



# California Association of Wheat Growers



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## In this Issue:

[California Legislative Report](#)

[News from the National Association of Wheat Growers](#)

[House Agriculture Committee Talks University Research Challenges](#)

[NAFTA/Trade Updates](#)

## California Legislative Report

*By Dennis Albiani, Legislative Advocate*

### **Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Nears First Deadline**

The Association attended an Agricultural Advisory Meeting hosted at the Department of Water Resources on Monday, June 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss agriculture's role in drafting requirements for the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).



The focus of the meeting was the upcoming June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. This deadline is for the formation of locally-controlled Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) in the State's high- and medium-priority groundwater basins and subbasins. The responsibility of the GSA is

to develop and implement a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) that meets the sustainability goal of the basin.

The current prioritization of basin conditions has identified 21 basins of being Critically Overdrafted. These conditions are often reassessed and changed. If that is the case, a basin that moves into Medium- Critically Overdrafted will have to implement a GSA.

<http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/cod.cfm>

The Department of Water Resources reported that they are in the process of developing three new guidance documents to assist the five Best Management Practices in a more technical scope. <http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/bmps.cfm>

To learn more, visit the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act website.

<http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/index.cfm>

### News from the National Association of Wheat Growers

#### ***AgPro (June 21, 2017) U.S. Wheat Associates Supports Nominee for "Agricultural Negotiator"***

...Currently, the important dispute cases against China's trade distorting domestic wheat support and its tariff rate quota obligations on imported wheat need to move forward, and the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement is looming. USW joins the National Association of Wheat Growers in urging an expedited review and confirmation so Doud can get to work at USTR as soon as possible.

#### ***High Plains/Midwest Ag Journal (June 21, 2017) Ag Groups Urge USDA to Revamp Biotech Reg Proposal***

Proposed revisions to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's biotechnology regulations take some very positive and bold steps in the right direction, but major changes are needed to ensure the new rules encourage innovation, according to a letter sent by 103 agricultural organizations... Signatories to the letter include the Agricultural Retailers Association, American Farm Bureau Federation, American Seed Trade Association, American Soybean Association, Biotechnology Innovation Organization, National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, National Association

of Wheat Growers, National Corn Growers Association, National Cotton Council, National Sorghum Producers and the Rural and Agriculture Council of America.

***High Plains/Midwest Ag (June 21, 2017) [New High-Fiber Wheat Varieties Available to Growers This Fall](#)***

The official launch of high-fiber wheat from Bay State Milling Company should portend opportunity for wheat farmers, according to Jim Peterson, director of research with Limagrain Cereals, which has contracted with Bay State to develop the new varieties. Bay State Milling announced this week the launch of HealthSense high-fiber wheat flour derived from high-amylose wheat. According to a company press release, “HealthSense offers the combined benefits of customary wheat flour functionality, a highly desired macronutrient, and traceability to the farm in one ingredient.”

### House Agriculture Committee Talks University Research Challenges

In its latest full committee 2018 Farm Bill hearing, the House Agriculture Committee this week reviewed the needs of university agricultural research, and while both lawmakers and university witnesses agreed ag research investment is important, that it pays back federal investment many fold and that President Trump’s FY2018 recommendation to freeze or rollback research spending is unwise at best, no one had a plan for increasing that federal investment in ag research.

University witnesses talked about the need for bench research dollars, but also the need to invest in institutions, meeting the needs for infrastructure rebuilding, replacing and refurbishing buildings that are decaying, and to provide incentives to retain faculty and keep professors invested in groundbreaking research. The academic witnesses also agreed that universities need to do a better job of communicating their research contributions to the public.

Committee Chair Mike Conaway (R, TX) told the panel in his opening remarks that production agriculture has relied on investments in ag research for more than 100 years to increase efficiencies and gains in productivity. However, budget challenges are real.

“The U.S. has long been a leader in cutting-edge agricultural research, but our current budget problems have us scrutinizing every dollar, with public funding for ag research declining as a share of overall public research spending in the U.S.,” he said. Conaway again reminded the panel, the witnesses, the audience and the media that agriculture has “done more than its fair share to help generate (federal) savings. The current Farm Bill was expected to save \$23 billion over 10 years...(but) the most recent CBO projections show that the 2014 Farm Bill is on target to save \$104 billion, more than four times what was anticipated.”

Witnesses testifying this week included Robert Duncan, chancellor, Texas Tech University; D. Jacqueline Burns, dean for research and director, University of Florida Institute of Food & Agriculture Sciences; Dr. Glenda Humiston, vice president, University of California; Dr. Walter Hill, dean of the College of Agriculture, Environment & Nutrition Sciences, Tuskegee University; Dr. Steven Tallant, president, Texas A & M University, and Carrie L. Billy, president and CEO, American Indian Higher Education Consortium.

## NAFTA/Trade Updates

### ***Doud Nominated to USTR Top Ag Post***

Gregg Doud, former senior Senate Agriculture Committee staffer for Sen. Pat Roberts (R, KS) and the chief economist for the National Cattlemen’s Beef Assn. (NCBA) for eight years has been nominated by President Trump to be chief agriculture negotiator at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. A native Kansan, Doud’s nomination was praised by Roberts, as well as by outgoing Obama administration chief ag negotiator Darci Vetter, both citing his 20 years of Washington, DC, experience. NCBA called on the Senate to confirm him as soon as possible. Doud is currently the president of the Commodity Markets Council, and previously worked for U.S. Wheat Associates. He owns a share of his family’s wheat, cattle and pork operation back in Kansas, and got an undergraduate agriculture degree and his Master’s degree in agricultural economics from Kansas State University.

### ***Perdue Hosts Canadian, Mexican Ag Ministers in Georgia***

In what many see as setting the tone for upcoming tripartite negotiations to modernize the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue hosted his Mexican and Canadian counterparts in his home state of Georgia this week. Meeting in Savannah, Perdue, Canadian Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay and Mexican Secretary of Agriculture Jose Calzada Rovirosa toured the Savannah port facility, then visited a local onion, sweet corn and sweet potato farm. Perdue once again referred to upcoming NAFTA renegotiations as “family discussions,” comparing the 24-year-old treaty to a marriage. A joint statement issued by the three stressed a collective commitment to open markets and the benefits of NAFTA. “Our trading relationship is vital to the economies – and the people – of our respective countries,” they said. “We share a commitment to keeping our markets open and transparent so that trade will continue to grow.” They said that “even the best trading partnerships face challenges...our agricultural differences are relatively few” given the three countries share \$85 billion in trade.

### ***NAFTA Sparring Continues; Lighthizer Offers Hopes for Talks***

U.S. Special Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer told a Senate committee he'd like to see a quick conclusion to upcoming renegotiations of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), but stopped short of giving the lawmakers a deadline. Meanwhile, Canada's ambassador swatted back at a bipartisan group of 10 Senators who claim Canada unfairly limits U.S. poultry imports, accusing the nation of “refusing to open its market to American poultry exports” since deal was signed in 1983. As for Lighthizer and his message to the Senate Finance Committee, and later to the House Ways & Means Committee, he said there is no agreement to shoot for a December, 2017, deadline as some have reported, and that his job is to get a deal with Canada and Mexico that cuts the U.S. trade deficit, helps heavy manufacturing job creation and protects NAFTA benefits for agriculture exports to the two countries. He said there is virtually no chance the talks will fail and the U.S. will pull out of NAFTA. “We're going to get a very good agreement, and we're going to do it as quickly as we can, but without artificial deadlines,” he said. “I'm prepared to negotiate until we get a high-standard agreement.” He said if there's a stalemate, he'd come back to the committee to consult with Senators. Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D, MI), ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, said the committee will hold him to that promise.

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