The old saying “March comes in like a Lion and out as a Lamb” sure did not hold true this year. This March came in like a lion, purred like a kitten for a few days and then exited as a Lion! Crop producers should take note the USDA has extended the Farm Bill decision until April 7, 2015. Make sure to contact the FSA Office to make your program choices! Two of our first harvests in Ashtabula County of 2015 are under way. Maple syrup season is underway as is miscanthus harvest. This past weekend I was able to watch the miscanthus harvest down in Orwell, Ohio. The switch from baling to chopping the miscanthus is working really nicely. The addition of tracks on the chopper and wagons have allowed harvest to run smoothly and have caused very little compaction of these very wet & marginal soils in Ashtabula County. Area beef producers will want to make sure to take time to attend next week’s beef clinic—it will be a good one! Have a good week and a very Happy Easter.

David Marrison, AG Educator

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USDA Extends ARC and PLC Deadlines

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced late last week that farm owners and producers have one additional week, until April 7, 2015, to choose between Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC), the safety-net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill. The final day to update yield history or reallocate base acres also will be April 7, 2015.

Estimates from the USDA indicate that nearly 98 percent of owners have already updated their yield and base acres, and 90 percent of producers have enrolled in ARC or PLC. The additional week will give producers a little more time to have those final conversations, review their data, visit their local Farm Service Agency offices, and make their decisions," said Vilsack.

If no changes are made to yield history or base acres by the deadline, the farm's current yield and base acres will be used. If a program choice of ARC or PLC is not made, there will be no 2014 crop year payments for the farm and the farm will default to PLC coverage for the 2015 through 2018 crop years. Producers who have an appointment at their local FSA offices scheduled by April 7 will be able to make an election between ARC and PLC, even if their actual
USDA Implements 2014 Farm Bill Provision to Limit Payments to Non-Farmers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced on March 24, 2015 of a proposed rule to limit farm payments to non-farmers, consistent with requirements Congress mandated in the 2014 Farm Bill. The proposed rule limits farm payments to individuals who may be designated as farm managers but are not actively engaged in farm management. In the Farm Bill, Congress gave USDA the authority to address this loophole for joint ventures and general partnerships, while exempting family farm operations from being impacted by the new rule USDA ultimately implements.

"We want to make sure that farm program payments are going to the farmers and farm families that they are intended to help. So we've taken the steps to do that, to the extent that the Farm Bill allows," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "The Farm Bill gave USDA the authority to limit farm program payments to individuals who are not actively engaged in the management of the farming operation on non-family farms. This helps close a loophole that has been taken advantage of by some larger joint ventures and general partnerships."

The current definition of "actively engaged" for managers, established in 1987, is broad, allowing individuals with little to no contributions to critical farm management decisions to receive safety-net payments if they are classified as farm managers, and for some operations there were an unlimited number of managers that could receive payments.

The proposed rule seeks to close this loophole to the extent possible within the guidelines required by the 2014 Farm Bill. Under the proposed rule, non-family joint ventures and general partnerships must document that their managers are making significant contributions to the farming operation, defined as 500 hours of substantial management work per year, or 25 percent of the critical management time necessary for the success of the farming operation. Many operations will be limited to only one manager who can receive a safety-net payment. Operators that can demonstrate they are large and complex could be allowed payments for up to three managers only if they can show all three are actively and substantially engaged in farm operations. The changes specified in the rule would apply to payment eligibility for 2016 and subsequent crop years for Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Programs, loan deficiency payments and marketing loan gains realized via the Marketing Assistance Loan program.

As mandated by Congress, family farms will not be impacted. There will also be no change to existing rules for contributions to land, capital, equipment, or labor. Only non-family farm general partnerships or joint ventures comprised of more than one member will be impacted by this proposed rule. Stakeholders interested in commenting on the proposed definition and changes are encouraged to provide written comments at www.regulations.gov by May 26, 2015. The proposed rule is available at http://go.usa.gov/3C6Kk.

The Science of Producing High Quality Meat Cuts” Workshop to be held on Wednesday, April 8, 2015

OSU Extension and the Ashtabula County Cattlemen’s Association would like to invite Northeast Ohio beef producers to attend “The Science of Producing High Quality Meat Cuts” workshop on Wednesday, April 8, 2015 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the downstairs meeting room of the OSU Extension - Ashtabula County office located at 39 Wall Street in Jefferson, Ohio. Area beef producers and 4-H/FFA youth are encouraged to attend this workshop.

This workshop will focus on understanding the science behind producing high quality meat cuts. Learn more about how cattle breeds affect carcass quality, leanness, and quality grade. Learn more about beef carcass anatomy and the procedures for beef carcass grading and awarding premiums. Learn about beef palatability
and how various cuts, grades and technologies may affect the eating experience of consumers. Attendees will also learn the factors affecting beef palatability and sensory evaluation.

This program will feature Dr. Lyda Garcia, OSU Extension Meat Science Specialist and Assistant Professor. Dr. Garcia joined the Department of Animal Sciences in February 2015. Prior to joining the Buckeye Family, Dr. Garcia was a Visiting Assistant Professor at Texas Tech University where she taught an undergraduate meat science course. At OSU, Dr. Garcia is responsible for teaching undergraduate courses in meat science, advises undergraduate Animal Sciences students, and supervises the Meat Judging Team.

This workshop is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. More information about this program can be obtained by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008. A programs flyer can be found at: http://go.osu.edu/ne-events

**Beef Lovers: How Safe are your Burgers?**  
From OSU Extension’s Chow Line (Published on March 26, 2015)

If steaks are safe when cooked to 145 degrees F, why do hamburgers need to be cooked to 160 degrees? All the meat comes from the same cow, right? All beef comes from cattle, yes, but when it comes to food safety, ground beef is a whole different animal. The reason is simple. Bacteria and other types of foodborne illness-causing contaminants that commonly feast on raw meat are surface creatures. As long as those steaks, roasts or chops aren’t messed with, pathogens remain close to the surface where the heat from cooking gets hottest and, given the proper time and temperature, sears them out of existence.

But as soon as raw meat is ground up, anything on the surface becomes mixed throughout. The internal temperature at the very center of the patty must get hot enough for long enough to eliminate the E. coli, Salmonella and other bugs lurking there. Research shows that most, if not all, raw meat plays host to some type of bacteria. It doesn’t matter if the meat is conventional or organic, or purchased from a mega super store or your friendly neighborhood butcher. You should just assume raw meat has some contamination and treat it with respect.

That’s why you see those warnings on restaurant menus saying, “Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness.” Unfortunately, not everyone gets the message. In 2014, a dozen people in four states, including Ohio, became ill after eating rare or medium-rare hamburgers; seven were hospitalized. E. coli O157:H7 was to blame. It’s important to note that there were likely many more people affected: For every E. coli infection confirmed in a lab, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates another 26 cases go unreported.

Four of the five Ohioans sickened in that outbreak said they ate burgers at a “gastro pub” chain that regularly cooks burgers to just 145 degrees F, boasting that it is “the temperature of a perfectly cooked medium-rare burger.” Food microbiologists tend to disagree with that assessment. In fact, food safety guidelines for food service establishments say they should cook hamburgers to 155 degrees F to be safe. At home, consumers need to cook burgers to 160 degrees because it’s likely the meat has been in and out of refrigeration periodically — such as when you’re at the grocery store or during the drive home — and thus needs an extra measure of safety during cooking.

Food safety experts’ concerns go beyond ground meat. Today, an estimated 25 percent of steaks sold in the U.S. have been “mechanically tenderized” — that is, mechanically punctured with needles or knives or injected with a 10 percent solution to make the cut more tender. The trouble is that as soon as the meat is cut into, surface contaminants get inside. With beef, you’ve got to treat those cuts of meat like hamburger and cook them thoroughly to 160 degrees F to be safe.
Unfortunately, it’s not always clear when meat has been treated this way. If the steak still has a bone, it’s likely the surface is intact. But if you’re not sure, ask the butcher for guidance.

Chow Line is a service of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1043, or filipic.3@osu.edu.
Editor: This column was reviewed by Linnette Goard, Ohio State University Extension’s food safety, selection and management specialist.

**Bioproducts & Biofuels Workshop to be held on Tuesday, April 21 in Ashtabula County**

OSU Extension through a partnership with two national grant projects will be offering a **Bioproducts & Biofuels Workshop** on Tuesday, April 21, 2015 from 10:00 am to 5:30 p.m. in Jefferson, Ohio at the Ashtabula County Extension office located at 30 Wall Street, Jefferson, Ohio.

This workshop will help agricultural industry personnel and interested producers to learn more about growing crops for fuel or commercial products. The focus is to provide practical knowledge, teaching materials, and assessment tools to assist producers in shifting to feedstock production for energy and bio-based products. One focus is on using “marginal lands” which are typically not ideal for growing grain or forage crops.

Session topics for this workshop include: Sustainable Bioenergy Cropping Systems; Switchgrass, Miscanthus and Other Perennial Grasses for Ethanol; Bio-products from Miscanthus; High Value Bio-based Products (Fuels, Chemicals and more); Evaluating and Calculating Soil Organic Carbon; and Ecosystems services and analyzing Soil Quality (test kit). Featured Speakers for this training workshop are: Randall Reeder, Extension Ag. Engineer (retired), Ohio State University; Dennis Pennington, Michigan State University; Jon Griswold, Aloterra Energy; Katrina Cornish, Ohio State University; Dennis Hall, Ohio Bioproducts Innovation Center, OSU; Jerry Grigar, State Agronomist, USDA-NRCS, Michigan; and Rafiq Islam, Soil Scientist, Ohio State University

This workshop is being sponsored and funded by OSU Extension, NewBio and SunGrant. The registration cost for this program is $15 per person and is requested by April 14, 2015. The registration fee was reduced dramatically due the sponsorship of the NewBio and Sungrants. More information about this workshop, can be obtained by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008. A programs flyer can be found at: [http://go.osu.edu/ne-events](http://go.osu.edu/ne-events)

**Ashtabula County Extension Office looking for Summer College Student Assistant**

OSU Extension in Ashtabula County is looking for a Summer College Student Assistant to assist with the summer 4-H Youth Development program. The purpose of this county based extension internship program is to provide an opportunity for a college student to gain workforce preparation skills to prepare them for success as they enter the first position of their professional careers. This summer position provides valuable pre-professional experience for educational and community based careers.

The Student Assistant will be provided with a variety of county-based Extension workforce experiences. Job responsibilities include but are not limited to: assisting the County Staff with Summer Youth Camps, Summer School Enrichment programs, and Junior Fair activities.

Applicants must have completed one year of college and have evidence of successful leadership experience in 4-H, school and/or community organizations. Candidates should be self-motivated, possess strong organizational skills and must be available to work a flexible schedule including occasional nights and weekends.
This student will be employed for a maximum of 15 weeks with proposed hourly wage is $9-$11 per hour depending on qualifications. Reimbursement for official job travel will be provided according to Extension travel policy. Pay will be on a bi-weekly basis. The successful applicant will be required to pass a criminal background check. Interested individuals should submit an employment application and resume (complete with reference list) to the Ashtabula County Extension Office. **The application deadline is April 15, 2015.** Please contact the Ashtabula County Extension Office at 440-576-9008 for more information.

7 Agronomic Crop Research Experience (ACRE) Summer Interns Sought for Ohio
OSU Extension State Specialists are starting a new summer program in 2015 aimed at providing a rich training experience to undergraduate students in a wide diversity of disciplines related to agronomic crop research. These Agronomic Crop Research Experience (ACRE) Interns will support on-farm research throughout the state, by being placed in strategic locations or hubs of on-farm research. **We are excited that one of the summer interns will be based out of the Ashtabula County Extension office for and will work in Ashtabula, Trumbull & Geauga Counties.**

The primary responsibilities of the ACREs will be to assist with crop scouting, sample collection, field data collection, laboratory analysis, data entry, field plot maintenance and crop reporting. Other activities related to research, extension and outreach are also likely. The ACRE program will last approximately 12 weeks, allowing some limited flexibility of the student to take a week off for vacation. A mandatory 2-3 day training will occur in Wooster starting on May 18 and the program will finish around August 14, 2015. College students interested in this program, should contact Steve Culman at culman.2@osu.edu. **Applications are due by April 17th.**

'Death Tax' Repeal Bill Introduced in Senate; House Ways and Means Committee Approves Estate Tax Repeal Bill
Published on: Mar 27, 2015 in Ohio Farmer

A bill to permanently repeal an estate tax that a group of legislators says has significant effects on family farms was introduced this week in the Senate, to join a similar bill already offered in the House. Co-sponsor of the "Death Tax Repeal Act of 2015," John Thune, R-S.D., announced the bill Thursday with the help of Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, and Reps. Kevin Brady, R-Texas, and Sanford Bishop D-Ga. Also Thursday, Thune introduced an amendment to the Senate’s Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Resolution to create a deficit neutral reserve fund to eliminate the federal estate tax.

The estate tax imposes a tax rate as high as 40% on family businesses – including farms and ranches – which Thune's office said hurts economic growth and small business development. Thune cited a 2012 study from the Republicans' Joint Economic Committee that suggests ending the estate tax would actually increase overall federal tax revenue by encouraging more investment. Another study by by former CBO Director Douglas Holtz-Eakin, Thune’s office said, found that repealing the death tax would create 1.5 million additional small business jobs and would shave almost a percentage point off the unemployment rate.

The bill follows a hearing in the House Committee on Ways and Means last week, where stakeholders including farmers and ranchers shared testimony on how the estate tax has affected their farm businesses. In that hearing, Bobby McKnight, a seventh-generation cattleman from Fort Davis, Texas, shared that he's had to cut staff to pay estate tax expenses. Farm Bureau member and Tennessee farmer Brandon Whitt also shared that his family had to sell off land to pay tax expenses. The land was later developed and cannot be recovered, Whitt said.
The bill also follows approval of the bill in the House Ways and Means Committee on Wednesday. "Currently more than 70% of family businesses do not survive to the second generation, and 90% of family businesses do not survive to the third generation. This legislation will finally give farmers, ranchers and family business owners the peace of mind of knowing that they no longer have to spend substantial sums on planning to minimize their death tax liability," Thune said.

"I believe there is now a majority in both the House and the Senate who agree with us that the death tax punishes a lifetime of hard work and I hope to see movement in both chambers on this legislation this year," he said. Brady called the "death tax" the "wrong tax at the wrong time." "After a family loses a loved one, why should Uncle Sam swoop in and take much of the nest egg they spent a lifetime building? Especially when it forces the survivors to take out loans or sell their land or business just to try to keep some of what they worked so hard to earn," he said.

**Fertilizer Certification Session to be held on April 7 in Geauga County**

Agricultural fertilizer applicator certification is now required for farmers who apply fertilizer to more than 50 acres of agricultural production grown primarily for sale. This requirement was signed into law in June, 2014, and also requires certification for commercial agricultural applicators. Farmers who have their fertilizer applied by co-ops or custom applicators are not required to be certified. Farmers and applicators need to attend a training course offered by Ohio State University Extension to become certified. Those who have a pesticide applicator license need to attend a two-hour fertilizer certification. If an applicator does not have a pesticide license, they will be required to attend a three-hour fertilizer certification.

The next three-hour certification program offered by the Northeast Ohio Extension offices will be held on **Tuesday, April 7, 2015** from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Geauga County Extension office at 14269 Claridon-Troy Road, in Burton, Ohio. This free meeting will meet the certification requirements for those with and without a pesticide license. Pre-registration is required and online registration is available at [http://nutrienteducation.osu.edu](http://nutrienteducation.osu.edu). Registration can also be made by calling the Geauga County Extension office at 440-834-4656. Additional sessions will held across Northeast Ohio through 2015.

Fertilizer is defined for the regulation as any substance containing nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, or other plant nutrient in a dry or liquid formulation. All application types such as broadcast, side dress, sub-surface, knifing and other are included in the certification requirement. Lime and limestone are not included as fertilizer for the certification and farmers who only use starter fertilizer in their planter boxes are exempted. Applicators who are a Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) or Ohio Certified Livestock Manager are not required to attend the training. The agriculture fertilizer certification is not required for manure applications as these are currently regulated.

Applicators who meet the criteria for the certification must attend training by September 30, 2017. The Ohio Department of Agriculture is the agency issuing the certification for agriculture fertilizer applications and information about the new certification can be found at: [http://agri.ohio.gov](http://agri.ohio.gov)

For more information about this training session or general materials for the agriculture fertilizer certification, visit [http://nutrienteducation.osu.edu](http://nutrienteducation.osu.edu) or call the Geauga County Extension office at 440-834-4656.

**Good Agricultural Practices Training to be held on May 6 in Ashtabula & Geauga Counties**

OSU Extension will be offering a training program on reducing microbial contamination on fruit and vegetable farms on May 6, 2015 at the Ashtabula and Geauga County Extension offices. The workshop will be offered at the Geauga County Extension Office located at 14269 Claridon-Troy Road in Burton, Ohio from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. and at the Ashtabula County Extension Office located at 39 Wall Street in Jefferson, Ohio from 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Food safety and good agricultural practices, or GAPs, for fruit and vegetable production are the focus of this workshop. In September 2014, the Food and Drug Administration released the proposed supplemental standards for the produce safety rule within the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). The FSMA produce safety rule encompasses known on-farm routes of contamination, such as: workers, animals, and manure. Whether or not a farm will be exempt from these rules, all growers are responsible for providing safe produce to their consumers.

Ohio State University Extension educators present the 3-hour programs. Participants will receive a recordkeeping binder and a certificate of participation as verification to customers that the grower received training in GAPs. Attendees won’t actually become “certified in GAPS” by taking the course. That certification comes only through having one of many possible farm audits conducted by USDA or 3rd party company. If you need to become GAPs Certified, find out what your buyer requires. Some may be satisfied with just a class on GAPs, others may require a completed farm food safety plan and audit. Many large grocery chains require their produce suppliers to have a farm food safety plan and audit. For small farms selling at stands and farmers’ markets, learning about GAPs at the OSU 3-hour course is a good way to stay competitive.

If you are interested in attending one of these GAPs training programs, please visit www.producesafety.osu.edu/events to download a registration form under the respective event. Growers must register before April 29, 2015, as there is a 10-person minimum in order to proceed with the class. Registration is $20 per person, payable by cash or check, with checks made out to “Ohio State University.” The registration cost of $20 is greatly reduced thanks to a grant from the Ohio Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Program, which helps to cover some of the program costs. For more information or to download a registration form, visit www.producesafety.osu.edu or call the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008.

2015 Upcoming Extension Program
The following programs have been scheduled for Northeast Ohio farmers this upcoming winter. Complete registration flyers can be found at: http://ashtabula.osu.edu/program-areas/agriculture-and-natural-resources/upcoming-educational-programs-deadlines

Growing Vegetable Crops in Pots
Saturday, April 4, 2015

Fertilizer Certification Sessions
April 7, 2015 at Geauga County Extension Office

Northeast Ohio Beef Clinic
Wednesday, April 8, 2015

2015 Joe Bodnar Memorial Northern Classic Steer & Heifer Show
Saturday, April 18 at the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds

Good Agricultural Practices Workshop
May 6, 2015 form 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Trumbull County Fair
July 14-19, 2015

Ashtabula County Fair
August 11-16, 2015
PLEASE SHARE...this newsletter with farmers or others who are interested in agricultural topics in Ashtabula & Trumbull Counties. Past issues can be located at: https://go.osu.edu/ag-news. Please tell your friends and neighbors to sign up for the list. CONTACT: marrison.2@osu.edu

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