# FARM BUREAU NEWS, visit www.lfbf.org! LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU NEWS Volume 91 | 2013 Issue

THE VOICE OF LOUISIANA AGRICULTURE

# Louisiana Young Farmers: Congressional Gridlock Impacts American Consumers, Taxpayers

**FB News Staff Writer** 

WASHINGTON, D.C. – John Compton knows that the rice payment he receives from the government is sometimes the difference between money in the bank and bankruptcy.

This year will mark Compton's third rice crop. As a young farmer just starting out on

"It's been something that me and my banker have been able to count on," said the 29-yearold rice farmer from Jeff Davis Parish. "He

his own, knowing those federal supports for

knows I'm good for the loan, but that government payment is his guarantee. It's mine too in a lot of ways."

Compton was one of a handful of young Louisiana farmers who traveled to Washington D.C. March 4-6 to visit with the state's congressional delegation. In meetings with Louisiana's members of Congress they impressed upon lawmakers the need for a comprehensive, fully funded farm bill to the

necessity of a workable immigration policy rice will be there helps him sleep a little easier that keeps workers from Mexico employed on from the lack of farm program payments."

> Compton traveled on behalf of the Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee with Amelia Levin Kent, a cattle producer and landscaper from Clinton, Oil City cattleman Marty Wooldridge and St. Mary Parish sugarcane farmer Wilson Judice. During their three-day visit they also sat in on economic and farm policy briefings presented by the American Farm Bureau Federation.

> Like all Americans, the young farmers voiced their displeasure with congressional gridlock and the across-the-board budget cuts farm spending are expected to top \$27 billion, something Compton and the others said will impact farmers first, but quickly makes its way to the grocery store check out counter.

"Food is more expensive than it's ever been," said Marty Wooldridge. "When farmers just look at current economic conditions on the get hit that ripple effect is quickly felt down the food distribution chain. Shoppers are going policies. Crop insurance can never replace to feel it as well. If you think food is expensive

now, just wait until farmers start feeling the hit

Congress, unable to muster support for a new farm bill last year, or any federal spending for that matter, extended the current farm law until September 2013. Additionally, lawmakers plan to cut some \$27 billion from the current farm bill. That comes on top of more than \$18 billion already cut from farm program spending over the last nine years, according to the Government Accounting Office.

Amelia Levin Kent, who along with her husband Russell raises cattle and ornamentals. told members of the state's congressional delegation that if farm program spending is that became effective March 1. Cuts in federal cut, producers must have viable alternatives to protect both their income and the nation's

> "The farm economy is highly cyclical and it changes like the weather," Kent told Rep. John Fleming, R-La. "This is why we shouldn't farm as a predicate for setting long term farm



Representatives of Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation's Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee Amelia Levin Kent John Compton Marty Wooldridge and Wilson Judice visited with Sen. David Vitter (R-La.) via webcam on their annual visit to the nation's capital

## California: Producers Say It's the Toughest Place In the Country to Farm

California ag regulations give La. farmers idea of results when state bureaucracy runs wild **FB News Staff Reports** 

SANTA MARIA, CALIF. - When Darin Gee talks about how much California's regulations cost his farm, his face sometimes turns as red as the strawberries he grows.

Before he ever picks the first strawberry he has \$40,000 per acre invested in his crop. That's right, not \$40,000 total, but \$40,000 per acre. When multiplied by 680 acres the total is a staggering \$27.2 million. You've got to sell a lot of strawberries to recover that cost. And while those costs include labor, inputs, equipment, insurance and the like, it's the regulations that bear a hefty price tag.

See California, page 7

Wesley Ridgedell, left and Butch Oaks, center, listen as Santa Maria strawberry grower Darin Gee explains how state regulations are driving up his cost of production. Ridgedell and Oaks were among two dozen Louisiana farmers who traveled to Santa Barbara County in February. Photo by

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By RONNIF ANDERSON President, Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, Inc.

Farmers, like all of us, love to celebrate life's milestones.

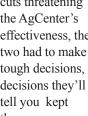
But every once in a while agriculture as a whole finds itself celebrating such events, and the recent retirement announcements of two of the LSU AgCenter's top leaders is both prideinducing and bittersweet.

Both Dr. Paul Coreil, vice chancellor and director of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, and Dwight Landreneau, the AgCenter's associate vice chancellor and associate director of the extension service, have served the state greatly and their presence will be missed by Louisiana's farm and rural communities.

Dr. Coreil, who was recently named interim chancellor for the LSU-Alexandria system, has been a tireless advocate for extension and outreach throughout his 35-year career. Paul understands the importance of bringing new technologies to the state's farm and ranch communities and his success in that capacity will carry on for years to come.

Dwight Landreneau proved his ability and desire to lead when, in 2006, he moved from his position as secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries under then-Gov. Kathleen Blanco to the Ag-Center. Together Paul and Dwight worked side by side during some of the AgCenter's toughest times.

With budget cuts threatening the AgCenter's effectiveness, the two had to make tough decisions, decisions they'll tell you kept them up more



Ronnie Anderson, President, Louisiana Farm Bureau

nights than they care to remember. Their commitment to the Louisiana farm community and the research and extension personnel under their purview made their jobs difficult at times. But when the tough decisions are called for, guys like Paul and Dwight were the best people for the job. They are both masters at making the most with the least and motivating their people to do the same. That's leadership, pure and simple.

At his retirement event April 6 Coreil recalled his days as a young extension agent in the last 1970s. He spoke of relationship building and how in the farm community a man's word and his commitment to agriculture was better than any binding legal document. He spoke of the AgCenter's accomplishments over the last 35 years and hoped he "left the place better than he found it." He did.

With their departure, AgCenter Chancellor Dr. Bill Richardson has an even tougher decision to make; finding two more dedicated leaders to step up and fill Paul and Dwight's

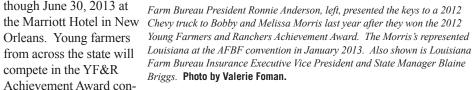
See "President's Perspective," page

## **Chevy Truck, John Deere 'Gator' Await 2013 Young Farmers and Ranchers Contest Winners**

#### **By MICHAEL DANNA FB News Staff Writer**

BATON ROUGE Winners of Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers contests will receive a host of prizes, including a 2013 Chevrolet pickup and a John Deere Gator utility vehicle.

The state's largest general farm organization will hold its annual convention June 27 though June 30, 2013 at Orleans. Young farmers from across the state will compete in the YF&R Achievement Award con-



test, the Discussion Meet, the Outstanding Young Farm Woman contest and the Excellence in Agriculture Award contest.

The organization will name its Young Farmer and Rancher contest winner Thursday, June 27 at the annual Organizational Awards program beginning at 5:30 p.m. The Achievement Award is presented to the young farm or ranch couple whose operation typifies diversity and sound farming practices. The statewide competition is sponsored by the Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee.

A variety of outstanding prizes will be presented to the Achievement Award winner, including a 2013 Chevrolet pickup truck, compliments of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Casualty Insurance Company, and a \$500 cash merit award. This year marks the first year under the Chevrolet incentive program.

The 2013 Achievement Award winner also will receive a \$250 cash award from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Radio Network, as well as a \$250 Sears gift certificate. The 2013 state Discussion Meet winner can look forward to receiving a John Deere 4x2 Gator utility vehicle, compliments of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Insurance Company. Gowan Company will be donating a \$1,000 U.S. savings bond to the Discussion Meet winner, while Syngenta also will donate a \$1,000 U.S. savings bond.

Other prizes include a \$250 cash award from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Radio Network and an all-expenses-paid trip to the national Discussion Meet finals in Nashville, Tenn. in January. The Discussion Meet is designed to engage young farmers in timely topics of discussion that impact their farming operations.

Louisiana's 2013 Outstanding Young Farm Woman will be presented with a \$1,000 savings bond from BASF Agricultural Products, Inc., a \$2,000 Office Depot gift certificate from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company, a \$250 cash award from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Radio Network, a \$250 Sears gift certificate from the Farm Bureau Insurance Companies, as well as a trip to the AFBF Young Farmers and Ranchers Leadership conference in 2012. The Outstanding Young Farm Woman award is presented to women producers who promote leadership in the continuation of the family farm here in

The Young Farmer and Rancher Excellence in Agriculture Award winner also will receive a host of prizes. The award honors those who have supporting roles in agriculture or those who may be part-time farmers.

The prize package carries with it a \$500 cash award, a \$250 Sears gift certificate from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Insurance Companies; a \$250 cash awards from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Radio Network and a decorative wall clock, compliments of the Louisiana

The winner also will receive a trip to the American Farm Bureau convention in San

See "YF&R Contest," continued on page 7

# California, continued from page 1

Gee's operation, DB Specialty Farms, was just one stop along a tour of Central California agriculture this February by a group of Louisiana farmers who spent three days hearing about how tough it is to be a farmer here. Gee's farm was the first stop that included citrus, vegetable and wine operations to flower growing and distribution.

"I tell people it's sometimes the toughest place in the country to farm," Gee said. "When farmers from other states come to visit my farm they're not sure they heard me correctly when I tell them how much it costs to farm out here. We've been lucky and made it work. Other (out-of-state) farmers tell me there's no way they could make a living if their costs were this high."

While migrant workers from Mexico are responsible for much of the harvesting on Gee's farm, there's one employee Gee pays nearly \$100,000 a year who never touches a strawberry. It's his regulatory compliance officer. His job is to make sure the farm remains compliant with California environmental regulations.

"People ask me 'How can you pay a guy that much who doesn't work on the farm?" Gee said. "He pays for himself by making sure we don't get crossways with the state. Just one water violation, for example, can cost me \$32,000 per violation. That can add up quickly. It's kind of like an insurance policy, really. I don't dare farm without it."

Gee's story can be found across Santa Barbara County. Farmers facing tough regulations do everything they can to maximize inputs while minimizing production costs.

That fact was never more evident than at the lemon and avocado farm managed by Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau President Paul Van

Van Leer's workers use 20-foot poles to harvest avocados. The poles have small canvas sack attached to them, allowing harvesters to snatch the fruit from the tall tree limbs. Most of his avocado trees have been pruned to near stumps so that they grow shorter and more round, rather than lean and tall.

"It just got too dangerous and time consuming to harvest from trees that can grow to nearly 30 feet tall," Van Leer said. "It required certified ladders, safety harnesses and had to file a harvest safety plan with the state. We also had to the workers as they harvested, making sure someone didn't 'forget' to put on his safety equipment. It was a benefit to the workers, but the time we spent meeting state regs was hitting us really hard."

"I just don't see how they do it," said Wesley Ridgedell, a cattle producer from Loranger, La. "Compared to our operations back home, there's no way we could make it if we had to comply with California regulations. The level of regulations we've heard about seem almost too expensive to allow you to make a living farming. Somehow they do it."

Patrick Becnel, a citrus grower from Belle Chasse, La., agreed that regulations are



Louisiana citrus grower Patrick Becnel examines lemons on the La Veras Ranch in Santa Barbara County. While he harvests lemons just once a year, his counterparts in California get five harvests per year: Photo by Michael Danna.

costing California growers money Louisiana producers would consider their profit margin. However, he said their climate, unlike the have a designated safety officer to watch over weather in Louisiana, allows for five lemon

"We harvest once a year so there's a big difference there," Becnel said. "But they face some of the same growing issues we face; pests, spoilage and tree diseases. When you look at how much it costs to grow crops out here you wonder how they make any money at all."

One reason California farmers can make money is the economy of scale. If left to stand alone the state's economy would be the eighth largest in the world. By comparison, Louisiana's entire farm economy generates \$10 billion a year. That's the same amount the California flower industry alone contributes to the Golden State every year.

YF&R Contest, continued from page 2

Antonio in January to compete for the national title, where he or she will be eligible to win a 2013 Chevrolet pickup truck and other prizes.

Louisiana's Young Farmer and Rancher Achievement Award, Excellence in Agriculture and Discussion Meet winners will be recognized similarly on a national level this January as they compete against other state winners at the American Farm Bureau's national convention. The national winners of the YF&R Achievement Award and the Discussion Meet will be presented with model year 2013 pickup trucks. A Chevrolet pickup also will be awarded to the Achievement Award winner.

The winner of the national Discussion Meet will receive a 2013 Chevy pickup. Each of the American Farm Bureau Discussion Meet runners up will receive a \$6,000 U.S. Savings Bond.

The winner of the national Excellence in Agriculture Award will receive a 2013 Chevy pickup. Each runner up will receive a \$2,000 U.S. Savings Bond and a Farm Boss Chain saw, courtesy of Stihl Outdoor Power Equipment.

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## Safety Pays

## **National Farm Safety Initiative Saving Lives**

ranches.

By WENDELL MILEY Safety Director, Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation

Depending on the reporting agencies and the statistics analyzed, farming and ranching is considered to be one of the most dangerous iobs in America.

In fact, farming is more dangerous than coal mining, which at one time had the highest number of work-related deaths of any industry. However, while mining has improved its safety record, so has American agriculture.

An independent five-year review by members of the National Academies of Science has given the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Program its highest score for safety. These are among the highest scores ever

awarded to a government program of its kind In its report, NIOSH said its Agriculture,

Forestry and Fishing Program led to a 59 percent reduction in child deaths and injuries on U.S. farms in 2011, while overall farmaccident related deaths were down 40 percent since 1992. The 2011 farm year was the latest available in the study.

Prompting the study was the fact that 85 percent of agricultural work sites are exempt from workplace safety standards of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA). Farmers are also excluded from the National Labor Relations Act and federal agencies are prohibited from collecting information about non-fatal workplace injuries and illnesses on the vast majority of the nation's farms and

See "Safety," page 6

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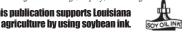
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#### **FB News Staff Reports**

The Louisiana Farm Bureau Agri-news Radio Network (LFBARN) is one of the largest farm networks in the South, created on August 6, 2012 by the merger of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Radio Network's farm broadcasting operations with the Louisiana Radio Network's agri-news division.

LFBARN has a combined 42 affiliates in Louisiana and Mississippi. LRN President Jim Engster said the merger represents the largest consolidation of Louisiana stations that carry

"This merger gives us both an opportunity to improve our farm news presence across the state." Engster said

LRN launched the Louisiana Agri-news Network in 1976, offering several daily agriculture reports for the state's farmers and produced in cooperation with the Farm Bureau. In 1998, the Farm Bureau began the Louisiana Farm Bureau Radio Network with 22 affiliates statewide.

In 2008, both organizations began sharing farm news and commodities prices. Ronnie Anderson, president of the Louisiana Farm Bureau, said merging the networks represents the next logical step.

"This is an opportunity for us to increase public awareness of the important role farmers and ranchers play in our daily lives," Anderson said. "It's also a chance to showcase the economic impact that farming has on our state while keeping residents updated on things going on in their communities."

Neil Melancon, general manager of the Farm Bureau network, will share LFBARN broadcasting duties with Don Molino, LRN's farm director since 1987.

"We'll be able to get out into the field more often, bringing listeners a wider range of stories than ever before," Molino said. "For our affiliates, it means more concise broadcasts and greater local revenue-generating potential."

LFBARN has a variety of programs that air at the times when farmers need them, with market news, analysis and the latest events in agriculture. In addition to offering informative local news features, we also present national and international news and tell Louisiana producers how actions on the national scene will affect their operations here at home.

Founded in 1974, Louisiana Radio Network provides 71 radio stations throughout Louisiana and parts of Mississippi with news, sports and agri-news. LRN also publishes Tiger Rag, "The Bible of LSU Sports," since 1978, and presents the annual Louisiana Farmer of the Year award.

#### ANNUAL MEETING NOTICES FOR THE 2013 LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION. INC. STATE CONVENTION

(Editor's Note: While all meetings of the 91st annual convention of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation's affiliated companies are scheduled to begin at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013, the meetings may begin earlier or later, depending on the adjournment of the voting delegates' session.)

#### LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION. INC.

Notice is hereby given to all members of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, Inc. and to all members of any Farm Bureau organization affiliated therewith, that the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, Inc., will hold its 91st annual meeting June 27 through June 30, 2013, at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La., and that the meeting of the House of Voting Delegates shall be held in conjunction therewith for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

## LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU MARKETING ASSOCIA-

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Marketing Association, Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

#### LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU SERVICE COMPANY, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Service Company, Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

#### LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU INVESTMENT CORPORATION

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Investment Corporation will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

#### LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU ENTERPRISES. INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Enterprises, Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m.. Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of AgriPAC will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before

#### LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION. INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Foundation, Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013

for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

#### LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION FOR AGRI-CULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom Inc. will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

#### LOUISIANA BROKERAGE OUTLET, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the stockholders of Louisiana Brokerage Outlet, Inc., will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before

## LOUISIANA FARM BUREAU MUTUAL INSURANCE

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the policyholders of Louisiana Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company will be held at the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans, La. at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 30, 2013 for the purpose of considering any business that may properly come before the meeting.

## Safety Pays, continued from page 2

While farming and ranching have a fatality rate eight times higher than all other U.S. industries combined, the study found that in 2011 557 farm, forestry and fisheries workers died. In 1993, when the agency's first report was filed, 931 farm workers died in ag-related

The safety programs analyzed in the fiveyear study were implemented in 10 states, including California, Texas and Nebraska, states Gunderson called "big farm worker states." The program looked at how certain farming practices have contributed to worker deaths and injuries, while examining the physical and emotional attributes of the workers themselves. Farmers in those states voluntarily allowed reviews of their farming operations and agreed to implement program recommendations following the study.

"What we found was farm labor is not a one-size-fits-all in terms of job requirements on the farm," Gunderson said. "Just like you need the right tool for the right job, you need the right farm worker for the task, and that includes everyone from the tractor driver to the hand-harvester.'

The study found, among other findings, that vounger workers were more willing to take risks than those aged 35-50. In contrast, older workers, in some cases, felt compelled to perform tasks to prove they could keep up with their younger counterparts, "which caused problems for them in the long term," Gunderson continued.

"We found that older workers sometimes needed to prove they could hack it alongside younger workers and teens," he said. "This caused muscle, back and repetitive motion injuries, accounting for more missed days of work, and in some cases resulting in death when the physical demands exceeded the worker's physical abilities."

The AFF program outlined new safety initiatives for farmers and ranchers to follow. Some of those initiatives included tasking a worker for the appropriate job based on age, weight, height and physical ability. It also called for improved training on new equipment, as well as annual on-farm safety programs that stressed safety awareness no matter the job.

"If you're inside an air-conditioned trac-

tor 10 hours a day, picking lettuce by hand or riding fence lines from dawn to dusk, safety should always be on the minds of farm workers," Gunderson said. "It's an attitude as much as it is a physical thing. Farmers and their employees must never forget the inherent dangers of their profession.'

In 2012, nearly \$22 million was distributed among the 10 state programs for training and information dissemination.

"In our current environment of budget austerity, this is an example of a relatively low-cost program that is making a significant impact on public safety, while at the same time saving farmers, insurers and government considerable costs related to injury and damage," said John May, M.D., director of the Northeast Center for Agricultural Health. "More than 1 million young people under age of 20 work on U.S. farms and ranches. These young people are the future of American agriculture and the better we can protect them, the more likely they are to remain healthy. All these factors ensure their ability to provide food, fiber and forest products to our nation and the rest of the world for generations to come.'

## Louisiana Farm Bureau Donates Food. Supplies to Monroe, New Orleans **Ronald McDonald House Charities**

**FB News Staff Reports** 

BATON ROUGE – Ronald McDonald House Charities in Monroe and New Orleans received food and cash donations from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation in honor of National Food Checkout Week.

Food Checkout Week commemorates the time when the average American consumer has earned enough money to pay the



entire year's food bill. Food Checkout Week 2013 was celebrated Sunday, Feb. 17 through Feb. 22. The theme of this year's events was stretching your food dollar with healthy, nutritious food. Louisiana's donations took place March 18 in Monroe and March 20 in New Orleans to better accommodate the schedules of each charity.

The Farm Bureau's Women's Leadership Committee organized this year's event by collecting Louisiana foodstuffs such as sweet potatoes, milk, Creole gumbo mixes and sugarcane products, as well as washcloths, towels and other household items such as linens and paper products from the state's cotton and timber industries. This is the 17th year the organization has donated food to the Ronald McDonald House Charities.

The food, supplies and monetary donations will be used to help feed visiting families staying at both locations of Louisiana Ronald McDonald House charities. Denise Cannatella, a grain producer from Melville, in St. Landry Parish, and chair of the Farm Bureau's Women's Leadership Committee, said her organization looks forward to Food Checkout Week each year as a way to celebrate farming and showcase how farmers reach out to their local communities.

"We get so much positive feedback from the people at these charities," Cannatella said. "We also get an opportunity to prove just how generous our farmers are. This is just one way farmers and ranchers get involved in their local communities throughout

In addition to the Ronald McDonald House donations, Farm Bureau women were able to reach out to consumers in Thibodaux, La., by conducting a consumer education program at the local farmers' market.

"Shoppers today want to make every penny count," Cannatella continued. "We show consumers how to compare products and use recipes we provide to prepare meals that are both nutritious and affordable. It's about getting the most value into the shopping cart."

Food Checkout Week, a national initiative begun in 1998, celebrates the abundance and affordability of food in the U.S. The average American household spends only about 10 percent of its annual disposable income on food, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Ronald McDonald House charities provide a home away from home for families of critically ill children receiving care or treatment in Monroe and New Orleans-area hospitals. The Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation is a private, non-profit organization representing the state's farmers, ranchers and rural residents.

### YF&Rs, continued from page 1

a Farm Bill because the two serve different functions. Crop insurance generally focuses on insuring production risks while the Farm Bill generally focuses on price. Producers need both."

Unfortunately, Kent said, crop insurance does not currently meet the needs of many southern producers, as evidenced by low participation and coverage levels. She said consumers also need to understand the situation many Louisiana farmers currently find themselves in.

"Everyone should care about the state of the farm economy, not just those directly involved in agriculture," she continued. "Agriculture boasts a rare trade surplus, and it generates hundreds of billions of dollars in economic activity each year. Here in Louisiana it's the No. 2 income generator behind oil and gas. Many people don't know that."

The four young farmers also voiced their concerns over increased government regulations and migrant labor issues. Wilson Judice, who planted his first cane crop on his own last year, said he depends on migrant workers from Mexico to plant and harvest his sugarcane. Without them. he said, his farm could not operate.

"You can shut my operation down," he told U.S. Sen.

David Vitter via web-based video conference call. "There no one locally who wants to work on my farm. I'm a small operator and totally dependent on workers from Mexico. I'd love to hire locally, but no one wants the job. Without these (migrant) workers the reality is sugar farming in much of my parish would simply cease to exist."

During briefings with American Farm Bureau policy staffers, the young farmers heard details of pending water regulations, as well as EPA crackdowns on on-farm fuel storage. The agency's Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures (SPCC) rule is scheduled to go into effect for aboveground oil storage capacity on farms beginning May 10, 2013. The law would require farmers storing more than 1,350 gallons of fuel to build retaining walls around their fuel storage tanks, even those on wheels. Wilson Judice said his farm has never spilled a drop of diesel and that the federal requirement could cost him nearly \$100,000 in construction and compliance costs.

"I buy diesel in bulk and go through it pretty quickly," Judice said. "It usually goes from the delivery truck, to the storage tank to the tractor or harvester. And believe me, I'm careful with it. At \$4 a gallon it's too expensive to spill even one drop."

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Special to the LFB News from the LSU AgCenter

CROWLEY, La. – Rice planting in the southern part of Louisiana is wrapping up, and north Louisiana farmers are getting ready to plant.

"For a lot of farmers, it's done," said Steve Linscombe, director of the LSU Ag-Center Rice Research Station near Crowley. "I think down here in the southern part of the state, we're 80-90 percent planted. Farmers had more rice planted in a shorter period of time than I personally can recall."

That will mean that a large amount of acreage will be ready for harvest at the same time, Linscombe said.

Farmers are planting early because research has consistently shown that planting early tends to provide higher yields, he said. Most farmers have succeeded at obtaining good stands of rice emerging from the soil.

The weather has been good for drill seeding, including research plots at the station and on five off-station sites, Linscombe said. "Up to this point, I think everything is doing as well as it could be."

A recent rain brought more than 3 inches of rain in many areas, adding to the decreased likelihood that surface water will become salty in rice fields near the coast, he said.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has



estimated 420,000 acres will be planted, an

increase of 20,000 from last year.

LSU AgCenter rice specialist Johnny Saichuk said the heavy rain on April 3 will delay completion of planting. "It brought things to a halt. If we had not had the weather, we'd almost be finished down here."

Last year, he said, rains also interrupted planting, but March was warmer.

Keith Collins, LSU AgCenter county agent in Richland Parish, said north Louisiana rice farmers are waiting to start planting. "I expect to see some rice start to go into the ground as soon as it dries up.'

A considerable amount of rice in north

Louisiana was planted in March 2012, unlike this year, Collins said. "Last year was the exception. It was very warm."

Collins said he expects north Louisiana rice acreage to decline again this year by at least 10 percent because of higher prices for corn and soybeans.

"I talked to a few farmers who planted rice last year who won't this year," he said.

Barrett Courville, LSU AgCenter county agent in Acadia and Jefferson Davis parishes, said farmers in both parishes are about 90 percent finished with planting. "The early planted rice is up, and it looks pretty good. We need some warm weather."

Flocks of blackbirds and ducks feeding on seed have caused farmers to replant. But when the bird repellent AV-1011 is used, birds avoid the seed. Temporary approval of the repellent has been granted by the Environmental Protection Agency, but a full label is needed, Courville said.

difference is like night and day. If you can't protect what you've got out there, you can't plant early where birds are a problem."

Acreage might dip slightly, but the totals in Jefferson Davis and Acadia parishes should each be around 80,000 acres, he said.

Keith Fontenot, LSU AgCenter county agent in Evangeline Parish, said many farmers there have finished planting. Much of the rice isn't growing much, he said, because of the chilly weather.

Rice acreage in Evangeline Parish will be about the same as last year – slightly more than 35,000 acres, Fontenot said. "They are staying close to what they have had."

Some farmers waited to see what crawfish prices will do after Easter before deciding how much they would plant, Fontenot said. That's also the case in Vermilion Parish, where county agent Andrew Granger said farmers with fields in crawfish will plant rice in those when the catch declines. He expects acreage to remain at last year's level of 42,000 acres.

Granger said the parish is 85-90 percent complete. "The biggest problem has been the cool weather."

The rains this past week stopped much of the planting that remains, he said. "Anybody still wanting to drill seed had to stop."

Bird problems also have been significant in Vermilion Parish for seed not treated with "It's a wonderful product," he said. "The the AV-1011 repellent, Granger said.

## Harper Armstrong Named 2013 LA Radio Network Farmer of the Year

Harper Armstrong and his wife Lois. LN Farm Broadcaster Don Molino,

held at White Oak Plantation in Baton Rouge. Photo by Michael Danna.

right, presented the Armstrong's with the award Feb. 28 at the annual event

**FB News Staff Reports** 

BATON ROUGE, La. – For his work as an agricultural innovator and mentor the Louisiana Radio Network named Harper Armstrong of Bastrop its 2013 Louisiana Farmer of the Year.

The 16th annual awards banquet honoring Harper and two other finalists was held Feb. 28 at White Oak Plantation. Nearly 200 attended the event.

A lifelong farmer for nearly 50 years, Armstrong was recognized for his work as an agricultural innovator, as well as his dedication to helping fellow

minority growers adopt the latest technology. He serves as an industry advocate and a local youth mentor. He is president of the Morehouse Parish Black Farmers and Landowners Association and serves as assistant chairman of the National Black Growers Council.

Armstrong's 2,500-acre farm in Morehouse Parish produces corn, soybeans, wheat and cotton. He also raises cattle and has a haying operation. Armstrong's farm has been used to demonstrate some of the latest agricultural advancements and ¬equipment to farmers throughout Louisiana and around the country. In addition, he opens his farm to area young people to promote agriculture as a livelihood.

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crop, manage a herd and run an agribusiness.

"His dedication to improving and refining Louisiana agriculture alone makes Harper Armstrong a substantial candidate for Farmer of the Year," said Jim Engster, president of Louisiana Radio Network. "What sets him apart is his commitment to his fellow farmers. his role as a community leader and his willingness to spend time with young people. Harper is a reminder of what the American Farm broadcaster Neil Melancon, left, is shown with LN Farmer of the Year

> Armstrong was chosen Farmer of the Year by an independent panel of judges from the Univer-

farmer means to us all."

sity of Kentucky and Texas A&M. The award includes a \$1,000 prize and 100 hours' use of a Case IH Magnum tractor from Progressive Tractor & Implement Co. The Farmer of the Year Program is sponsored by Louisiana Ra-

dio Network in conjunction with the Louisiana Farm Bureau Agrinews Radio Network, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, LSU AgCenter and Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation.

The other finalists for this year's award were Donald Berken, a rice grower from Welsh, and Gerald Wood, a sugar farmer with operations in St. James and Pointe Coupee. Founded in 1974, Louisiana Radio Network provides 71 radio stations throughout Louisiana and parts of Mississippi with news, sports and agriculPresident's, continued from page 2



Dr. Paul Coreil, vice chancellor and director of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service for the LSU AgCenter, has been named Interim Chancellor at LSU Alexandria.



shoes. Making that transition go more smoothly, thankfully, is the continuing presence of Dr. John Russin, vice chancellor and director of the state's agricultural experiment station network. Dr. Russin is picking up the slack right now and goodness knows his plate stays full.

We in Louisiana agriculture salute Paul and Dwight for their work on behalf of all farmers and ranchers. They've both left agriculture and rural Louisiana better than they found it.

## After More than Seven Years of Negotiation, Japan Officially Agrees to Increase U.S. Beef Imports

FARM BUREAU NEWS STAFF REPORTS

The United States and Japan officially sealed an agreement last week that will allow exports of U.S. beef from cattle less than 30 months of age to enter that Asian market.

The agreement was a long time in the making and its positive influence on U.S. beef markets could mean more than an immediate increase in trade volume with Japan, according to farm and beef trade groups across the country.

"Japan has long been a prime import market for Louisiana and U.S. beef," said Ronnie Anderson, president of the Louisiana Farm Bureau and a beef cattle producer from Ethel. "The real bonus could be that an influx of U.S. beef to Japan could lower consumer prices there and as a result lead to higher consumption levels there."

The announcement that Japan will begin to import U.S. beef from cattle 30 months of age and younger comes after a seven-year ban of the importation of such animals. The initial rules, imposed by Japan in 2005, permitted U.S. beef imports only from cattle up to 20 months old, after a total ban in 2003 that followed an outbreak of bovine spongiform encephalopa-

"Japan's imports of U.S. beef plunged by 60 percent to some 120,000 metric tons from 2001 to 2011," said Veronica Nigh, a trade specialist with the American Farm Bureau. "Australian beef producers were the main beneficiaries in an import market worth more than \$2 billion. Australian beef essentially took the place of U.S. beef. Their producers won and ours lost.'



But that could all change following the new ruling, Nigh said. Late last year, Japan's food safety organization helped pave the way for the announcement by reporting that the risk from importing beef from cattle aged 30 months or younger from the United States, Canada, France and the Netherlands would be negligible to human health. The Japanese government held a series of public consultations and bilateral talks on how the new safety requirements would be met in the supply-

"This is a big win, and it's the result of seven-plus years of resolute work by both the Bush and Obama administrations," said AFBF President Bob Stallman. "This is great news for American cattle producers and it should have positive ripple effects for other U.S. food and agricultural sectors."

According to Stallman, Japan's action highlights the imporwould likely be captured by U.S. beef."

tance of sticking to sound, validated science; using multipronged efforts that included U.S. and Canada pushing for common-sense BSE guidelines; Congress supporting funding for the overall BSE effort; and multi-agency cooperation.

"We saw a sustained grassroots push to make sure officials knew how important this milestone is," Stallman said. "It truly sets the stage and establishes a process for other efforts on breaking down non-tariff barriers."

According to Nigh, the United States produces large amounts of specific meat cuts and offal that bring higher returns in Japan than in domestic markets. She said Japanese beef prices rose significantly following the 2003 trade restrictions, which severely limited supplies of those cuts. But now, an increased presence of U.S. beef in Japan could bring higher returns for U.S. producers and lower prices for Japanese consumers.

Anderson pointed out a 2010 study by the Agriculture Department's Economic Research Service, which estimated that every decrease of 1 percent in beef prices in Japan actually leads to increases in consumption greater than 1 percent.

"The positive effects for U.S. beef producers go beyond the actual export volume," Anderson said. "This gives U.S. beef an opportunity to lead a resurgence in beef consumption. Analysis by USDA indicates Japanese consumers are very price sensitive when it comes to beef and the increased presence of U.S. beef in the Japanese market will lower their retail beef prices. Lower retail prices traditionally lead to increased beef consumption and therefore demand. This would be good news for U.S. producers because much of this new demand



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