

# The Market Bulletin

<http://www.wvagriculture.org/>

Walt Helmick, Commissioner

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## Walt's View

The 2014 session of the Legislature is under way and I recently appeared before the committee I headed for eight years, Senate Finance. I told them what

I've been saying to everyone. In the next few years, I'd like to see the state's farmers double their production over current levels.

We consume \$7 billion worth of food and we generate only about \$663 million in agricultural goods. If we could get our production to just \$1 billion, it could create exponential growth in our state's economy, and expand the tax base without increasing taxes.

Food is not a discretionary expense. People must spend money on food constantly. That's why I find it so troubling that so much of our food comes from outside our state. That money could stay in our state and create jobs instead of us importing more than 90 percent of our food.

We could be growing a lot of that food here in West Virginia. For example, we have well over 100,000 acres of flat land in central and southern West Virginia as a result of numerous surface mining operations that could conceivably support commercial livestock production.

I recently visited a modern pork operation in North Carolina. The industry in that state employs thousands and produces \$2.5 billion in pork annually. I was astonished that the grow-out houses had virtually no odor. The pigs' waste is collected and the methane is used to generate electricity for the facility.

Regardless, North Carolina farmers can no longer obtain permits to expand operations. I'm telling them, "Look at southern West Virginia!"

## Keeping West Virginia Resources in West Virginia

I would love to see this type of operation go on one of our old mine sites, which typically are remote, flat, and frequently have good rail access. A hog farm wouldn't need rich soil because feed is shipped in to such operations. But it would need electricity and some type of efficient transportation. I truly believe that such a facility will become a reality. We continue to explore potential sites and potential companies.

Sen. Ron Stollings, D-Boone, supports my suggestions and said as much during our budget presentation.

"You understand coal production is way down ... and no projections say that it's coming back," Stollings said. "I urge you to get cracking on that – hog farms or any other post-mining land use."

We're also exploring a horticultural pilot project to grow potatoes in Randolph County. Boxcar loads of potatoes come into West Virginia every week from Idaho, there is no reason we can't reduce that number being imported by growing

them right here.

We are on the same page as the Governor, who, in his State of the State Address, said, "The resources of this state need to be used here and not piped somewhere else." Of course, he was talking about our Marcellus and Utica Shale gas reserves, but the sentiment is the same.

I also found it heartening that he opened up his fourth address by drawing an analogy between agriculture and public office. "Governing, like gardening, takes planning, patience and foresight," he said. How right he is!

We've also already seen some progress on the West Virginia Warriors and Veterans to Agriculture Project. The West Virginia Veterans Council voted to support legislation that would formally recognize and fund our project. The project currently identifies veterans who want to become

involved in farming, markets farm products of veterans already involved in agriculture, builds a brand for farmer-veteran products, seeks property that can be used for veteran



Commissioner Helmick recently crowned Leslie Garrett, representing the WV Black Walnut Festival, as the 2014 Miss West Virginia Association of Fairs and Festivals Queen. Garrett resides in Calhoun County.

farmer projects, cooperates with VA-certified agriculture education programs, works to develop rehabilitation sites and technical assistance resources and creates an environment for long-term growth of veteran-owned and operated agribusinesses.

In international news, Canadian health officials said a fatal case of H5N1 bird flu has been reported in Canada, the first known case in North America. The victim was on a flight from China when symptoms first appeared. The victim reportedly had visited Beijing, but had not been on a farm or at markets.

Officials said they don't know how the person contracted the virus, didn't think anyone else had contracted the virus, and that they didn't think it was a human health threat.

All the same, whether you're involved in the commercial poultry industry, or you have a flock of backyard birds, biosecurity should be on your mind at all times. It's a good business practice, as well as a good health practice.

Walt

# Farm To School Showcase features website rollout

[www.groweducatesell.com](http://www.groweducatesell.com)

The West Virginia Farm To School Community Development Group (WVFTSCDG) kicked off the 2014 Cast Iron Cook-Off with a showcase that featured presentations on Farm To School success stories from throughout the state and the roll-out of a brand new FTS website, [www.groweducatesell.com](http://www.groweducatesell.com).

“When county school systems purchase local products from farmers, the food served in our schools is not only fresher, but the local dollars stay in the community,” said James Phares, West Virginia Superintendent of Schools. “The economic and community development opportunities with the farm to school initiative in West Virginia are limitless and the impact is real. This showcase brings the benefits of the Farm to School initiative center stage.”

“Farm to School presents a tremendous opportunity for our state and our agricultural community,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick. “We spend around \$100 million a year on school food. Although we’ll never capture all that money, we could be keeping a substantial portion of it in our state where it can help our farmers, build our communities, and provide our students fresher, better meals.”

The showcase featured three key components of the FTS movement: grow, educate and sell.

**Grow** – local farmers, including two high school students,

## FTS QUICK FACTS

- Since 2012, almost \$900,000 was spent on local products in West Virginia schools; \$470,000 so far this school year.
- More than 30 counties purchased local foods for schools last year
- 13 agricultural education programs have been funded
- WVDE recently awarded \$58,000 to fund an additional 11 agricultural education programs for the 2013-2014 school year using funds from the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources.
- 16 schools were funded with \$2,000 start-up grants from United States Department of Agriculture Team Nutrition funds.
- More than 60 students were funded with entrepreneurial grants to start their own farming business and these students have sold over \$44,000 worth of products to West Virginia schools.
- The WVDE will be sponsoring ten AmeriCorps members with funding from Volunteer West Virginia and the Benedum Foundation to help counties around the state with their Farm to School efforts.

have overcome the barriers and made farming financial viable. More growers are desperately needed.

### Educate

– Presenters discussed how to successfully incorporate school gardens and garden-based learning into elementary curriculum and how to implement a comprehensive farm to school program that involves both Agricultural Education and Pro Start students.

**Sell** – Incorporating local foods into school meals is no easy task. Presenters from two county school systems shared how they have been able to overcome the barriers.

West Virginia Farm to School Collaborative partners include the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), the West Virginia Division of Agriculture (WVDA), West Virginia University Cooperative Extension - Small Farms Center, Collaborative for 21st Century Appalachia and New Appalachian Farm and Research Center.

Three years ago the WVDE hired a full-time FTS coordinator to work around the state, provided grants to agricultural education programs to enhance onsite growing projects, funded student farmers through entrepreneurial grants, and provided incentives for counties to purchase local products. Currently, the Farm to School program operates in more than 30 West Virginia county school systems.

WVDA has invested USDA Specialty Crop Grant funding into student agriculture and growing season extension projects to help promote the production and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Farmers interested in becoming involved in FTS should contact Buddy Davidson at 304-541-5932, [bdavidson@wvda.us](mailto:bdavidson@wvda.us).



The West Virginia Farm To School Community Development Group presented state agriculture education / FFA groups with \$58,600 in funding for student projects for the coming school year.



Commissioner Helmick and wife Rita pose with Cabell County Farm To School participants during the FTS Showcase held ahead of the 2014 Cast Iron Cook-Off. Pictured are Food Service Director Rhonda McCoy (left) and student farmers Zachary Call and Orin Jackson, who, combined, sold more than \$15,000 worth of produce to Cabell County schools.

**RISK  
Management  
101**

**USDA** United States Department of Agriculture  
Risk Management Agency

**GOT LRP?**

**Do you have Livestock Risk Protection?**

Buying a livestock insurance policy is one risk management option. Producers should always carefully consider how a policy will work in conjunction with their other risk management strategies to insure the best possible outcome.

### QUESTIONS?

Contact your local insurance agent or Tom McConnell,  
Risk Management Coordinator, 304-293-2642;  
[trmcconnell@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:trmcconnell@mail.wvu.edu)

*“This institution is an equal opportunity provider”*

# Winter Injury to Plants

Patty Gundrum, Agricultural Plant Pathologist, WVDA Plant Industries Division

Cold temperatures and windy conditions during the winter months can often damage our valuable landscape plants. Plants more likely to be injured during this time of year are those not tolerant to the specific hardiness zone in which they are typically grown. For instance, most of West Virginia is in the hardiness zone 6, with a portion of our eastern mountains falling into zone 5. Normal hardening-off may not occur in plants not accustomed to growing in colder temperatures so landscape plants hardy to zones 7 or higher may develop winter damage here in our state. This low temperature injury may not be evident until plants resume growth in the spring. When purchasing plants at your local garden center or nursery, be sure to find the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone information, either by checking the label on the plant or speaking to the nursery operator.

One type of winter injury is desiccation, also referred to as "winter burn". The damage occurs when water transpires from the needle or evergreen leaf faster than the roots can replenish moisture from the soil. Frozen soil will prevent roots from absorbing water and freeze/thaw cycles can heave shallow rooted plants out of the ground. Broadleaf evergreens such as boxwoods,

camellias and rhododendrons may exhibit a brown, bronze or orange leaf color due to the ravages of winter wind and excessive sunlight. These desiccating conditions can be managed by watering in the autumn before freezing conditions occur, providing a 3-inch layer of mulch to prevent soil water loss and planting evergreens on the north, northeast or east side of a building where intense winter sunlight and prevailing winds can be minimized. The protected location will also delay premature spring growth when plants may be prone to injury by early spring frosts.

Winter sunscald is a condition which affects tree bark. Young trees with thin bark such as maple, willow, ash, beech and fruit trees are more prone to suffer from sunscald injury. When the winter sun warms the tree bark during the day followed by rapid cooling at night, inner bark (phloem) and cambial tissues may be killed by the fluctuating temperatures. This can cause sunken and discolored bark which may crack or fall off, revealing dead plant tissue underneath. This type of injury and subsequent damage create favorable environments for opportunistic disease causing fungi. These fungi can invade and colonize injured tissue, creating further damage and decay in the tree. Tree wraps commonly sold at

garden centers can insulate bark and are an effective way to prevent winter sunscald.

Rock salt or sodium chloride (NaCl) is the most commonly used de-icer on sidewalks and roads due to low cost and effectiveness. However, salts can alter soil structure, thereby creating erosion, water runoff and soil compaction. These soils become unsuitable for healthy plant growth. The plant roots take up the soluble salts, causing dehydration, displacing important ions such as calcium, potassium and magnesium and interfering with the biochemical processes of growth. Plants growing near treated areas experience runoff and are more prone to damage from salt accumulation in their tissues. Use salt sparingly around sensitive plants and, when possible, use de-icing agents with calcium chloride or use sand or cinders to provide traction and make sidewalks and driveways less slick. Salt-laden soil can be made more suitable for plants by the addition of calcium sulfate (gypsum) into the surface layer.

*For more information concerning this topic or any other plant problems, please contact the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, Plant Industries Division at (304) 558-2212.*

## Clafin Foundation Presents Funding for Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture Bee Project at McCausland Farm

Point Pleasant attorney Stephen C. Littlepage, who serves as President of the Robert and Louise Clafin Foundation, recently presented a check in the amount of \$5,510 to West Virginia Agriculture Commissioner Walt Helmick to assist in funding the WVDA's new Veterans and Warriors To Agriculture Project.

The funds will be used specifically to establish 10 bee hives, protective fencing around the hives, and the planting of various berry bushes on a tract of WVDA-owned property at the McCausland Farm in Mason County.

The small apiary operation will be tended to and nurtured by veterans and warriors who will be trained and educated with the intention that they will then have the skills and knowledge to establish their own agribusiness operation.

Joining Commissioner Helmick at the event was James McCormick, Director of the Veterans and Warriors To Agriculture Project for the WVDA.

For more information on the Veterans and Warriors project, search "Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture" on Facebook.



## USDA requires that cattle be officially identified before crossing state lines

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) rule states that effective March 11, cattle moved across state lines are required to be officially identified and accompanied by an interstate certificate of veterinary inspection (ICVI). Cattle affected by this rule include: sexually-intact beef cattle over 18 months of age, all dairy cattle, and all cattle being moved for shows, rodeos or other exhibitions.

Current exemptions to the rule include beef cattle under 18 months of age and cattle moving directly to a recognized slaughter establishment.

Official identification is an official ear tag. This can be either a metal NUES "brite" tag or a tag that bears a 15 digit identification number beginning with 840. The ear tag must also have the official ear tag shield imprinted on it. In order to purchase official ID tags, cattle owners must have a premise identification number.

For more information, contact Burke Holvey at 304-269-0598. For information on a Premise ID Number (PIN) contact Shelly Lantz at 304-558-2214.

# Learn, Network and Eat Local! at the West Virginia Small Farm Conference

The 2014 West Virginia Small Farm Conference will be held Feb. 27, 28 and March 1, at the Waterfront Hotel and Conference Center in Morgantown. The conference will mirror the many opportunities and problems most farmers face.

The conference schedule has grown every year and now includes three pre-conference workshops on Wednesday, February 26. These are:

1. GHP\GAP training by the WVDA
2. Youth Entrepreneurship Competition
3. Day 1 of the Process Control School

The conference officially begins on Thursday with seven day-long, in-depth workshops including:

1. Youth/FFA Day
2. Red Meat
3. Day 2 of the Better Process Control School

4. WV Bed & Breakfast
5. Value Adding
6. Farmers Market Nutrition Voucher Training
7. Entrepreneurship

Thursday night also features the Winter Blues Farmers' Market and Local Food Dine-around which features 50 farmer vendors and 20 chefs and restaurants from all over West Virginia (see below article). Last year more than 4,500 local food enthusiasts attended the event. This serves as a great marketing event but it also serves as a teaching opportunity as the farmers learn from their neighbors who are growing or marketing differently than they are.

The Friday and Saturday schedule includes 77 individual workshops. The focus of the workshops include:

1. Production and storage of fruit and vegetables
2. Beginning farmer track

3. Farm to school
4. Farmers market management
5. Marketing
6. Agri-tourism
7. Food safety
8. Wholesale opportunities
9. Farm business issues including Insurance basics, including the Patient Protection and Affordable Healthcare Act.
10. Learning to work together through Cooperatives and group dynamics

Again this year, all meals and breaks will be sourced with locally-produced food. Last year's conference purchased food from 17 different farmers.

For more information about the Small Farms Conference, visit <http://smallfarmcenter.ext.wvu.edu/conference>. The website will be updated on a weekly basis.

## Sixth Annual 'Winter Blues Farmers' Market' Set for February 27, as part of the WV Small Farm Conference

*West Virginia's largest indoor Winter Market to feature a large variety of local products*

Support the Slow Food movement at the Winter Blues Farmers Market organized by the West Virginia Farmers Market Association. The market will be held from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, February 27, in the Morgantown

Event Center at Waterfront Place. Again this year, SNAP benefits and credit cards will be accepted.

Farmers from throughout West Virginia and neighboring Maryland and Pennsylvania will turn the Morgantown Event Center into West Virginia's largest indoor winter farmers' market. More than 40 vendors will offer fresh produce from high tunnels and hydroponic greenhouses, as well as locally raised and grazed meats, farm fresh eggs, herbs and garlic, honey and maple syrup, winter-stored apples and fresh pressed cider, potatoes and root vegetables. Locally made cheeses, jerky, and summer sausages will also be available as well as a wide variety of artisan and salt rise breads

Our farmers have preserved the freshness of summer in many different

products including salsas, pickled beets, pickles, jams, jellies and fruit butters. Dried herbal products for your kitchen or your health and homemade soaps and cleaning products will also be



available.

New this year will be craft vendors who will put their twist on local. Local businesses who support the local food movement and the Monongalia County Extension and 4-H will also be on hand.

Our food area will be expanded this year featuring local chefs who have made a commitment to cook with local food.

Come chase the winter blues away while shopping for local foods, listening to live music and eating local foods prepared by local chefs.

The Winter Blues Farmers Market is free and open to the public.

*For more information about the market contact Lesa Gay at [winterbluesfarmersmarket@gmail.com](mailto:winterbluesfarmersmarket@gmail.com).*

## State Fair's Marlene Pierson-Jolliffe's Dream Big Challenge raised over 6 million pounds of food

Marlene Pierson-Jolliffe, CEO of the State Fair of West Virginia, wrapped up her term as the 2013 Chair for International Association of Fairs and Expositions, on December 9-12, at the Paris Hotel Casino in Las Vegas. While there, the IAFE celebrated the efforts of fairs worldwide for raising a total of 6,005,069 pounds of food.

At last year's IAFE gathering, Jolliffe challenged IAFE members to "Dream Big" and showcase how agricultural fairs impact their community's social issues by feeding the hungry through a food drive.

Of the 1,100 IAFE members, nearly 200 fairs answered that call and held a food drive during their own annual fairs, some during non-fair events and activities at their grounds, as well as during board meetings and other gatherings. All food and cash donations raised will benefit each respective fair's local community, designated to one or more organizations feeding those who are food-insecure.

At the 2013 State Fair of West Virginia, fair officials joined with First Energy for "Magic Monday" and generated 20,000 pounds of food through a gate discount promotion. Employees of First Energy, The State Fair of West Virginia, and Reithoffer Shows, manned the entrance gates and coordinated the donations of nonperishable food items.

# Cooking with WV Honey & Maple Syrup

Jean Smith, Director, WVDA Marketing & Development Division

February is sometimes referred to as the Sweetest Month! This year, why not plan to celebrate the month by using West Virginia honey and maple syrup! Both products are naturally sweet and can be used by most folks in their daily food intake. West Virginia also has a new syrup which made its debut in the fall of 2013 – hickory syrup, which is produced in Lincoln County. Keep watching *The Market Bulletin* for a story about this new West Virginia product and the company owners.

This time of year is very, very busy for our West Virginia Maple Syrup producers! Trees are tapped and the sap is flowing – maple houses are fully staffed and syrup is being made. For a listing of West Virginia maple syrup producers, please contact our office at 304.558.2210 or via email, [jsmith@wvda.us](mailto:jsmith@wvda.us).

West Virginia beekeepers still have West Virginia honey available. Please use the same contact information if you would like a listing of beekeepers in a certain location. Beekeepers are anxiously awaiting



the warm spring weather and flowers for the pollination process to begin and thus a new supply of West Virginia honey. – *Happy Cooking!*

## Maple Glazed Chicken Breasts

- 2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon fresh-squeezed lemon juice (approximately juice of 1 lemon)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
- ¼ teaspoon freshly-ground black pepper
- 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts or 2 chicken breasts with ribs

In large resealable plastic bag, combine maple syrup, soy sauce, lemon juice, garlic, ginger and pepper. Place chicken breasts in bag; turn to coat with marinade. Seal bag and refrigerate chicken for 2 hours, turning several times.

Preheat oven to 375°F. Remove chicken from marinade and place on a baking pan; cook approximately 20-30 minutes or until a meat thermometer registers an internal temperature of 165°F (juices will run clear when cut with the tip of a knife).

## Maple and Oatmeal Pancakes

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ⅔ cup flour                  | ¾ cup buttermilk             |
| ½ cup oatmeal                | ¼ cup maple syrup            |
| ½ teaspoon baking powder     | 1 large egg                  |
| Pinch of sea salt            | 2 tablespoons butter, melted |
| Pinch of nutmeg and cinnamon |                              |

In large bowl, combine flour, oatmeal, baking powder, salt and spices. In another bowl, mix the buttermilk, maple syrup, egg and butter. Add the flour mixture and stir until you get a thick batter. Heat up large pan. Add a dab of butter and pour some of the mixture to desired size. Cook them a few minutes on each side. Repeat with the remaining batter. Serve hot with the brandied peaches, the brandy syrup, and some lightly whipped cream.

## Honey Glazed Grilled Vegetables

Compliments of the National Honey Board

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 12 small red potatoes, halved          | 2 zucchini, halved lengthwise and halved again  |
| ¼ cup honey                            | 1 medium eggplant, cut into ½-inch thick slices |
| 3 tablespoons dry white wine           | 1 green bell pepper, cut in eighths             |
| 1 clove garlic, minced                 | 1 red bell pepper, cut in eighths               |
| 1 teaspoon dried thyme leaves, crushed | 1 large onion, cut in ½-inch thick slices       |
| ½ teaspoon salt                        |   |
| ½ teaspoon pepper                      |   |

Cover potatoes with water in large saucepan. Bring to a boil and simmer 5 minutes; drain. Combine honey, wine, garlic, thyme, salt and pepper in small bowl; mix well. Place potatoes and remaining vegetables on oiled barbecue grill over hot coals. Grill 20-25 minutes, turning and brushing with honey mixture every 7-8 minutes. **Conventional Oven Directions:** Toss vegetables with honey mixture. Bake, uncovered, at 400°F 25 minutes or until tender, stirring every 8-10 minutes to prevent burning.

## Brandied Peaches

- 3 cups frozen peaches, thawed and drained
- ½ cup brandy (brandy flavoring may be substituted)
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- ¼ cup water

In medium saucepan, bring brandy, sugar, maple syrup and water to a simmer until sugar is dissolved.

Put peaches in a bowl; pour brandy syrup over them. Let steep for at least 30 minutes.

Leave them overnight for even better results. You can also double or triple the recipe and jar them for later use.

## Maple Syrup Fun Facts

- Trees can be tapped as early as the end of January.
- Warm sunny days and frosty nights are the best temperatures for sap to flow.
- On average, it takes 45 gallons of evaporated sap to produce one gallon of syrup.

## What's Cookin', cont. on page 6

- In April, when the buds on the maple tree begin to grow, the sap tapping is discontinued because the sap becomes unsavory.
- Maple syrup comes in different grades: "fancy" grade is the lightest colored "commercial" grade is the best syrup to use in cooking because it is rich in flavor.

## Scrapie tag ordering process changing for state producers

In November 2013, the USDA Veterinary Services (VS) reorganized to optimize and streamline their services. Due to this change, state producers can no longer call the Pickerington, Ohio, VS office to order their scrapie tags. Instead, WV sheep and goat producers must call the toll free line, 1-866-USDA-Tag (1-866-873-2824).

All West Virginia tag orders will now be fulfilled directly through the tag company and may take 4-6 weeks for orders to arrive. There will no longer be a supply of tags available to ship directly from the field office.

Scrapie is a fatal, degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of sheep and goats. The scrapie infectious agent is spread from the ewe or doe to her offspring and other lambs or kids through contact with the placenta and placental fluids. Symptoms and evidence of scrapie are not usually seen until several years later.

Trace back to the premise where the sheep or goat was born is essential and is the purpose for the official scrapie tags.

This is also why WV recommends that all sheep and goats be tagged with official scrapie identification tags before leaving the farm. The USDA provides white tags free of charge, or once set up in the database, producers can order farm specific tags of other colors.

With the Spring lambing/kidding season approaching, producers should inventory their tag supply and place orders now, to ensure an adequate supply of tags in time for fair season.

*What's Cookin', cont. from page 5*

## Honey Cherry Granola Bars

*Compliments of the National Honey Board*

- 1/3 cup pure honey
- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 3 egg whites
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon almond flavoring
- 3 cups low-fat granola
- 1/2 cup almonds, coarsely chopped
- 3/4 cup dried cherries

Preheat oven to 350°F. Whisk together honey, butter, egg whites, cinnamon and almond flavoring. Stir in granola, almonds and cherries. Spoon granola mixture into 9", nonstick (or well greased) square pan. Using piece of wax paper, firmly press granola mixture in pan. Bake 20-25 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove pan from oven and place on a cooling rack. Cool completely; cut into bars.

## USDA program targets 29 rural W.Va. counties for aid

reprinted from *The Charleston Gazette*

Twenty-nine West Virginia counties have been added to a U.S. Department of Agriculture initiative targeting persistent poverty in rural America.

Of the 703 U.S. counties with poverty rates above 20 percent, 537 are found in rural areas, according to a survey by the USDA's Economic Research Service.

"There's a significant rural component to poverty in America," U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack said in a teleconference call with regional reporters. "The average wage-earner in a rural county makes \$6,500 a year less than an urban worker" in the same region, Vilsack said.

As a result, "people in many rural areas feel disconnected from the rest of America and left out. We decided it was time to address this feeling," Vilsack said.

The USDA antipoverty program, called StrikeForce, matches federal funds with local projects and their sponsoring organizations. Last year, the program financed, among other things, more than \$9 million in micro-loans to beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers, and \$68 million for community buildings in StrikeForce areas.

Since 2010, the StrikeForce program has partnered with more than 400 community organizations, businesses, foundations and universities to provide funds and technical expertise for more than 80,000 projects, channeling \$9.7 billion in investments into rural America.

Projects StrkeForce has been involved with range from financing summer feeding programs for rural schools and building tribal administration offices for American Indians

to providing farmers with funds for seasonal greenhouses and providing loans for rural housing.

StrikeForce began operating in 2010, starting in three southern states. Since then, rural poverty areas in 16 additional states were added. Vilsack's announcement earlier this week that 29 West Virginia counties would be included in the program, along with impoverished counties in Kentucky, Tennessee and Louisiana, brings the number of states served by the program to 20.

By working on problems identified by local community groups, universities and businesses, the USDA avoids the off-putting "I'm from the federal government and I'm here to help" approach used by some agencies, Vilsack said.

"The StrikeForce strategy of partnering public resources with local expertise is helping to grow rural economies and create jobs" in rural areas with persistent poverty, Vilsack said.

In coming months, a StrikeForce team will travel to West Virginia to begin identifying projects that could benefit from the program, according to the Agriculture secretary.

The West Virginia counties in which the program will operate are Barbour, Boone, Braxton, Cabell, Calhoun, Clay, Doddridge, Fayette, Gilmer, Hampshire, Lewis, Lincoln, Logan, McDowell, Mason, Mercer, Mingo, Nicholas, Pleasants, Randolph, Ritchie, Roane, Summers, Tyler, Upshur, Wayne, Webster, Wirt and Wyoming.

For more information on the USDA initiative, visit [www.usda.gov/strikeforce](http://www.usda.gov/strikeforce).

## WVU Extension GARDEN CALENDAR February 2014

February 1 .....Apply lime and fertilizer. Order fruit trees.

February 3 .....Grow herbs on the windowsill.

February 4 .....Order a high tunnel.

February 5 .....Seed head lettuce (indoors).

February 6 .....Build a low tunnel or cold frame.

February 7 .....Seed cauliflower (indoors).

February 8 .....Clean dust from houseplants with damp cloth.

February 10 .....Seed celery (indoors).

February 11 .....Seed leafy salad greens in high tunnel.

February 13 .....Seed broccoli (indoors)

February 15 .....Seed peas (outdoors) south of U.S. Route 60.

February 18 .....Seed cabbage (indoors).

February 19 .....Plant Irish potatoes in high tunnel.

February 21 .....Seed onions and greens in cold frame or low tunnel.

February 22 .....Apply lime sulfur to blueberries. Prune Blueberries.

February 24 .....Apply dormant oil spray to fruit trees.

February 25 .....Prune deciduous trees and shrubs.

February 26 .....Mow asparagus ferns.

February 27 .....Pre sprout seed potatoes.

# 2014 Cast Iron event tempts taste buds, tests chefs

The award skillets have all been handed out and another West Virginia Cast Iron Cookoff is in the books. The 2014 event once again provided participants with example after example of the truly great food that can be made with West Virginia produce and protein.



Diners dig into the "Taste of the Mountains" buffet following the awards ceremony of the 2014 Cast Iron Cook-Off at the Greenbrier Resort. WVDA sponsored all the proteins for the dinner, including chicken, trout, lamb and pork barbecue.

## Our Agrarian Roots

*History of the  
Preston County Buckwheat Festival*

Late in the Great Depression, rural West Virginia and Preston County found economic recovery slow and tedious. Local farmers grew buckwheat, although mainly for animal feed, as an "insurance crop" because of its short growing season and good quality; it was thought that perhaps this grain might spur agricultural economic growth.

For this reason and for its uniqueness, buckwheat was chosen as the focus for an end-of-harvest homecoming when farmers could relax, have fun, and compete - thus blossomed the Preston County Buckwheat Festival.

Source: Golden Harvest, 50 Years At The Buckwheat Festival;  
KVFD Festival Genesis: Farmers, Buckwheat and a Dream by Tom McConnell



**Chef Noah Miller's team was chosen as "Overall Grand Champion" at the 2014 Cast Iron Cook-Off. A Charleston native, Miller began his cooking career at 13, working for Otis Laury in the West Virginia Governor's Mansion. He has also worked at a variety of restaurants throughout West Virginia. He opened Noah's Eclectic Bistro on McFarland Street in Charleston in March 2012.**

The cooking contest went on through the morning into early afternoon. The evening events began with the awards ceremony, a reception hosted by Steelite International USA, and a Taste from the Mountains buffet, featuring a wide variety local cuisine. WVDA sponsored the protein for the buffet, including chicken, lamb, trout and pork barbecue.

Celebrating its tenth year in 2015, the Cast Iron Cook-Off® was founded on the belief that food is the centerpiece of every human celebration and that traditions enhance the festivities; a rural community's economic growth and development can evolve out of its cultural heritage; everything tastes better and is more nutritious when it is has been recently harvested and eating well and healthily is important and deserves our full attention.

Despite the name, buckwheat is not related to wheat, as it is not a grass. Instead, buckwheat is related to sorrel, knotweed and rhubarb.

The first Buckwheat Festival was held October 13, 14, 15, 1938 and included an all-day horse trading and a farmer's auction. Early festival activities were located on the east lawn of the courthouse, and attendees enjoyed sack races, hog calling for women, husband calling, nail driving for women, eating contests, tugs of war, and rolling pin throwing. As continues today, buckwheat and other agricultural crops were exhibited, a king and queen were selected, and a banquet of buckwheat cakes and sausage were served.

Buckwheat Flour is often substituted for wheat flour because of many people's allergic reaction.

It is often also used as a feed for poultry and other livestock. It is high in

The 2015 Cook-Off will be held at the Marriott Hotel in Charleston.

*The evening's Grand Award winners were:*

- Overall Grand Champion – Noah's Eclectic Bistro
- Best Single Course – Raleigh General Hospital, smoked trout mousse
- Best Menu for 21st century interpretation of traditional Appalachian cuisine – Paterno's at the Park
- Pioneer Award – West Virginia author Jeanne Mozier
- Other award winners were:
- Best Use of Cast Iron – Bridgeport Conference Center
- Best Teamwork and Team Leadership – Raleigh General Hospital
- Whistle While You Work Award – Paterno's at the Park
- Best Table Presentation – WVU Erickson Alumni Center
- Best Use of Appalachian Regional Product – Noah's Eclectic Bistro
- Best Use of Appalachian Regional Protein – Smokey's on the Gorge
- Best use of Appalachian Regional Value Added Product – The Bank Food and Drink
- People's Choice Award – The Bank Food and Drink
- Best Teamwork Honorable Mention – Greenbrier/Steelite
- Honorable Mention Whistle While You Work – Greenbrier/Steelite

Emcee for the evening was Beth Newcome, assisted by John Brown and Joy Marr. Dale Hawkins and Alissa Wyatt served as floor commentators during the cooking competition.

carbohydrates and is about 11% protein and 2% fat. The hulled kernels, or groats, can be cooked and served much like rice.

The buckwheat that goes into the thousands of cakes that are served at the festival is ground at the Hazelton mill in Preston County. The current mill is the third at this site. The mill was originally waterwheel driven but was switched over to large diesel engines in the 1950s.

The mill is open after each Labor Day until winter months. Located off I-68, Exit 29, it is the only mill in the area that still grinds with a stone. Visitors can order Buckwheat Flour by calling 304-379-7755 or by e-mailing [bwflour@frontier.com](mailto:bwflour@frontier.com).

### ATTENTION PRODUCERS!

Producers with premise ID numbers need to update their change of address, especially the new 911 addresses by contacting Shelly Lantz at the WVDA Animal Health Division at 304-558-2214.