

AG ISSUES UPDATE
Edited by Brad Hollabaugh
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Ag Guestworker Bill Introduced in House

On July 18, Congressmen Dan Newhouse (R-WA), Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), Collin Peterson (D-MN), Henry Cuellar (D-TX) and others introduced the Ag and Legal Workforce Act. The legislation marries an improved Ag Act (H-2C) with the Legal Workforce Act (mandatory E-Verify).

This new package reflects favorable changes to the legislation supported by USApple and secured by Congressman Newhouse and others who did not support earlier versions of the bill.

We are pleased to report that a number of apple members cosponsored the bill, including Reps. John Katko (R-NY), Fred Upton (R-MI), Elise Stefanik (R-NY), Chris Collins (R-NY), Tom Reed (R-NY) and John Faso (R-NY). Many more have indicated they will vote for it if given the opportunity.

The bill's sponsors were pushing for a vote before the House adjourns for the August recess but that deadline has now passed. The leadership is still determining whether there will be enough votes to pass this new package. It is unlikely that more than a handful of Democrats will support it, and there are conservatives who view the Ag Act as amnesty. There are other Republicans who do not have agriculture in their districts and may be uncomfortable with mandatory E-Verify absent broader reforms.

The debate will pick up when the House returns in September. USApple remains in constant communication with Congressman Newhouse and our other champions as we advocate for agricultural labor reforms that will ensure a legal, stable and reliable workforce in both the short and long term. *Apple Bites - 7.27.18*

Retaliatory Tariffs Take A Big Bite Out of U.S. Apple Industry

(Opinion Article, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jeff Colombini and Mike Wade, July 25, 2018)

The United States exports one out of every three apples it grows. California, Washington, New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan together produce 90 percent of the apples grown in America. Although we apple growers come from various places, we share one common concern: going out of business.

While having to close the farm gates for good is always in the back of growers' minds, as profit margins are razor thin and our livelihoods depend on the grace of Mother Nature, it has never been more of a reality than now due to the retaliatory tariffs being imposed on apple exports by Mexico, India and China.

Thousands of jobs in rural America are at risk, not just in growing and picking the crop but also in equipment, fuel and fertilizer sales, and in packing and transportation.

Saying that trade is critical to the apple industry is an understatement. Apple exports are also important to the U.S. economy and jobs. Because of our thriving export markets, the apple industry annually generates about \$15 billion in economic activity, provides more than 71,000 jobs and contributes nearly \$1 billion toward a positive trade balance.

Importantly, rural economies in states like Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, California, Washington and Virginia rely on a healthy agriculture sector, of which apple exports play a big role.

Mexico, India and China are the U.S. apple's Nos. 1, 2 and 6 export markets, and they're all at risk because of a trade dispute we didn't start — and certainly don't want.

It took the apple industry years to penetrate these markets. It has since been a long and expensive process to develop them into viable and valuable trading partners. Maintaining and continuing to build these hard-won markets is critical to the health of the entire U.S. apple industry.

Unfortunately, in retaliation to U.S.-imposed tariffs, Mexico has slapped a 20 percent tariff on apple imports from the United States. The trade dispute also further complicates renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, under which apples have been a big winner. Prior to NAFTA, Mexico imposed a 20 percent tariff on U.S. apples, which was eliminated under NAFTA. With duty-free access, Mexico became our largest export market: Annual apple exports to Mexico quadrupled to \$215 million. Now it looks like we may be headed right back to where we started 24 years ago before NAFTA.

The impact of Mexico, on top of India, on top of China, is a triple whammy.

India has been a thriving growth market for U.S. apples, so much so that this year the country moved up to second place for apple exports. In the first nine months of 2017, apple growers more than doubled their 2016 sales to India. But 25 percent retaliatory tariffs on our apples by the country (bringing total Indian tariffs on U.S. apples to 75 percent) that will go into effect Aug. 4 puts the market at great risk.

And earlier this month, China unleashed additional retaliatory tariffs on U.S. apples, bringing the total up to 50 percent.

The tariffs by China are of significant concern, as it's an emerging market and one that apple growers view as having significant growth potential. We only achieved full access to the Chinese market in 2015. In that short time, exports have grown to 2.5 million boxes per year. We've been competing, and winning.

Growers understand Econ 101 very well, and unless these trade issues get resolved quickly, the apples that were destined for export will overhang the market and depress prices. That will impact growers coast to coast, hurting everyone's bottom lines, eventually trickling down to rural economies. Relationships with Mexico, India, China and other valuable trading partners, like Canada (our No. 3 market), need to be repaired as quickly as possible to minimize the damage to agriculture and rural communities.

(Jeff Colombini of Lodi Farming in Stockton and Mike Wade of Columbia Fruit Packers in Wenatchee, Wash., are apple growers who sit on the U.S. Apple Association Board of Directors. They are joined in this commentary by board members Mark Boyer, of Ridgetop Orchards, Fishertown, Pa.; Kaari Stannard, of Fish Creek Orchards/New York Apple Sales, Glenmont, N.Y.; and Chris Alpers of RedPath Orchards & Alpers Farm, Lake Leelanau, Mich.)

Administration Announces New Agriculture Programs to Mitigate Trade Damage

President Trump and Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue announced \$12 billion in temporary assistance programs targeted at all segments of agriculture adversely impacted by retaliatory tariffs. USApple was given advanced notice of the announcement with a call from a senior USDA official. USApple also participated in a conference call with USDA officials where they further outlined the proposal.

The new programs will include direct payments to producers of soybeans, sorghum, corn, wheat, cotton, dairy, and hogs. For other commodities including apples, USDA plans to increase Section 32 commodity purchases for distribution to food banks and other nutrition programs. Finally, USDA plans to create a new foreign market development program designed to build on the Market Access Program.

USDA stressed that these mitigation programs are temporary. USApple will meet with USDA officials in the next few weeks to ensure they have heard the apple perspective as this process moves forward. While we await the development of program details, USApple continues to stress the importance of resolving these trade disputes amicably and quickly. *Apple Bites - 7.27.18*

House and Senate to Meet on Farm Bill

Congress is a step closer to putting the 2018 Farm Bill to a final vote.

The Senate voted recently to appoint conferees who will help develop the final draft of the critical agriculture legislation. The House took similar action last month. Conferees from each chamber will now meet to work out differences between separate versions of the farm bill passed by the House and Senate and prepare a combined bill that will require approval from each chamber.

Having a new farm bill in place before the current law expires at the end of September is critical to continuing key agriculture programs that help farmers manage their risk to stay viable in an unpredictable business and give certainty during a struggling farm economy. Some hurdles remain, chiefly reconciling differences between the House's and Senate's approaches to the nutrition title and conservation programs.

Wheeler Nominated as EPA Chief

President Donald Trump has nominated Andrew Wheeler to lead the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency following the resignation of former EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. Wheeler, who was confirmed as the agency's deputy administrator in April, must be confirmed to the post by the Senate. He will serve as acting EPA administrator in the interim.

Wheeler began his career at the EPA as a special assistant during President George H.W. Bush's administration. He served as a staffer for Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma and in several staff leadership roles for the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works. Prior to returning to EPA recently, Wheeler worked as an attorney and lobbyist specializing in the energy and natural resources industry.

Spotted Lanternfly Permit Training Available

Training is available online to obtain the necessary permits to comply with Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's spotted lanternfly quarantine.

Businesses, including farms, must obtain spotted lanternfly permits if they are performing work within or moving goods out of the quarantine zone, which includes Lancaster, Lebanon, Schuylkill, Berks, Chester, Carbon, Monroe, Lehigh, Northampton, Montgomery, Bucks, Delaware and Philadelphia counties. Under the quarantine order, each business must designate at least one spotted lanternfly trainer who must go through training and pass an exam. That person is then responsible for training other employees and keeping records to comply with the regulation.

Training and the exam are available online at <http://bit.ly/2A69fdn>. Several in-person training sessions are also being planned within the quarantine area. For more information or to register, contact Jeff Miller at 717.772.5206 or jefamiller@pa.gov.

The quarantine is among the efforts aiming to halt the spread of the invasive spotted lanternfly, which threatens many agricultural crops, including fruit trees, grapes and hardwoods.

Roundtable Talk Focuses on Rural Broadband

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau was one of several organizations that discussed the lack of internet connectivity at a roundtable discussion hosted by U.S. Rep. Tom Marino. Marino, who represents several counties in the central and northern Pennsylvania, said the lack of internet connectivity is one of the chief issues he hears about from constituents. He plans on making the issue of improving broadband connectivity one of his chief legislative initiatives.

"I don't want to leave here just saying this was a nice meeting. I want some thoughts and ideas of what we can do to facilitate this," Marino said.

PFB Vice President Chris Hoffman, who lives in Juniata County and participated in the discussion, said the lack of reliable internet service in his area means he cannot use the latest technology on his hog and chicken farm. That type of technological advancement is occurring throughout agriculture, but without broadband services, farmers are unable to take advantage, Hoffman said.

Mark Smith, Pennsylvania's executive director of broadband initiatives, said Pennsylvania is making mapping existing utility rights-of-way a priority as it seeks to connect most of rural Pennsylvania to the internet by 2022. In addition, the state is performing a cost analysis of what it would cost to deliver high speed services to those areas, he said.

Conservation Grants Available for Farms, Small Businesses

Pennsylvania farms with 100 full-time-equivalent employees or fewer can apply for grants to help pay for natural resource conservation projects. Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Small Business Advantage grant program will match up to 50 percent of the cost of materials for projects such as planting riparian buffers, installing streambank exclusionary fencing and implementing barnyard runoff control systems.

There is \$1 million is available for grants this year. Producers should apply right away because grants are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis and funds are usually gone within three months. For more information, visit the Small Business Advantage Grant page at www.dep.pa.gov or contact the DEP Small Business Ombudsman Office at 717.772.5160.

Finding a Vaccine for Lyme Disease

Katie McLaughlin has grown up watching the impact of Lyme Disease on each member of her immediate family and herself. "While I remember my own pain and fatigue, none of that will ever compare to the constant fear of losing my dad (Steve McLaughlin)," the Juniata County resident recalled. "The disease nearly took my father's life. After three years of treatment throughout Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey, my father was left with serious nerve damage that led to two nervous system surgeries, one of which causing a blood clot resulting in an additional open-heart surgery."

Pennsylvania leads the nation in Lyme Disease cases and farmers and rural residents are at greater risk due to the amount of time they spend outside. But there could be hope for McLaughlin and

thousands of other Pennsylvanians who have struggled with the disease. A new Lyme Disease vaccine, VLA15-101, recently passed phase one of three in Federal Drug Administration testing.

Pennsylvania has prime conditions for Lyme Disease to spread, due to the state's ideal environment and large concentrations of the black-legged tick's primary vector, the white-tailed deer, which can carry 3,000 ticks each. According to available Centers for Disease Control data, the state saw 48,626 confirmed cases of Lyme Disease between 2006 and 2016. And the number of cases in the state increased 44 percent between 1999 and 2015.

In Pennsylvania, of the 1,005 ticks submitted to the Laboratory of Medical Zoology, 268 ticks (26.67 percent) tested positive for *Borrelia*, which causes Lyme Disease. This means that one in four deer ticks can cause Lyme Disease.

In 1998, LYMERix was approved by the FDA to be safe and effective in preventing the contraction of Lyme Disease in humans. The vaccines were administered in a series of three steps and worked by killing the *Borrelia* within the tick's midgut upon feeding from individuals with vaccine-induced antibodies.

The series of LYMERix vaccinations failed to receive public acceptance and were voluntarily pulled from the market in 2002 due to poor sales. The failure may have occurred for several reasons: negative news coverage surrounded the potential of arthritic-like side effects, the recommended booster time frame was unclear, and a pediatric version of the vaccine was not offered.

Medical costs related to treatment for Lyme Disease range from \$712 million to \$1.3 billion annually in the U.S., prompting a new demand for a solution since the failure of LYMERix.

McLaughlin is hopeful of the new vaccine's ability to prevent the contraction of Lyme Disease.

"I do believe that research and human health standards are needed when testing this vaccine because no one facing Lyme Disease deserves false hope," she said. "So we need to get this vaccine right."

Invasive Tick a Potential Threat to Livestock, People

The Asian "longhorn" tick, an invasive species that congregates in large numbers and can cause anemia in livestock, has been found in Pennsylvania.

The insect was recently discovered on a wild deer in Centre County and was found last year on sheep in New Jersey. While the insect carries several diseases that infect hogs and cattle in Asia, none of the samples inspected so far in the U.S. were found to be carrying infectious pathogens. However, state officials warn that the tick still poses a health threat to people and animals. The insects can spread quickly and a single tick can produce 2,000 eggs after feeding on host.

"Even experts have difficulty distinguishing among tick species, so it is important to take precautions to protect pets, livestock and family members from becoming a host for ticks of any kind," said State Veterinarian Dr. David Wolfgang. "Scientists don't yet know how this species will adapt to the North American climate and animal hosts, but we know it survived New Jersey's winter and has infested sheep and cattle in this region."

Wolfgang recommended examining livestock for ticks regularly and working with a veterinarian to develop tick prevention and control measures. Farmers can reduce tick habitat by keeping grass low and maintaining a nine-foot distance between pastures and wooded areas.

Be on the Lookout for Giant Hogweed

Giant Hogweed, an invasive plant that's extremely dangerous to humans, has been getting a lot of attention in the news and on social media recently due to new sightings in the eastern United States. Fortunately, the plant does not seem to be spreading in Pennsylvania.

"The plant has been sighted in 500 locations in the state since it was first discovered here in the late 1990s, and has been eradicated in all but 40 of those sites," said Shannon Powers, Deputy Communications Director for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. "Remember, the department only considers it eradicated after the site has been clear for three years."

Nevertheless, officials say Pennsylvanians should be on the lookout for the dangerous plant and help to stop its spread in the Keystone State. The plant's sap and juices can produce painful blisters and long-term scarring. Contact with the eyes can cause permanent blindness. People who come into contact with the plant should immediately wash the area with soap and water, then cover the area to protect the skin from direct sunlight for 48 hours.

Identifying giant hogweed can be tricky, it is most often confused with poison hemlock, angelica, cow parsnip. Giant hogweed has clusters of small, white flowers that form a flat-topped umbel which stretches up to two and a half feet wide. It's called giant for a reason, growing 15-feet tall with a two- to four-inch diameter stem. Its pesky seeds remain dormant for up to five years in soil and more than 100,000 seeds are produced annually by each, rapid-growing plant.

What should you do when you think you have giant hogweed on your property? First, call the giant hogweed hotline at 1.877.464.9333 or email RA-plant@pa.gov. PDA advises residents against attempting to remove the plant on their own and instead utilize the department.

Art Gover with Penn State Extensions Wildland Weed Management said repeated mowing or cutting throughout the growing season can be used to starve out the plant's energy. Although he cautions: "The residue on the cutting surface would be an issue."

Another option is to spray it with glyphosate or triclopyr in spring or early summer, with a follow-up in mid-summer. Your best option would be to prevent giant hogweed from spreading onto your property to begin with. "Protection is a matter of vigilance," Gover said. "Don't let it get started. It's easy to spot. It really is giant."

Two New Game Commissioners Selected

Two new members have been appointed to fill vacancies on the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Each will serve a four-year term. Scott H. Foradora, of Clearfield County was selected from Region 3, which includes Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Jefferson, McKean and Potter counties. He owns an insurance business.

Dennis R. Fredericks, of Washington County, was selected from Region 2, which includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington and Westmoreland counties. A retired environmental engineer, he previously served on the commission from 1991 to 1999.

Both men are lifelong hunters and members of several sportsmen's organizations.