



What's ahead for Washington this week: USDA's annual Agricultural Outlook Forum

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Washington, Feb. 14 – With Congress away all this week for its Presidents' Day recess, the spotlight will be on USDA's annual Outlook Conference Thursday and Friday.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack delivers the keynote address for two days focused on "Sustainable Agriculture: The Key to Health & Prosperity." Other speakers include USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan, both U.S. Trade Representative Ronald Kirk and USDA Under Secretary Jim Miller on ag exports, USDA Chief Economist Joseph Glauber, International Food Policy Research Institute Division Director Marie Ruel, Whole Foods Market Co-President & COO Walter Robb, Bon Appétit Management Company CEO Fedele Bauccio, Recently Retired Sysco Corp. CEO Richard Schnieders, and, as the dinner speaker, USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture Director Roger Beachy.

At a time when climate change skeptics defy science by loudly proclaiming that 33 inches of snow in Washington, DC's blizzards last week somehow proved that the planet is cooling, not warming, Dr. Beachy's speech strikes a hopeful note in its title: "The New Consensus: Science, Sustainability and Society." It's a speech aimed at showing how research and advanced technologies "look to solve issues of sustainable agriculture in relation to environmental, economic and trade competitiveness."

In another Outlook presentation aimed squarely at refuting the climate-change skeptics, State Department Science & Technology Advisor Nina Fedoroff's will speak on "Rethinking Agriculture in a Warming Climate."

Among the controversial topics certain to draw crowds to the panel sessions:

- Energy Policy, Climate Policy, and the Economics of U.S. Agriculture: Brian Murray, Professor, Nicholas School of Environmental Sciences and Policy, Duke University, Durham, NC
- Putting the Hopes and Fears of Climate Change Legislation in Perspective: Daniel de la Torre Ugarte, Associate Director, Agricultural Policy and Analysis Center, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

- Climate Security and Food Security: On a Collision Course?: Scott Faber, Vice President for Federal Affairs, The Grocery Manufacturers Association, Washington, DC
- The Impact of Food Commodity and Energy Costs on Retail Food Prices: Phillip Kaufman, Agricultural Economist, Economic Research Service, USDA
- Corn and Energy Prices in the Grocery Aisle: John Urbanchuk, LECG LLC, Wayne, PA
- The Impact of Ethanol Use on Food Prices and Greenhouse-Gas Emissions: Robert Johansson, Microeconomic Studies Division, Congressional Budget Office
- The 2010 Retail Food Price Outlook: The Impact of Commodity and Farm Price Changes on Retail Food Prices: Ephraim Leibtag Economist, Economic Research Service, USDA

To keep up with the Outlook Forum, go to www.usda.gov/oce/forum where the plenary speeches will be webcast after 6 p.m. EST on Feb. 18, and speech and PowerPoint presentations will be posted online after 6 p.m. on Feb. 19.

A White House event on Thursday threatens to sour already difficult trade relations with China. President Obama will meet with the Dalai Lama, a meeting bound to offend the Chinese and perhaps undermine efforts to export more to China. Later Thursday, the President flies to Denver to speak at a fundraiser for freshman Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) before heading to Las Vegas to boost re-election chances for endangered Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV).

In congressional hearings in Washington, this week's only Capitol Hill hearing will focus on how energy and national security issues are closely related:

Friday, Feb. 19

- Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs subcommittee hearing on "Blue, Gold, and Green: How Delaware State and Local Governments Are Cutting Their Energy Costs"

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) reports include:

- Tuesday, Feb. 16, Turkey Hatchery
- Wednesday, Feb. 17, Weather-Crop Summary, U.S. and Canadian Hogs, U.S. and Canadian Cattle and Sheep, Broiler Hatchery, Potato Stocks
- Thursday, Feb. 18, Catfish Processing, Farm Labor
- Friday, Feb. 19, Dairy Products Prices, Cattle on Feed, Crop Values, Milk Production, Peanut Prices

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