

March 18, 2010

In This Issue

[MEMBER NEWS](#)

[NEWS YOU CAN USE](#)

[UPCOMING EVENTS](#)

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MEMBER NEWS

Update on the Missouri Legislature

The Missouri Legislature is back from spring break and in full swing. The state budget is the top overall concern for most legislators. At a recent meeting of the Agricultural Business Council of Kansas City, Senator Shields spoke on the Council and stated that the state budget was both a short- and long-term concern.



Pictured above: MO-AG Executive Director, Steve Taylor (center), introduces Missouri Senate President Pro Tem Sen. Charlie Shields (right); looking on, ABC-KC Chairman Bob Petersen (left).

There are many bills in the Legislature that MO-AG is monitoring. On March 17th, MO-AG Executive Director Steve Taylor testified before the Senate Agriculture Committee regarding SB667, SB766, and SB622.

SB667 would set a fee for farmers to retain seed protected under federal patent law. Taylor told the Committee that SB667 attempts to void federal patent law and, if passed into state law, it would be ruled unconstitutional. Taylor also used the opportunity to provide the Committee with some information from the "Beyond the Seed" educational campaign supported by MO-AG national affiliate, the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA). ASTA has compiled some

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excellent information regarding the cost of developing patented seed and its value to farmers and society. Taylor told the Committee that in 2007, the seed industry invested \$2 billion in seed development and that research from Iowa State University shows farmers get a \$6 benefit for each \$1 spent on private sector research, while consumers benefit from increased yields and lower prices. Taylor concluded that "It is vital that we protect intellectual property to ensure that the pipeline of valuable new seed technologies, which benefit agriculture, continues to flow."

SB766 sets up protocols for how fields are to be entered to be sampled for genetic material. Taylor told the Committee that "MO-AG members, for the most part, are businesses that sell to or buy from farmers. An overall concern is that it appears to us that SB 766 sets up protocols for how a farmer will communicate with an agribusiness selling him or her product." SB766 requires that the farmer and Department of Agriculture be notified in writing that a farmer is "suspected" of breaching a contract or guilty of patent infringement.

Finally, the Committee considered SB622 which raises pesticide fees paid to the Missouri Department of Agriculture. Taylor told the Committee that MO-AG is "generally supportive of the Department's goal of preventing unreasonable adverse effects of pesticide use, while helping assure the availability of pesticides needed to maintain our quality of life." Taylor continued that "MO-AG supports adequate funding of the Missouri Department of Agriculture's Pesticide Program and we would have grave concerns if the Department would cease providing these services. However, we feel the figure being considered represents a very large increase over the current figure."

Another important piece of legislation under consideration is HJR86 which would put a Constitutional Amendment on the Missouri ballot for the November 2010 election. The amendment states that agriculture provides food, energy, and security and that it is the right of Missouri citizens to raise domesticated animals. MO-AG is part of the "Missourians for Animal Care" coalition which supports this amendment. HJR86 passed the House and now awaits action by the Senate.



Pictured above: State Representative Terry Swinger, Minority Caucus Chairman (far left) with MO-AG Executive Director Steve Taylor (center) and other members of the Coalition for Animal Care.

MO-AG Board Examines Membership Classification and Dues

At the last MO-AG Board of Directors meeting, the Board discussed the current membership classifications and dues structure. It was determined that the current system is outdated, given the vast changes in our industry over recent years. Therefore, the Board has directed staff to begin the process of implementing a new system.

A very important change in this new system is that for any part of a business to be a member of MO-AG, all of the business would have to be a member. For example, manufacturers would be required to be a member at the manufacturer level. The old classification of "associate" will be dropped, thus eliminating the possibility of a manufacturer's salesman being a member, without the manufacturing company being a member. The new system would also require retailers to include all its branches as members. The dues levied per branch would be the same at \$175 per branch location.

One of the primary considerations for the Board in developing this new system was to create an equitable allocation of dues. These changes are scheduled to go into effect beginning January, 2011.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Following Through on Spray Drift

As noted in a previous *Wrap-Up*, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is considering new enforcement guidance for spray drift for the FIFRA label language which would put States in the role of risk assessors for an unachievable zero-drift mandate and spawn endless lawsuits. (See link to "spray drift talking points" on [MO-AG's website](#)). In a March 16th letter to EPA, Congressman Collin Peterson, Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, expressed concern over EPA's action and the "extraordinary regulatory shift to a zero tolerance risk standard for off-target spray drift." Peterson urged EPA to instead "work to better equip states to manage this critical issue." In February, MO-AG Executive Director Steve Taylor and several of his counterparts traveled to Washington DC and visited with Chairman Peterson on several issues and, specifically, on the spray drift issue.

Dialog at American Royal Event Labeled Unbalanced

Welcoming about 200 attendees to the event, American Royal Chairman Greg Maday said the Farm, Food & Health Conference is

the first event sponsored by the Good Food - Good Futures Institute, an initiative of the American Royal Association, a 110-year-old civic organization "focused on promoting American agricultural education and agrarian values." The Institute is an alliance of Kansas City-based farmers, food retailers, healthcare and information technology professionals, educators, civic leaders, employers and entrepreneurs "who come together out of a belief that good food and good futures are strongly linked."

Much of the conversation at the Farm, Food and Health Conference centered around the idea that a "movement" is taking shape in America to change our food system. John Fisk, director of the Wallace Center at Winrock International, told attendees that the movement is "helping build a 21st Century Food System." Larry Yee, director emeritus, University of California Cooperative Extension, and co-founder, Association of Family Farms, echoed the sentiment that "our current system is fundamentally unsustainable. I believe the antidote is a 21st Century re-creation of the food system." Yee said there are "deep flaws in our global economic paradigm," and criticized the modern industrial agriculture as a system that has been developed only to seek "efficiency and profits." He said the current system is designed to produce cheap and abundant food and calories.

The tone of the dialog at the Conference was one that inferred that local, natural and/or organic foods are "good" foods, and implied - without actually vocalizing the sentiment - that foods produced with the assistance of modern technology (i.e., antibiotics, hormones, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) are "bad" foods.

Concerned by what they saw in the Conference agenda and the list of speakers, Kansas City-area agribusiness leaders contacted American Royal officials to voice their objections about what they view as an anti-modern agriculture event. Many of the American Royal's long-standing sponsors and constituents have been angered by the Farm, Food & Health Conference. That's because they see the event, and similar ones across the country, as efforts to promote social causes rather than provide food consumers with facts about modern food production. [Source: *Cattlenetwork*]

Farmers Get More Attention During Elections than During Sessions

Farmers receive a lot of attention from politicians during elections, but could be excused for feeling a bit neglected during the legislative sessions.

Agriculture has had successes, mostly notably in the bio-fuels industry. Missouri has sunk tens of millions of taxpayer dollars into incentives to lure investment into ethanol and bio-diesel plants, reaching its height in Fiscal Year 2009 when \$46.7 million in general

revenue funds were budgeted for bio-fuel subsidies. Row crop farmers benefited. Grain prices rose, especially corn. The State Tax Commission concluded that the value of cropland rose significantly enough to raise its valuation, even as the Commission proposed a decrease in the valuation of pasture ground. The Legislature rejected the proposal and kept farmland valuations steady.

Other sectors haven't been as successful. A House Interim Committee on Emerging Issues in Agriculture issued a report on January 27th of 2009. It has largely been ignored. A special House task force was formed in March of last year after the \$27 million Cathy Giesecker fraud case in Martinsburg and the bankruptcy of Gallatin Grain Company came to light. A year later, nothing has been done. Task force members say they are waiting for a report from the State Auditor. A proposal to tap unused tax credits to help struggling dairy farmers passed the House last year, but died in the Senate.

Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Dan Clemens of Marshfield doesn't blame the Legislature as much as an overall lack of understanding about what's at stake. "I just think that if there's a failure, it's not the Legislature," Clemens says. "It's a general getting the message across from everybody." [Source: *Missourinet*]

AGRIServices of Brunswick Puts Shipping Back on the Missouri River

JEFFERSON CITY - March 11, 2010 - Cargo is once again moving on the river! A newly energized shipping year begins by welcoming four barges onto the Missouri River.

Thursday morning, more than 6,000 tons of fertilizer began moving up the Missouri River to farms and retail locations in Central Missouri, signifying the start of the most promising shipping season the industry has seen in eight years. The four barges are getting pushed by the M/V Butch Bowman, a 2400 horse power shallow draft boat ideal for Missouri River navigation. This load is expected to arrive at AGRIServices of Brunswick on Sunday.

Drought and low water levels the past eight years almost sunk Missouri River cargo shipping, but there's a rejuvenated focus to bring river traffic back. The Missouri Department of Transportation, along with agriculture and shipping partners, want renewed life on the Missouri River and have formed a unique partnership to increase freight shipping, create jobs and promote an environmentally friendlier way to transport goods.

"We established our own barge services division when other providers moved off the river. The Missouri river is the best way to move freight." said Bill Jackson, AGRIServices of Brunswick. "This is a viable shipping option which can save money, lower carbon dioxide

emissions and relieve stress on our crowded freeways."

Along with a unified effort to revitalize Missouri River traffic, a market and commodity analysis will take place. This study would determine the right approach for improving the Missouri River corridor by looking into traditional river products, examining the potential for containerized shipping and discovering ways to get more consistent operations, even when water levels are low. [Source: *Missouri Department of Transportation*]

USDA Promotes Environmental Markets

USDA's Office of Environmental Markets (OEM) will work to carry out USDA's climate and rural revitalization goals by supporting the development of emerging markets for carbon, water quality, wetlands and biodiversity. "Environmental markets leverage private investments that result in cleaner air, improved water quality, restored wetlands, and enhanced wildlife habitat," said Secretary Tom Vilsack. "These markets have the potential to become a new economic driver for rural America, exactly what we need to support a bold, creative future for America's farmers, ranchers and rural communities." [Source: *USDA*]

USDA Addresses Concerns with EPA

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack addressed the growing concern by farmers of regulations being handed down by EPA. Many say farming will be hard hit, but Vilsack says take a closer look. "I think you're going to find in many, many, many cases agriculture is exempted or the thresholds are such that the vast majority of regulations don't apply to farms, and that there is an openness and willingness on the part of the administration and EPA to actually understand and appreciate the significance of these regulations on agriculture."

Vilsack added, "I think sometimes the headline gets people all concerned that there is a huge regulation, only to find out that the regulation might affect seven farms because the thresholds are so high that the vast, vast majority of farms aren't involved."

Vilsack said his department does advocate for production agriculture at EPA. "We do let EPA know when we are aware of actions that they're intending to take or thinking about taking. We aggressively promote and explain to them precisely how it's going to impact agriculture."

The Secretary encouraged EPA and agriculture to avoid an antagonistic relationship by getting to know each other better. [Source: *Hoosier Ag Today*]

Senator Roberts on EPA and USDA

According to U.S. Senator Pat Roberts of Kansas, EPA is expanding regulations over carbon emissions, spray drift, atrazine, rural dust, and will require every producer to acquire a Clean Water Act permit. Roberts stated "I am a co-sponsor of a resolution to strip EPA's authority to unilaterally regulate carbon in a way that grinds our economy to a halt."

Referring to USDA, Roberts stated that "'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' is USDA's new initiative aimed at connecting farmers with consumers. USDA believes it's important to bring together farmers from the fields and consumers from town in one place to get to know each other, understand each other, and appreciate one another." Said Senator Roberts, "As you know, in Kansas, we call that Church." [Source: Senator Pat Roberts (KS)]

UPCOMING EVENTS

JULY, 2010

**21-23 MO-AG Summer Meeting; Country Club Hotel;
Lake Ozark, MO**

Note: Items in **red** are new postings since the last Wrap-Up issue.

Letters to the Editor

Do you have a response to the Missouri Agribusiness Wrap Up? Let us know! The Missouri Agribusiness Wrap Up is a bi-weekly publication of the Missouri Agribusiness Association (MO-AG). MO-AG is a member-owned association based in Jefferson City, Mo. which protects members' interests in state legislation and provides educational opportunities.

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