What’s new?

Immigration reform: The TN Farm Bureau urges you to do your part
The Senate resumed debate on the immigration reform legislation last week. Farm Bureau urges its members to contact Senators Alexander and Corker to support moving the process forward.
Farmers are facing increasing and more confusing liability exposure under the current federal system, while states and municipalities consider hundreds of new laws governing immigration in the face of the failure of Congress to act. As the Department of Homeland Security continues to ramp up enforcement, new laws are needed to clarify farmer responsibilities and to deal with workplace realities.

Impact
AFBF economists estimate nearly $10 billion a year in production is at risk if Congress fails to enact provisions that would provide an adequate agricultural workforce in the short and long-term.

Action Requested
The TFB asks that you contact your Congressmen and urge them to SUPPORT comprehensive immigration reform, STRENGTHEN guest worker provisions to ensure an adequate legal workforce, and ENCOURAGE moving forward so the bill is passed without further delay. TN has been identified as being especially important.

A sample letter is posted online at Capitol Connection, which can be accessed at: www.tnfarmbureau.org. Select ‘Issues’, then ‘Capitol Connection’. The username is ‘tnfarm’ and the password is ‘agriculture’. Edit the subject line and sample text with your own words—share your personal labor story.

Corn yields dry up in FL
The drought is raising production costs, but reducing sweet corn yields in Florida. Government-ordered water restrictions have reduced agricultural use by nearly half. By early June, most Belle Glade-area grower shippers have finished their sweet corn and green bean harvests, which have switched to southern Georgia, but some are trying to hang on for the 4th of July market.
Tom Perryman, crop manager for Pioneer Growers Co-op member Hundley Farms Inc., said the drought has caused some of his corn fields to lose up to a third of their yields. Lack of moisture also encourages growth of the cornstalk borer. This pest’s voracious appetite hinders plant development and leaves bare spots in fields.
Perryman said growers are spending more money than usual battling such pests and on overhead irrigation in an area watered primarily by canals.

Supersize those veggies!
McDonald’s announced plans to add more fruits and vegetables to its menu in their annual shareholder meeting. Future fruit offerings could include smoothies and side dishes, said Christina Alfaro, U.S. communications manager.
McDonald’s has had success in the U.S. with its apple slices and salads and in China with its corn cups, Alfaro said.

This was excerpted from The Packer Online. For the full story visit ‘Florida drought cuts corn yields’ at: www.thepacker.com.

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Tennessee Vegetable News

Of special interest:
- Immigration reform
- Low corn yields due to drought
- McDonald’s more than fries?
- Tennessee’s own Crabtree Farms
- Tassels but no silks?
- Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus

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Hidden in the Clifton Hills neighborhood near downtown Chattanooga lies Crabtree Farms, a research and education project promoting sustainable agriculture. The property on which Crabtree Farms now stands has been in agricultural use since the early 1800’s. In 1997, the property was donated to the city of Chattanooga by the Crabtree and McGauley families with the stipulation that the property remain agricultural. Will and McNair Bailey started Crabtree Farms of Chattanooga Inc. in 1998. The City leases the land to Crabtree Farms for $1 per year. The farm spans 22 acres, and includes an on-site community garden and urban farm. Started in 2001, the 1 acre community garden is divided into 41 plots, which are seasonally available to rental for those in the community. Each gardener rents a 200 ft² plot and has access to tools, compost, water, and advice from Crabtree staff members and volunteers on planting tips and organic gardening techniques. At the beginning of the season, the plots are tilled by the staff. The rest is left up to the individual gardeners elbow grease and creativity. The garden has been such a success that the plots are sold out for the 2007 season, and there is already a waiting list for next year. Those who did not get a plot this year can still enjoy farm fresh fruits and vegetables produced at the Crabtree urban farm and sold at the on-site farm stand. The urban farm is used for research, for education, and for market. Five acres are cultivated for growing fruits, vegetables, herbs, and cut flowers organically. Plants are propagated right on the farm in Crabtree’s two greenhouses. The farm produces over 200 varieties of certified organic crops from arugula to Shiitake mushrooms. Crabtree also offers pick-your-own strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries in season, when Mother Nature cooperates. In addition to their sales at the on-farm stand, you can find their produce at the Chattanooga and Lookout Markets. Also, they offer a FOOD CSA (Fresh Organic Options in Dining Community Supported Agriculture) program. In the CSA, participants pre-pay for 29 weeks of farm fresh produce and flowers. Each box contains enough to feed 2-3 people each week and can be picked up on the farm or in North Chattanooga. Crabtree also has a program called ‘Adopt-A-Box’, where you can support families in the community, who might not have access to fresh organic produce, by donating funds to ‘adopt-a-box’. Besides the farming and marketing, Crabtree Farms has an active educational component. The 2007 training program is titled ‘Preserving Tradition’ and includes hands-on, workshops, from old-fashioned crafts to farming techniques. In the ‘Farmer for a Day’ workshops, farm manager Joel Houser, will share with participants his growing knowledge from planting to harvesting to storing. Crabtree welcomes volunteers on the farm, whether it be individuals or groups with a little extra time on their hands. Educational tours and field trips are also available, for a small fee, and are tailored to the groups’ interests. Crabtree Farms is an innovative operation, from its farming practices to its marketing, and has a lot to offer. To learn more about Crabtree Farms, visit their website at: www.crabtreefarms.org. Do you have a Tennessee farm story to share? If so, send it to: awszelak@utk.edu.

All pictures from the Crabtree Farms website: www.crabtreefarms.org.
Question of the Week

Q: The sweet corn is tasseling, but there are no silks. What’s going on? -K.K.

A: Unfortunately, this could be due to drought conditions. For this week’s answer, I turn to Dr. Bob Nielsen from Purdue University and his publication ‘Sex in the Corn Field’. “The most common cause of incomplete silk emergence is severe drought stress. Silks have the greatest water content of any corn plant tissue and thus, are most sensitive to moisture level changes. Severe moisture deficits will slow silk elongation, causing a delay or failure of silks to emerge from the ear. If the delay is long enough, pollen shed may be almost or completely finished before receptive silks are available; resulting in nearly or totally blank cobs.

Also, though technically not defined as silk emergence failure, severe silk clipping by insects such as corn rootworm or Japanese beetle can interfere with pollination by decreasing or eliminating viable or receptive exposed silk tissue. But, unless beetle activity is nonstop for days, continued elongation of silks from the husk will expose undamaged, receptive silk tissue at the rate of 1” or more per day.”

For more of the story on silk emergence, visit: www.agry.purdue.edu/ext/corn/news/articles.03/Silks-0716.html.

Crop Report

Harvests of cool season crops continue and harvests of warm season crops are gaining speed! Sweet corn harvests have even begun! However, I have also heard many reports of tomato spotted wilt virus (TSWV) this week. In the ‘Fruit and Pest News’, Dr. Steve Bost reports sightings in Crockett, Chester, Cannon, and Hardeman Counties in home gardens. I have also seen it in growers’ fields in Western TN. Dr. Allen Straw, Virginia Tech, reports TSWV in growers’ fields in southern KY and western VA.

Be on the lookout!

Symptoms include generalized necrosis (blighting) of young leaves, stunting and paling of young plants with purpling of leaf veins on the underside of leaves. Purple to bronze ‘freckles’ may appear on leaves. Fruit symptoms include yellow and red concentric rings on ripe fruit and alligator skin on some. TSWV is spread by thrips. Ironically, spread may stop on its own if the weather is hot and dry, due to the effect on the thrips. (These must be some heat resistant thrips we are seeing this year!)

Planting resistant varieties is your best defense for TSWV. These include Amelia, Crista, BHN 640, Talladega, Quincy, Red Defender, and Nico. Reflective mulches also deter thrips, and aluminum foil around the base of the plant will work, too. Do not attempt to remove infected plants, as this may cause movement of the thrips to unaffected plants.

For more information on TSWV and how to control it, visit: http://westtennessee.tennessee.edu/research/Canaday/TSWV.pdf and http://westtennessee.tennessee.edu/research/Canaday/EPP159TSWV.pdf.

Weather Report

While there’s a good chance of thunderstorms tonight in some areas across the state, other parts will remain dry. Last night some parts of Knoxville received 0.1”, while outlying areas received more than 2”. We could all still use more. In Western TN, the possibility for showers and storms will persist all week with highs near 90 and lows in the mid-60’s. In Eastern TN, any chance of rain will clear out in the next day or so until the middle of next week. High’s will remain in the mid-80’s and low’s in the low to mid-60’s.

Middle TN has a slight chance of showers for the next two days and then clear skies with high’s in the low 90’s and low’s in the mid-60’s. Though it’s beginning to sound like a broken record, keep those crops watered!
Upcoming Events

TN Agricultural Enhancement Program—Producer Diversification Cost Share Program
Applications accepted: July 2 - August 31 (postmarked)
Additional details at www.state.tn.us/agriculture/enhancement/growth.html.

For more information, visit: www.ATTRA.org.

Produce Inspection Training Program, June 18-22, 2007, Fredericksburg, VA
For more information, visit: www.UnitedFresh.org.

Southeast Greenhouse Conference, June 20-23, 2007, Greenville, SC
For more information, call 1.800.453.3070, or visit www.SGCTS.org or email smolnar@asginfo.net.

Blooms Days Garden Festival and Marketplace, June 23-24, 2007, East Tennessee Research and Education Center, Knoxville, TN
For more information, visit http://bloomsdays.tennessee.edu/.

12th Annual Mountain Farm and Garden Tour, June 23-24, 2007, surrounding Asheville, NC
For more information, visit: www.carolinafarmstewards.org.

Southern Conservation Agricultural Systems Conference, June 25-27, 2007, Quincy, FL
For more information, visit: www.ATTRA.org.

Tobacco, Beef and More, June 28, 2007, Highland Rim Research and Education Center, Springfield, TN
For details, visit http://agriculture.tennessee.edu/news/releases/0705-HRREC%20Field%20Day.htm.

Sunbelt Ag Expo Field Day, July 10, 2007, Moultrie, GA
For more information visit www.sunbeltexpo.com or call 229.985.1968.

Summer Celebration, July 12, 2007, West Tennessee Research and Education Center, Jackson, TN
For more information, visit: http://agriculture.tennessee.edu/news/FieldDays/.

National Association of County Agriculture Agents Annual Meeting/Professional Improvement Conference, July 15-19, 2007, Grand Rapids, MI
For details, visit www.naccaa2007.msu.edu.

Building and Sustaining Effective Community Food Projects- A Training Facilitated by Southern SAWG, July 25-26, 2007, Nashville, TN
For more information, contact Keith Richards at keith@ssawg.org or 479-587-0888.

2007 Annual Small Farm Expo/Small farmer Recognition Program, August 2, 2007, TSU Research and Demonstration Farm, Ashland City, TN
For more information and registration, contact Hilda Gooch at 615.963.5530 or agooch@tnstate.edu.

Steak and Potatoes Field Day, August 7, 2007, Plateau Research and Education Center, Crossville, TN

Potato Association of America 91st Annual Meeting, August 12-16, 2007, Idaho Falls, ID
For details visit www.conferences.uidaho.edu/PAA.

Sunbelt Ag Expo—30th Anniversary Show, October 16-18, 2007, Moultrie, GA
For more information visit www.sunbeltexpo.com or call 229.985.1968.

International Irrigation Show, December 9-11, 2007, San Diego, CA
For details, call 703.536.7080 or visit http://www.irrigation.org.

Tennessee Fruit and Vegetable Association Convention, December 9-11, 2007, Nashville Airport Marriott, Nashville, TN

Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.