



# California Association of Wheat Growers

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## Newsletter

August 19, 2010

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### Upcoming Events

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**-August 31, 2010 - CAWG Board Meeting/Special Guest Chief Executive Officer of NAWG Dana Peterson to Attend**

**-September 20-24 - Wheat Foods Council, Urban Wheat Field Event/CAWG Hill Visits**

**-October 22-25 - NAWG Fall Wheat Conference**

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### August 27 is the Deadline for CRP Sign-Up

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USDA this week reminded producers they have until the close of business on Friday, August 27 to enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), offering eligible land for competitive general sign-up. In addition to first-time signers, CRP participants with existing contracts

scheduled to expire on Sept. 30, 2010, may elect to re-enroll under a new 10-15-year contract. Contracts awarded under the current sign-up are effective Oct. 1, 2010. Details of the program can be found at [www.fsa.usda.gov/crp](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp).

## "Changing the Conversation about California Agriculture"

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What is the California Agricultural Communications Coalition and why is it important to you?

These are tenuous times for California farmers and ranchers. With fewer than two percent of all Americans engaged in farming today, consumers have become increasingly isolated from the source of their food supply. Adding to this growing detachment is the fact that the public is only hearing one side of the story - and it's not ours. The conversation needs to include farmers who will remind people that most of their food comes from multi-generational family farms and that those farms, along with the farming way of life, are increasingly threatened by external factors beyond our control. So, how do we communicate who we are, what we do, and how we do it to an increasingly urban and disconnected public?

By now, you may have already heard something about a communications campaign for agriculture currently under way in California. If not, let me introduce you to the California Agricultural Communications Coalition (CACC) and the [www.KnowACaliforniaFarmer.com](http://www.KnowACaliforniaFarmer.com) website, which is built around the strategy that if each one of us takes a moment or two to share his or her story, we can collectively change the conversation about California agriculture and communicate the value of our industry to the state.

How did the CACC get up and running?

It is safe to say that most of us believe that we to the need to improve public perceptions of California agriculture and reconnect consumers to the source of their food supply. In November 2008, an inaugural summit was organized in Lodi. Coincidentally, the Lodi

Summit was held the day after Prop 2 passed, the initiative sponsored by the Humane Society aimed at prohibiting the confinement of certain farm animals. Nearly one hundred people representing every walk of farming and ranching around the state converged to talk about the past, the present and the future of agriculture in California. This was the beginning of the CACC.

The first action item for the coalition was to develop common messaging points that would connect consumers with California agriculture. Market research, funded by members of the coalition, revealed that most Californians have positive perceptions about farmers and ranchers. Consumers overwhelmingly like family farmers, but not "agribusiness." While they see farmers as caring for the land and local communities, they do not believe agribusiness "cares." Many see the farming way of life slowly going away and believe extreme environmentalism has resulted in onerous rules and regulations that threaten farms and farm jobs.

Based on this snapshot of perceptions and beliefs, the CACC sought and received grant funding and hired AdFarm, an energetic, creative and agriculture-centric public relations firm, to build a communications plan that connects consumers to California farms and ranches and helps us spread the messages that will help the industry remain viable and vibrant in the decades to come.

The primary hub of the CACC campaign is the [www.KnowACaliforniaFarmer.com](http://www.KnowACaliforniaFarmer.com) website, which is designed to showcase the people - you - who produce the food, fiber and flowers that Californians rely on. Through videos, photos and blogs, California's farmers and ranchers can share their stories directly with consumers. These are not polished PR pieces, but casual snapshots of life on the farm or ranch. You will provide the content - real stories and images of who you are and how you grow the highest quality agricultural products in the world. Through videos, photos and blogs, you can proactively and positively engage consumers in real-time dialogue about the many benefits the industry provides our communities and state. Even though we are using the latest social media technology, we have created a website that is easy to access and use. This is your chance to learn, practice, and master new communications tools that will bring the farm and ranch back into the homes of millions of Californians.

While the official launch of the website is scheduled for late August or early September, and will involve a coordinated media and consumer outreach strategy, the [www.KnowACaliforniaFarmer.com](http://www.KnowACaliforniaFarmer.com) is currently live for all CACC members. Please visit the website to check out all of the excellent videos, photos and blogs that have already been posted by CACC members. The website is still password protected, so please use the following link and login information:

Link: <http://knowacaliforniafarmer.com/index.php>  
Username: cacc

Password: cacc

How can you get involved?

1. Register for an account on the [www.KnowACaliforniaFarmer.com](http://www.KnowACaliforniaFarmer.com) website

The California Seed Association encourages all of its members to consider becoming engaged in the CACC. To register for an account, please click on the following link:  
<http://www.knowacaliforniafarmer.com/communications-toolbox/register.php>.

Your account will provide you with access to the members-only Communications Toolbox where you'll find instructions on how to post content to the website, the coalition's core messages, and tools and resources to enhance your public outreach efforts, including "how-to" documents and regular webinars on social media, public relations in a digital world, issues and crisis management, and traditional media outreach.

2. Help develop content (videos, photos and blogs) for the website

Please review the recorded webinar at the following link for guidelines on developing website content:  
<https://student.gototraining.com/80ft9/recording/3367687895371135744>.

We are looking for authentic videos, photos and blogs that convey the CACC's core messages based on multi-generational family farmers and ranchers, and the risk of losing these family-owned farms and ranches.

For additional support in developing content, please reach out to the California Seed Association office.

### **U.S. to Gain from Russia's Drought-Decimated Wheat Exports**

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 Russia's long-standing drought and wild fires will benefit U.S. wheat growers, the American Farm Bureau Federation said this week, as the Russian government shuts down wheat exports for the rest of the year and most world buyers turn to the U.S. to supply their wheat needs. With USDA projecting a huge drop in Russian wheat exports - 3 million tons during the 2010-2011 marketing year compared with 18.5 million metric tons the year before - "and because the U.S. is expecting a good wheat crop with good stock levels, our farmers stand to take up a big share of the wheat exports that would have gone to Russia," said AFBF economist John Anderson. Anderson forecasts the U.S. picking up almost half of the Russian exports.

### **NAWG CEO Talks Trade, Biotech at USW World Staff Conference**

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 U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) held a conference of their staff from around the world this week in Victoria, Canada. The event happens every other year and gives export

development staff from the 90 countries U.S. Wheat works in the opportunity to gather, share information and get updated on U.S. operations, crop conditions and long-term trends.

The three-day meeting included presentations from USW and state commission leaders on the organization's work, developments in trade policy and updated tools available to support USW export market development activities.

For example, the group discussed how to make trade teams coming to the U.S. more valuable experiences for all participants and how to provide the most updated information in regular presentations overseas staff members do for buyers.

Other presentations focused on the status of each of the six classes of wheat, including crop conditions, outlook for production over time, new varieties and quality improvement efforts. Mike Krueger, a market analyst from the Money Farm in North Dakota, was also in attendance to give an update on trends among U.S. commodities, including wheat.

NAWG Chief Executive Officer Dana Peterson represented the Association at the meeting, focusing her input on trade and biotechnology policy, which NAWG and U.S. Wheat coordinate jointly. Peterson also shared with meeting participants what NAWG is working on in the areas of environmental and research policy and how that fits into the work U.S. Wheat does.

### **Senate Rail Expansion Tax Incentive Bill Introduced**

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A bill designed to attract private capital investment in rail infrastructure capacity through federal tax credits was introduced last week by Sens. Kent Conrad (D, ND) and John Ensign (R, NV). The bill is the Senate companion bill to a bill introduced in the House by Rep. Kendrick Meek (D, FL) last year. Endorsed by the Association of American Railroads (AAR), the bill would provide a 25% tax credit for capacity expansion spending on new freight infrastructure, and the ability to expense all qualifying rail infrastructure spending, freeing up capital for capacity expansion, says the AAR. The tax benefits are not only for railroads but are available to any taxpayer who spends the money, including rail network users, shippers, trucking companies and ports. Qualifying spending can include track, grading, tunnels, train control devices, signals, locomotives, bridges, yards, terminals and intermodal transfer and transload facilities.

### **Mexican Government Revises Import Tariffs on U.S. Goods over Truck Stalemate;**

#### **New List Includes U.S. Pet Foods, Oats and Other Grains, Pork**

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Producers of agriculture and processed products impacted by a new list of U.S. products against which Mexico will impose 5-25% import tariffs beginning August 19, blame the Administration's inability to resolve a long-standing cross-border trucking dispute. These

producers are members of the Alliance to Keep U.S. Jobs, a coalition of national associations, including the American Feed Industry Assn. and National Grain & Feed Assn., as well as individual companies, who have allied to urge President Obama to rectify the border dispute. The Mexican government also made it clear that U.S. inaction on the trucking dispute is responsible for the new tariffs particularly in the wake of assurances Obama gave Mexican President Felipe Calderon during a recent state visit to the White House. New to the revised Mexican list are pet foods for retail sale, a variety of pork and pork products, oats and other grains, as well as cheeses, fruits and vegetables, and several industrial products, with insiders indicating these commodities were chosen to put pressure on certain U.S. states and their congressional delegations. Several previously targeted items have been removed from the list. An official statement on the action released by the Mexican government explained its "review" of the original tariff list established in March, 2009, which targets 99 U.S. products. However, the total value of the products caught in the tariff scheme remains at about \$2.5 billion, which is legally allowable under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Further, the tariffs are part of a "carousel" tariff structure, meaning the list of products will be continuously modified until the trucking problem is solved. U.S. Special Trade Representative Ron Kirk said Obama "understands the economic pain these tariffs cause for American farmers," adding that he and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood are working to "resolve this issue in a way that addresses safety concerns and upholds our trade obligations." National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) President Sam Carney said the Mexican action will "have negative economic consequences for America's pork producers. We're extremely disappointed that our top volume export market has taken this action, but we're more disappointed that the United States is not living up to its trade obligations." The dispute centers on a cross-border trucking pilot program, initiated by the Bush Administration when a NAFTA dispute resolution found the U.S. in violation of its NAFTA obligations by excluding Mexican trucks from operating beyond a tight U.S. "border zone." Under the pilot program, both the U.S. and Mexico agreed to allow their domestic trucking companies to operate as long as each company met all federal equipment, driver safety and insurance obligations of the host country. Independent trucking companies and unions urged Congress to kill the program alleging safety issues, and Congress went along. The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) called on the White House to "stand up to Mexico's bullying tariff tactics and start fighting for the livelihoods of Americans." The truckers group called the Mexican tariffs "illegal", saying the onus is on Mexico to "raise safety, security and environmental standards for their trucking industry." The Obama Administration has held consultations with the Mexican government, and LaHood has promised resolution of the situation, but nothing has been proposed by the White House.

### **California Legislative Update: Steinberg's "Card Check for Ag" Heads to the Governor**

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On party line votes, Senator Steinberg's amended "Card Check for Ag" legislation passed the Assembly, the Senate Industrial Relations Committee and the Senate Floor. The bill is now in enrollment and is headed to the Governor's desk for action.

To summarize, the amendments remove the provision that required the ALRB to certify election when 50% plus one vote of the employees requested an election and replaced it with

provisions that require "card check" approvals as a legal remedy when the board determines there have been unfair labor practices in an election. Agricultural employers are concerned that this provision will increase the incentives to allege "unfair labor practices" during an election and would provide organizers a second opportunity at certification through a "card check" approval process leading to almost certain union approval of elections even when the employees vote for "no union." The same coalition of agricultural associations that secured the Governor's veto of the overtime bill is working on defeating this proposal. Please send letters of opposition to Governor Schwarzenegger.