurt by omitting onions from their menu, our U.S. growers who supply good, safe onions will be."

The fiscal 2004 omnibus appropriations bill, which includes the agriculture appropriations bill, would delay implementation of mandatory country-of-origin labeling for meat, meat products, and fruits and vegetables until Sept. 30, 2006. Under the 2002 farm bill, mandatory labeling at retail is supposed to go into effect by Sept.

30, 2004. A voluntary labeling program has been operating since October of last year.

Bono said the two-year delay in implementing mandatory country-of-origin labeling would hurt U.S. farmers. In the wake of the Hepatitis A outbreak, consumers are likely to avoid all green onions, including those grown in the United States, she said, since there is no way for them to tell which ones were imported from Mexico.

The Florida Agriculture Department issued a news release Nov. 25 stating that supermarket shoppers in Florida do have the benefit of knowing where their produce is grown because that state has its own country-of-origin labeling law for produce. Florida is the only state that has such a program. Proponents of the federal mandatory country-of-origin labeling program have pointed to the Florida program, which has been operating since the late 1970s, as a model, said John Fruin, Florida Agriculture Department spokesman.

The issue of a national country-of-origin labeling program has been described in recent years as a consumer right-to-know issue, not a matter of food safety. However, Fruin said Hepatitis A-contaminated strawberries from Mexico in 1997, and imports of Mexican melons contaminated with Salmonella last year, have shown the need for consumers to know where their fruits and vegetables originated. "We think our labeling law has been very successful," Fruin said.

Hepatitis A is a liver disease that develops within six weeks of exposure. It is usually mild, causing jaundice (yellowing of the skin), fatigue, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, diarrhea and fever. It can, however, be severe, especially in people with liver disease or weakened immune systems.

FDA has advised consumers to cook all raw green onions thoroughly before eating them.

Senate shelves energy bill

The Senate's failure to limit debate on comprehensive energy legislation late last month has delayed consideration of the bill until next year.

"In spite of the Senate's failure to end a filibuster on the energy bill this year, Farm Bureau will continue to fight for support of the key provisions of this legislation related to renewable fuels, improved energy supplies and more reliable distribution systems," said American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman. "While America's farmers are disappointed with the energy bill's outcome in 2003, we will stand resolute in 2004 behind our commitment to supplying efficient, home-grown energy solutions such as ethanol and biodiesel."

The House on Nov. 18 passed the final version of the energy bill on a 246-180 vote. The bill was introduced in the Senate that same day, but a Nov. 21 Senate vote to limit debate on the bill failed, 57-40, three votes short of the 60 votes needed to invoke cloture.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) changed his vote at the last minute from "yea" to "nay" so he would be allowed to bring up another cloture motion in the following days. However, he abandoned that intention when the extra votes needed proved impossible to get.

"The sensible and comprehensive energy package, which, unfortunately, a minority of senators was able to turn away, would have enhanced our rural economies and prioritized our nation's renewable energy capability while protecting our environment," Stallman said.

The legislation includes a renewable fuels standard (RFS) that would increase the nation's use of renewable fuels to 5 billion gallons by 2012.

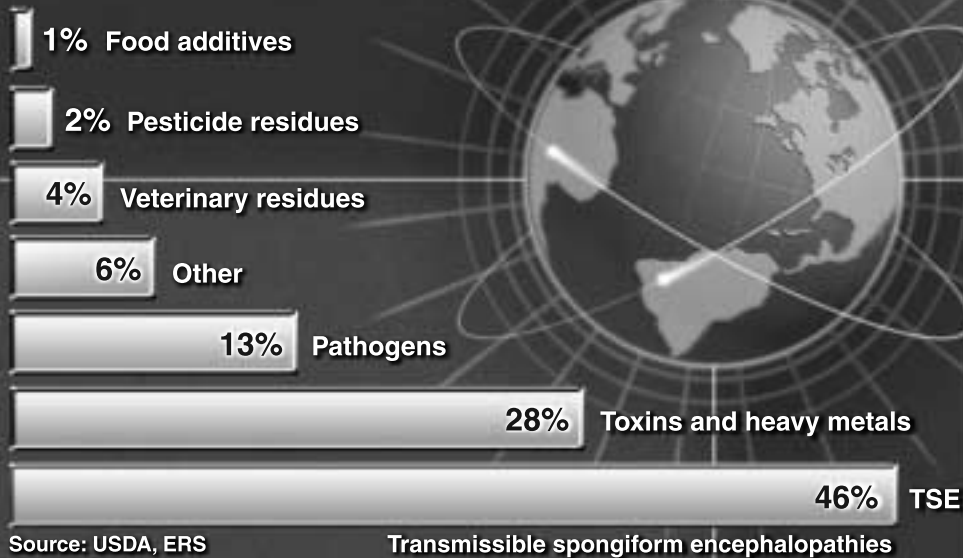
The standard is estimated to increase per-year demand for corn by more than 1 billion bushels and soybeans by 144 million bushels.

"America's farmers remain confident that the inability to end the energy bill filibuster this year will only be a temporary setback," Stallman said. "The provisions of this legislation are so urgent and positive for our nation's overall energy future that Congress seemingly has little choice but to revisit the issue in early 2004."

Frist has indicated that the energy bill will be the top priority for the Senate in 2004.

FOOD SAFETY

Distribution of complaints to the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Committee 1995-2001





Times have changed for America's tobacco farmers

Tobacco production in the United States dates back to Colonial times, and some of today's tobacco farmers work the same land that their great-great grandfathers once did. The crop was the livelihood of several rural communities years ago, and continues to be for some. But a changing market breeds an uncertain future for the last of the tobacco farmers.

Tobacco was one of the first crops to be commercially cultivated and marketed in the United States, and still is produced in 20 states. As tobacco production expanded throughout the nation, Congress recognized the need to formulate a program that would control the production of tobacco and stabilize the price while preventing any one company from monopolizing the market.

In 1938, Congress established the federal tobacco quota program. Under the program, which remains in place today, tobacco farmers agree to restrict supply in order to receive minimum price guarantees.

The 65-year-old program has been effective in providing price support

and stability for small tobacco farms. But over the last decade, changes in market forces and public opinion have caused consumption of domestic tobacco to weaken, pushing a lot of farmers out of business.

"While American agriculture has faced lean times over the past few years, tobacco farmers have also struggled with massive industry changes," said Bob Stallman, American Farm Bureau Federation president, in a letter to lawmakers working on legislation that would create a tobacco buyout program. "Billion-dollar lawsuits, a decline in tobacco consumption and a surge in the use of imported tobacco have significantly strained the federal tobacco program, but more importantly, have severely strained many tobacco farmers."

And, the quota allotments that are based on past production do not allow tobacco farmers to increase production to take advantage of production shortages in other countries and fill the supply gaps. Countries that are not constrained by a supply control program have the flexibility to respond to global market fluctuations.

Smallest crop in 106 years

The Agriculture Department estimates this year's supply of U.S.-grown tobacco will be about 7 percent lower than last year. At approximately 831 million pounds, it will be the smallest tobacco crop since 1897.

Flue-cured and burley tobacco made up 93 percent of the 890-million-pound U.S. tobacco crop in 2002, which was valued at more than \$1.5 billion, according to USDA.

With the total tobacco crop shrinking, tobacco quota is shrinking as well, making the quota a valuable commodity in itself. Tobacco quota has declined more than 50 percent since 1997, when it reached its highest level.

The Agriculture Department is expected to announce the 2004 quota later this month, based on production levels and demand from cigarette companies. Farmers are expecting yet another cut.

"Over the past seven years, burley and flue-cured producers have lost half of their quota. As a result, producers are faced with higher input costs, while at the same time compelled to produce less tobacco," said David Winkles, South Carolina Farm Bureau Federation president, at a House Agriculture Committee hearing on federal tobacco policy. "Even as prices for cigarettes rise, the tobacco farmer's portion of the retail tobacco falls—from 7 cents in 1980 to less than 2 cents today."

As income drops, more farmers are going out of business. According to the latest U.S. Census of Agriculture, production over the last 50 years has declined by 46 percent and acreage has dropped 73 percent.

Import surge

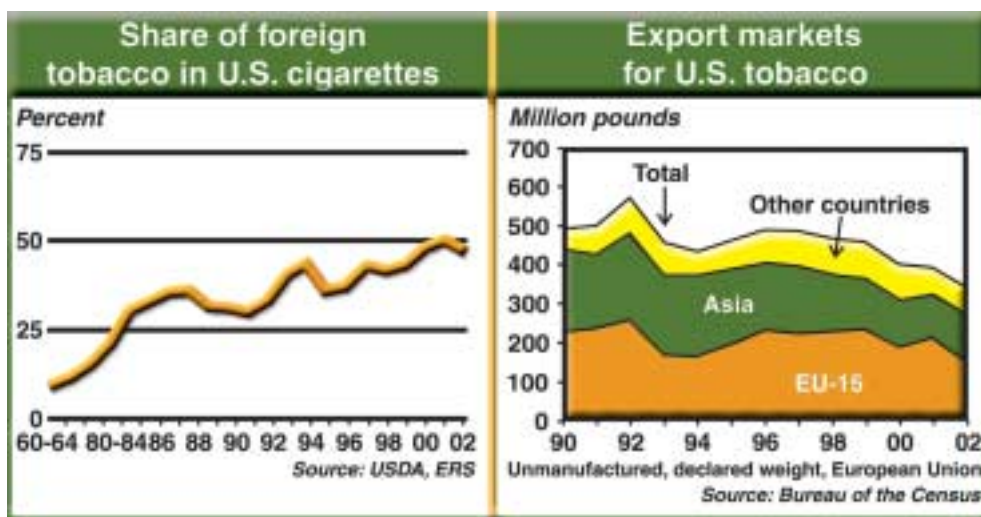
For several years, the superior quality

of U.S. tobacco justified its higher price when compared to foreign tobacco. But over the last 25 years, overseas growers have dramatically improved the quality of their product. While U.S. growers continue to produce high-quality tobacco, foreign producers are giving them a run for their money in both the quality and quantity departments.

The United States in 1960 enjoyed a nearly 30 percent share of the world tobacco market. USDA data show the U.S. share of the world tobacco market in 2002 was at an all-time low of 8 percent. Last year also marked the first time that Japan, the country that buys the most U.S. tobacco, purchased leaf from Brazil. Over the past 10 years, Brazil has become the largest exporter of leaf, surpassing the United States.

Additionally, U.S.-manufactured cigarettes now contain nearly 50 percent foreign tobacco, according to USDA. While exports of U.S. tobacco are declining, imports of tobacco by the United States are on the rise. With less of a difference in quality between foreign and domestic tobacco, price becomes the main motivator when purchasing the product.

"With these great market pressures at work, it is difficult to see how the current program structure will do anything other than perpetuate this downward spiral," said Bob Young, AFBF chief economist. "But at the same time, we must understand that this program has been around for 65 years. People—even whole communities—have structured their lives around this program. That's what makes a buyout so important, and why the structure of that program is so critical."



Tobacco buyout is

Several alternatives to the federal tobacco quota program have been kicked around since the mid-1990s, most including some kind of buyout to compensate current quota owners for the loss of their quota. Tobacco quota is a major asset that can be leased or someday sold to other tobacco farmers, perhaps helping to finance retirement or a child's college education. Quota owners can't afford just to walk away from that asset.

However, with the market for U.S.

tobacco declining, there is increasing interest in revamping or eliminating the current quota system.

The proposal that has been the most successful to date is legislation offered by Reps. Ernie Fletcher (R-Ky.), Bob Etheridge (D-N.C.), Virgil Goode (R-Va.) and Mike McIntyre (D-N.C.) to compensate quota owners at the rate of \$8 per pound and tobacco growers at \$4 per pound. The payments would be made in equal installments over seven years.

Similar buyout legislation, introduced by Sens. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and Elizabeth Dole (R-N.C.), was almost included in the fiscal 2004 omnibus appropriations bill. But proponents of the buyout came up short because of disagreement over the regulatory role of the Food and Drug Administration.

As a result, the tobacco quota buyout is stalled until next year when the next session of Congress begins. The omnibus bill was the last potential legislative

vehicle to move the tobacco buyout this year.

"It's disappointing to get so close and not reach the finish line," said Dana Brooks, American Farm Bureau Federation commodity program specialist. "Tobacco farmers need this buyout now. This will be one of Farm Bureau's biggest priorities in January, to get buyout legislation back on the table and on its way to enactment."

Rep. Jack Kingston (R-Ga.), a member



Tobacco farmer keeps up tradition in face of change

Frank Wood is happiest when he is working on his small Calvert County, Md., tobacco farm. His family has been raising tobacco there for as many generations as he can think of, and he has been growing tobacco practically all his life.

"I had my first crop when I was five," the 69-year-old Wood said. "My father gave me a little piece of land to farm, and I've had a tobacco crop every year since then."

Tobacco farming runs deep not just in Wood's family but also in many of the families that call southern Maryland home. Maryland Type 32 burley tobacco has been produced in the area since early Colonial times. The tobacco industry is part of the history and culture of the area. There's a town close to Wood's farm named Port Tobacco. Because the area is hilly and the fields are relatively small, Wood said, it's easier to work tobacco than grain crops that need longer rows and larger equipment.

But few Marylanders raise tobacco anymore. The state of Maryland nearly four years ago offered tobacco farmers a voluntary buyout, using money from the master settlement agreement reached between 46 states and the tobacco companies they had sued. As of 2002, more than 700 of the nearly 1,000 eligible growers had taken the deal, reducing harvested acres by 60 percent.

Maryland produced only 2.4 million pounds of tobacco last year according to the state's agricultural statistics service, compared to almost 12 million pounds in 1999. Because there is less tobacco harvested, there are only two tobacco warehouses where there used to be eight, which makes it harder for the farmers who chose to stay in the tobacco business to market their leaf.

Tobacco farming in southern Maryland will continue to fade away, Wood predicted. A look around Wood's farm shows why. His home and farm sit along a busy commuter route to Washington, D.C. Land prices have soared, and fields of tobacco are quickly being replaced by a new crop: acres of large new houses.



Frank Wood of Calvert County, Md., is proud to be a tobacco farmer, but he thinks tobacco farming is dying in his area. He displays a rack of dried tobacco plants that are ready to be stripped of their leaves.

"And that's the last crop that will grow on that land," he said. "That's something to think about. The way this area is growing, the few hardheads of us who are left, when we die, tobacco farming here is gone."

Wood is proud to be one of the few who didn't take the buyout. "I didn't like the idea of it," he said. "It would place a covenant on the land prohibiting anyone from using it to raise to-

bacco ever again. You couldn't farm tobacco for the rest of your life. I found that a little hard to swallow. It seemed like giving up too much of my rights."

Not to mention Wood enjoys farming tobacco. He once, briefly, took a job as a banker, and he worked for several years as a salesman for Anheuser-Busch. He sometimes had to work two

wider, longer leaves that can grow closer together on the plant. Mechanical planters have made the job easier, as have barns with wider doors so the farmer can drive a truckload of tobacco right in rather than having to carry it in by hand. Herbicides came along to help control crabgrass, the most troublesome weed in the tobacco field. And Wood, like many farmers today, has adopted conservation practices such as contour strip farming. He plants strips of tobacco at right angles to the slope of his field, and alternately between strips of an erosion-resistant forage crop, to help control erosion.

He has also seen foreign competition grow. China produces 40 percent of the world's tobacco, he said, and labor is much cheaper there. In fact, the growth in lower-priced imported tobacco is one reason many tobacco farmers want the federal government to offer a national tobacco quota buyout.

Maryland isn't a quota state, so Wood doesn't have strong views about the prospect of a national buyout. But he said he has talked with tobacco farmers in quota areas who say they need it. To the extent that it would help get the government out of farming, he is in favor of it. "I don't like government interference in farming," he said.

Wood thinks the market for tobacco will expand, despite declining U.S. demand for smoking and chewing tobacco. In Asia and Europe, the market is still strong, he said. And tobacco researchers are working on new uses, such as medicines to treat Parkinson's disease and cancer, and oil used in paint.

"Nationally, it's going to grow. Tobacco's going to be around," he said proudly. With champions like Wood, there's little doubt of that.

top priority in 2004

of the omnibus conference committee that tried to work out an agreement on the buyout legislation, said, "Obtaining a tobacco buyout has become one of my top priorities. We brought it from being a distant issue to being in the top 10 and people saying, 'We have to do something about it.'"

Another important issue for tobacco growers is what kind of safety net they will have if and when the buyout is offered and the quota system is ended.

By limiting tobacco supply, the quota program keeps tobacco prices higher than they otherwise would be.

The Agriculture Department has estimated that burley prices would decline 20 percent to 30 percent with the removal of marketing quotas. The Fletcher-Etheridge-Goode-McIntyre legislation would create a price insurance system to pay producers the difference between a market-determined, insured price and actual prices whenever prices take a

dive. Assessments on tobacco producers and tobacco product manufacturers would pay for the system, so it wouldn't cost the taxpayer.

AFBF President Bob Stallman has said the bill equitably compensates tobacco quota holders and growers while protecting them in the future with a safety net.

House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) has written members of Congress that the tobacco buyout will continue to receive significant attention during the

108th Congress, which continues through 2004. The issue remains at the forefront of the congressional agenda, he said.

This is the first in a series of stories focusing on agricultural commodities that have a rich history of production in the United States and are undergoing great change, and the farmers who produce them. Future stories will focus on sugar, cotton and other agricultural products.

FOR THE RECORD

Roll Call

vote

vote

vote

vote

vote

vote

vote

Senate votes on energy bill cloture motion

The Senate on Nov. 21 defeated, 57-40, a motion that would have limited debate on the Energy Policy Act of 2003 (H.R. 6) and forced a final vote. The Senate's failure to invoke cloture has delayed further consideration of the bill until next year.

The motion was just three votes short of the 60 votes needed to invoke cloture. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) at the last minute changed his vote to oppose cloture so he could bring up another cloture motion the next week. Before Frist changed his vote, energy bill supporters were only two votes short of limiting debate.

The American Farm Bureau Federation believes the energy bill would carve out a larger role for America's home-grown renewable fuels, strengthen the economy and cut U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

Farm Bureau favored a "yea" (Y) vote.

LEGEND:

Y — yea n — nay ? — not voting

Name	Party	Vote	Name	Party	Vote	Name	Party	Vote	Name	Party	Vote	Name	Party	Vote
Alabama			Hawaii			Massachusetts			New Mexico			South Dakota		
Sessions (R)		Y	Akaka (D)		n	Kennedy (D)		n	Bingaman (D)		n	Daschle (D)		Y
Shelby (R)		Y	Inouye (D)		n	Kerry (D)		?	Domenici (R)		Y	Johnson (D)		Y
Alaska			Idaho			Michigan			New York			Tennessee		
Murkowski (R)		Y	Craig (R)		Y	Levin (D)		n	Clinton (D)		n	Alexander (R)		Y
Stevens (R)		Y	Crapo (R)		Y	Stabenow (D)		n	Schumer (D)		n	Frist (R)		n
Arizona			Illinois			Minnesota			North Carolina			Texas		
Kyl (R)		Y	Durbin (D)		n	Coleman (R)		Y	Dole (R)		Y	Cornyn (R)		Y
McCain (R)		n	Fitzgerald (R)		Y	Dayton (D)		Y	Edwards (D)		?	Hutchison (R)		Y
Arkansas			Indiana			Mississippi			North Dakota			Utah		
Lincoln (D)		Y	Bayh (D)		n	Cochran (R)		Y	Conrad (D)		Y	Bennett (R)		Y
Pryor (D)		Y	Lugar (R)		Y	Lott (R)		Y	Dorgan (D)		Y	Hatch (R)		Y
California			Iowa			Missouri			Ohio			Vermont		
Boxer (D)		n	Grassley (R)		Y	Bond (R)		Y	Dewine (R)		Y	Jeffords (I)		n
Feinstein (D)		n	Harkin (D)		Y	Talent (R)		Y	Voinovich (R)		Y	Leahy (D)		n
Colorado			Kansas			Montana			Oklahoma			Virginia		
Allard (R)		Y	Brownback (R)		Y	Baucus (D)		Y	Inhofe (R)		Y	Allen (R)		Y
Campbell (R)		Y	Roberts (R)		Y	Burns (R)		Y	Nickles (R)		Y	Warner (R)		Y
Connecticut			Kentucky			Nebraska			Oregon			Washington		
Dodd (D)		n	Bunning (R)		Y	Hagel (R)		Y	Smith (R)		Y	Cantwell (D)		n
Lieberman (D)		n	McConnell (R)		Y	Nelson (D)		Y	Wyden (D)		n	Murray (D)		n
Delaware			Louisiana			Nevada			Pennsylvania			West Virginia		
Biden (D)		n	Breaux (D)		Y	Ensign (R)		Y	Santorum (R)		Y	Byrd (D)		n
Carper (D)		n	Landrieu (D)		Y	Reid (D)		n	Specter (R)		Y	Rockefeller (D)		n
Florida			Maine			New Hampshire			Rhode Island			Wisconsin		
Graham (D)		n	Collins (R)		n	Gregg (R)		n	Chafee (R)		n	Feingold (D)		n
Nelson (D)		n	Snowe (R)		n	Sununu (R)		n	Reed (D)		n	Kohl (D)		n
Georgia			Maryland			New Jersey			South Carolina			Wyoming		
Chambliss (R)		Y	Mikulski (D)		n	Corzine (D)		n	Graham (R)		Y	Enzi (R)		Y
Miller (D)		Y	Sarbanes (D)		n	Lautenberg (D)		n	Hollings (D)		?	Thomas (R)		Y

Animal ID program in the works

With a goal of tracing an animal's origin within 48 hours in order to improve disease control and food security, the livestock industry and state and federal governments are developing an animal identification plan for U.S. livestock.

The U.S. Animal Identification Plan (USAIP) would allow animal health officials to pinpoint all animals and premises a diseased animal came in contact with within two days of identifying the animal as diseased.

"The program would help assure the public that U.S. meat is safe," said Mary Kay Thatcher, American Farm Bureau Federation public policy director. "It also would cut down on the number of animals that have to be slaughtered in the event of a disease outbreak."

Under USAIP, all states would have a premises identification system in place by July 2004 and all specified animals would have a form of identification by July 2006. One type of identification could include an electronic tag attached to the ear of an animal.

A draft of the plan was presented by an Agriculture Department-appointed task force at the U.S. Animal Health Association's annual meeting in September. The task force is made up of individuals representing the livestock industry, as well as state and federal health officials. AFBF has participated in the meetings of the task force.

Current AFBF policy supports a voluntary animal identification program, but Thatcher said Farm Bureau members could change the policy to support a mandatory program. "After witnessing the market impact of the discovery of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in Canada, we may change our position to mandatory," she said. "A lot of states have brought up the issue, so it will be discussed during our policymaking process."

BSE, also known as mad cow disease, was detected in a cow on an Alberta farm in May. The discovery prompted USDA to ban the import of any ruminants or ruminant products from Canada. Several other countries also

banned Canadian products, costing the country millions in lost exports. "[After the BSE discovery in Canada], the thinking is not if BSE will hit the United States, but when," Thatcher said. She predicts a mandatory animal identification program will be a reality in the near future.

Discussion on how best to implement the program continues. Perhaps the biggest question is where the money will come from to fund the program. "The burden cannot fall solely on the shoulders of producers," Thatcher said. "The government ought to be involved to help alleviate cost."

The farm bill provision requiring country-of-origin labeling (COOL) prohibits a mandatory animal identification program. If an animal identification program is adopted and the COOL law is amended to allow a mandatory identification system, implementation of COOL "certainly would be less costly to producers," Thatcher said. Congress is expected to review an animal identification program next spring.

Healthy forests

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more than 7 million acres burned nationwide.

The Interior Department considers an estimated 190 million acres of federal forests and rangelands at high risk for catastrophic fire. The high fire risk is due to natural fuels buildup, combined with drought and insect and disease damage, according to the department.

The healthy forests bill implements more active forest and rangeland management by establishing a framework for protecting communities and the environment through forest thinning, planned burns and forest restoration projects.

In addition to those projects, the legislation encourages renewable energy-related uses of biomass such as wood chips and brush that result from the thinning process. The bill also addresses catastrophic insect infestations on both public and private forest acreage.

"Healthy forest legislation will lead to improvement of highly detrimental forest conditions and ultimately fewer catastrophic fires," Stallman said.

"This in turn will provide numerous environmental benefits such as improved water quality and water yields, improved range conditions and improved overall forest health," he added.

Appropriations details are coming out

continued from page 1

years of the program. AFBF opposes farm and conservation program payment limits.

The final bill will not contain a provision that had been in the Senate bill easing restrictions on U.S. citizens'

ability to travel to Cuba. Farm Bureau supports lifting the travel ban in order to increase demand for U.S. agricultural exports to Cuba and make it easier to arrange Cuban purchases of U.S. farm stuffs.

The conference report would fund

Agriculture in the Classroom (AIRC) at \$695,000 in 2004, the same as last year and only \$55,000 less than the president's budget requested. Farm Bureau supports adequate funding to support AIRC activities that help schoolchildren learn about agriculture.

Farm Bureau membership grows to 5.5 million families

State Farm Bureaus this year turned in another year of strong membership performance. The final tally boosts Farm Bureau's nationwide grassroots strength by 213,794 member families. Already the nation's largest general farm organization, the American Farm Bureau Federation's final 2003 membership tally rose to a record 5,519,795 member families.

According to AFBF President Bob Stallman, the organization's growth continues to be fueled by the recognition of Farm Bureau's strong record as an advocate for grassroots public policy developed by and for its members, and on the strength of the many outstanding programs and services Farm Bureau provides to improve member families' business success and standard of living.

"Having more than 213,000 new families join Farm Bureau this year affirms our ongoing effort to represent and serve America's farm and ranch families," Stallman said. "Farm Bureau makes a difference in peoples' lives and anyone associated with Farm Bureau should take pride in this obvious sign of approval."

Stallman said this year's membership achievement could be traced to Farm Bureau's overall effectiveness and its commitment to members.

"Families joining Farm Bureau at the grassroots level are the foundation of our national success," Stallman said. "This year's membership gain provides new resources that will help make Farm Bureau even more effective in the national public policy arena."

"The organization has never been stronger and I am proud to say that Farm Bureau will play a supporting role in the lives of more American families than ever before."

Stallman outlined a number of high-

lights from the recently concluded 2003 membership year, the 43rd consecutive year in which Farm Bureau membership has grown nationwide.

- Tennessee Farm Bureau continued to claim the title of the nation's largest state Farm Bureau, with 580,525 member families.

- Tennessee Farm Bureau also had the largest numeric gain, with 25,101 new member families.

- Alaska Farm Bureau, at 254 members, achieved the highest percentage of 2003 quota (2002 membership plus one), with 164.9 percent.

Joining Tennessee in the 2003 "top 10" Farm Bureau membership states were: North Carolina, 447,101; Kentucky, 442,969; Illinois, 385,146; Texas, 371,320; Georgia, 355,320; Indiana, 284,930; Arkansas, 235,401; Mississippi, 223,400; and Ohio, 217,531.

Following Tennessee, Texas Farm Bureau achieved the second largest 2003 membership gain: 22,647 new member families. Michigan Farm Bureau posted the third highest gain: 22,387 new member families. Illinois Farm Bureau posted the fourth highest gain with 20,828 new members.

Following those top four membership gain states, with increases of more than 10,000 new members, were: Georgia, 19,187; North Carolina, 16,034; Louisiana, 13,101; Oklahoma, 11,561; and Kentucky, 11,280.

State Farm Bureaus with membership gains greater than 5,000 included Virginia Farm Bureau, at 6,645 new members, and Oregon Farm Bureau, at 6,135 new members.

Following Alaska Farm Bureau in the category of largest percentage of quota, and percentage of 110 percent or more, were: Oregon, 118.5 percent; Colorado, 113.6 percent; Michigan,

112.2 percent; Pennsylvania, 111.6 percent; Louisiana, 110.9 percent; and Nebraska, 110 percent.

The Farm Bureau region reporting the largest membership increase was the South, with a combined gain of 135,388 new member families. The Northeast led with the highest percentage of quota: 105.4 percent.

Eight other state Farm Bureaus have

final 2003 rosters of more than 100,000 members: Michigan, 204,621; Oklahoma, 155,703; Iowa, 152,619; Florida, 151,441; Virginia, 143,069; Louisiana, 132,303; South Carolina, 130,565; and Kansas, 126,383.

The 2003 membership gain is the second largest in Farm Bureau's history. A gain of 219,098 new members was recorded in 1977.

2003 final membership

State	Membership	State	Membership
Alabama	9,400*	Nebraska	55,000*
Alaska	254*	Nevada	10,990*
Arizona	18,196*	New Hampshire	5,927*
Arkansas	235,401*	New Jersey	19,503*
California	90,017*	New Mexico	17,297*
Colorado	28,402*	New York	35,697*
Connecticut	5,554*	North Carolina	447,101*
Delaware	4,697*	North Dakota	26,090*
Florida	151,441*	Ohio	217,531*
Georgia	355,320*	Oklahoma	155,703*
Hawaii	1,651	Oregon	39,270*
Idaho	61,042*	Pennsylvania	33,398*
Illinois	385,146*	Puerto Rico	944*
Indiana	284,930*	Rhode Island	3,383*
Iowa	152,619*	South Carolina	130,565*
Kansas	126,383	South Dakota	11,491*
Kentucky	442,969*	Tennessee	580,525*
Louisiana	132,303*	Texas	371,320*
Maine	5,747*	Utah	21,676
Maryland	14,717*	Vermont	5,108*
Massachusetts	6,614*	Virginia	143,069*
Michigan	204,621*	Washington	33,594*
Minnesota	33,801	West Virginia	16,879*
Mississippi	223,400*	Wisconsin	45,932
Missouri	96,668*	Wyoming	9,807*
Montana	10,702*		

*Achieved membership quota

AFBF — 5,519,795

Watkins promoted; Farm Bureau hires two new staff

Rosemarie Watkins has been promoted to the newly created position of director of public policy for international trade at AFBF. In her new role, she will supervise all aspects of AFBF's involvement in helping to shape international trade policy.

Most recently, Watkins was senior director of congressional relations at AFBF, with responsibilities that included conservation, domestic and international environmental issues, and biotechnology.

Prior to joining AFBF eight years ago, Watkins worked for the American Forest and Paper Association in Washington, D.C., where she worked on a variety of natural resource issues, including the Endangered Species Act, wetland reform, property rights and Forest Service administrative appeals.

Watkins earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from California State



Watkins

Saguinsin

Hall

University at Hayward. She grew up on a farm in California and has worked in the public policy arena since moving to Washington in 1980.

Kimberly Saguinsin joined the American Farm Bureau Federation's public relations team Dec. 1 as a graphic designer and video editor. She will work

on a variety of audio, video and Internet projects.

Before joining Farm Bureau, Saguinsin worked for K12, a Tysons Corner, Va., company that delivers Web-based curricula to home schools and virtual charter schools. At K12, she created animated productions for language arts

courses and worked as a videographer.

Saguinsin earned a bachelor of arts degree from American University in Washington, D.C., specializing in visual media. She is a native of New Jersey and now lives in Manassas, Va.

Also joining Farm Bureau Dec. 1 was Megan Hall, a research analyst on the AFBF economic analysis team. Hall will help gather and analyze statistical data and information on the agricultural economy and the general economy. She will also help prepare articles and presentations, and help Farm Bureau staff and members address a broad range of economic issues.

Hall is graduating from Oklahoma State University with a master's degree in agricultural economics. She earned her bachelor's degree in agribusiness, also from Oklahoma State.

Hall is a native of Indiana. She now resides in Washington, D.C.

GRASSROOTS

AFBF convention features several ag seminars

Members attending the American Farm Bureau Federation's 85th annual convention, Jan. 10-14, in Honolulu, Hawaii, will have the opportunity to attend a broad range of educational seminars on agricultural topics.

Rolland Hayenga, AFBF's annual convention coordinator, said this year's annual convention seminars offer "something for everyone" interested in sharpening his or her agricultural knowledge.

"As the World Turns ... For Agriculture" will cover the many challenges posed by the new farm bill, the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002.

"The Risks for Agriculture in the Race for Water" will explore how competition for water supplies has spread across the country to include farmers, municipalities and endangered species. This seminar will include discussion of "Water 2025," a new effort by the Interior Department to fit the needs of agriculture, a growing population, tribal concerns and wildlife with the water supplies of the West.

"Sowing the Seeds for Profits—Right on the Farm" will include tips from an agritourism pro on how to turn a family farm into an interesting tourist stop.

"What Does EPA Expect from the



The 2003 AFBF annual convention will be held in Honolulu, Hawaii. In addition to a beautiful setting, the convention features conferences on top issues affecting agriculture.

Livestock Industry to Keep Our Country's Water Clean?" will provide an overview of new concentrated animal feeding operation rules. An officer from the Environmental Protection Agency's Rural Branch Office of Wastewater Management will discuss how the agency is working with livestock producers to facilitate good manure management practices and nutrient management planning.

"What's Cooking? Direct Marketing Success!" will include a cooking demonstration by two of Honolulu's top chefs, followed by a presentation on how they have developed successful business relationships with local farmers.

"Where's the Beef ... Pork, Lamb and Poultry?" will include a unique perspective on consumer trends from an executive at Safeway, Inc., one of the largest U.S. supermarket chains.

Members may also attend seminars sponsored by companies participating in the Farm Bureau Showcase, which includes exhibits highlighting agricultural products, informational displays, government resources and state Farm Bureau programs. Topics covered in exhibitor seminars will include using soy biodiesel on the farm and ranch, U.S.-Canada ag trade, the economic status and performance of plant biotechnology in 2003, sowing the seeds for profit on the farm and resources for value-added businesses.

In addition, America's Second Harvest will sponsor a seminar on its teamwork with Farm Bureau and Syngenta on the new "Harvest for All" program.

The Showcase trade-show exhibit runs through Monday afternoon, Jan. 12, and includes the popular Farmer Idea Exchange and County Idea Exchange.

Returning to this year's convention is the Cyber Café, sponsored by *fbcountry.com*. Other convention highlights include Young Farmer and Rancher competitive events and the Farm Bureau Women's business session. Dairy Management Inc. will sponsor a "milk and cookies" fundraiser benefiting the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture.

County Farm Bureaus launch 'No Meth' campaign

Three county Farm Bureaus in Illinois have developed a campaign to educate farmers about ways they can help prevent theft of anhydrous ammonia, which farmers use to fertilize their crops, and makers of illegal methamphetamine use to formulate the drug.

Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan last month applauded the efforts of the Pike, Scott and Effingham County Farm Bureaus for focusing attention on the growing problem of methamphetamine abuse in the state.

Abuse of methamphetamine, or meth for short, and theft of anhydrous ammonia from on-farm tanks to make the drug are growing national problems. Use of the drug has grown steadily from 1998 through 2000, leading to more meth production and more anhydrous ammonia thefts from farms and fertilizer dealers.

The Fertilizer Institute, which represents fertilizer manufacturers, also has begun a campaign to make farmers aware of the threat of theft, how to recognize when a theft has occurred and what to do if a theft is discovered. They are also investigating the possibility of a fertilizer additive that would make the product unusable or undesirable for meth production.

In the meantime, however, anhydrous ammonia thefts are likely to

continue, and farmers need to protect themselves and others.

The "No Meth" campaign involves distribution of bright yellow stickers to be placed on anhydrous ammonia storage tanks. The term "No Meth" is an acronym for the following six ways farmers can help prevent theft and protect themselves and their families:

Never confront thieves. They may become violent.

Often examine tanks for signs of tampering.

Move tanks to open areas where they can be seen from the road.

Empy tanks should be returned immediately.

Talk to local law enforcement. Report tampering or thefts.

Help prevent theft. Keep your family safe!

According to Ohio State University (OSU), farmers should be aware of the risk of an accident if a theft occurs on their farm. Anhydrous ammonia, a volatile chemical, can spill or leak from tank valves that malfunction after tampering by thieves. Physical contact and

inhalation of anhydrous ammonia can cause serious injuries, including chemical burns to the skin and lungs. If a tank appears to have been tampered with, farmers should stay away from it and keep others away, as well as contact local law enforcement.

Farmers also face the risk of explosions from closed containers or small propane tanks left behind on the farm if thieves have to make a quick get-

away. Farmers should be cautious with propane tanks that are found with blue or green valves or if the tanks have frost on them, according to OSU.

And, farmers should be aware of the risk of liability for any danger to farm visitors, even the trespassing thief. Farmers should document the precautions they have taken to secure their anhydrous ammonia supply and post signs warning of dangerous conditions around the tank.

Anhydrous ammonia is important in farming. It's an essential component in formulating other types of nitrogen fertilizer and it is applied directly to

farmland as fertilizer. It is the least expensive form of nitrogen fertilizer available.

Meth, also known as "speed" or "chalk," is a stimulant like cocaine, but it is derived from chemicals rather than plants and it takes longer for the human body to get rid of it. Meth abuse can cause cardiovascular problems, lead poisoning, memory loss, violent behavior, anxiety and other symptoms. Persistent users can have psychotic symptoms for months or even years after quitting the drug.



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