

USDA investing to strengthen food system

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press



Tom Vilsack

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Building on efforts to expand meat and poultry processing capacity, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on June 1 announced nearly \$3 billion to help transform the U.S. food system and make it more resilient.

“We live in a great time of disruption caused by a changing climate, a global pandemic and an unprovoked brutal war,” Vilsack said. “All of which manifests itself in supply-chain disruptions, inflation, unprecedented natural disasters, growing global food insecurity and continued pandemic-related hospitalizations and deaths.”

“A transformed food sys-

tem is part of how we as a country become more resilient and competitive in the face of these big and future challenges and threats,” he said.

A transformed food system will make it easier to adapt to and mitigate climate change while not sacrificing agricultural production by reducing the carbon footprint of food production, he said.

It will deliver a better deal for farmers, ranchers and consumers through more, new and better markets, also stimulating the rural economy. It will lead to better health outcomes by increas-

ing access to healthy, locally grown food, he said.

It will also sustainably produce more food, allowing the U.S. to meet its global responsibility to ensure global food security, he said.

“The transformation that needs to take place has to be comprehensive. It has to touch on all elements of our food system,” he said.

There are four basic elements of the food system — production, processing, distribution and aggregation and market development — and the transformation has to wind through all of them, he said.

The system needs to sustainably grow and raise crops and livestock with net zero emissions, increase farm and

rural income, build greater resilience across the entire food chain, provide access to nutritious food for all and guarantee equity of opportunity for all, he said.

“Building the system back better, stronger and more resilient requires an unprecedented approach, and that is what we are investing in at significant levels today,” he said.

In addition to USDA’s investments earlier this year of \$1 billion for climate-smart agriculture and \$1 billion to expand meat and poultry processing capacity, Vilsack announced several new investments to strengthen the food system.

Those investments include:

- \$100 million to expand

warehousing and refrigeration capacity at foodbanks and pantries.

- \$150 million to expand technical assistance to make sure producers have access to USDA’s loan and conservation programs.

- \$600 million to link local and regional producers to USDA commodity purchases for school feeding programs.

- \$300 million for organic transition.

- \$600 million for non-meat and poultry processing.

- \$40 million for workforce training.

- \$155 million to eliminate food deserts.

- \$75 million for urban agriculture.

- \$60 million for the Farm to School Program.

- \$50 million for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

- \$40 million for the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program.

- \$100 million for the new Healthy Food Incentive Program with a focus on schools.

- \$400 million to establish a network of food business centers to share knowledge about USDA programs to support local and regional food systems.

- \$200 million for specialty crop food safety certification.

- \$90 million to prevent food loss and waste.

- \$25 million to support technology for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

New leader joins Washington Cattlemen’s Association ‘for the long haul’

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press



Chelsea Hajny

Chelsea Hajny takes over as executive vice president of the Washington Cattlemen’s Association on July 1.

She replaces Ashley House, who left to take a job with the Colorado Farm Bureau. House joined the association in August 2020.

“I have been an ag kid my entire life, growing up on the back of a horse and with cattle,” Hajny told the Capital Press. “I truly believe there are no better people than ag people.”

Hajny grew up on a cattle ranch in North Idaho and currently raises Black Angus.

She is chief financial officer at Hajny Trading, an export and domestic hay operation she co-founded in the Kititas Valley. She is also CEO of Hajny Strategies, which specializes in sponsorship acquisition for property and events.

She has also worked as development and revenue strategist for the Central Washington State Fair.

The executive vice

Ag people are the salt of the earth, the kind of people you want to know, that you’re lucky enough to know, that make this world a great place to live in.”

“Meeting Chelsea for the first time is like shaking hands with a ray of sunshine,” said Mark Streuli, lobbyist for the association. “Her positive energy, self-confidence and a love for the cattle business really showed when she interviewed with the board. When you add that to her accomplished professional, executive work experience, it was very clear. She will be phenomenal in standing up for Washington’s cattle ranchers.”

Hajny pointed to existing expertise within the cattlemen’s association community, from board members to volunteers.

“I am in this for the long haul,” she said. “I am really excited to impact change and hit the ground running July 1 and do some really great things for some really great people.”

The association represents more than 1,200 ranch families.

president position is full-time.

Hajny said her first move will be to meet with ranchers to learn their needs.

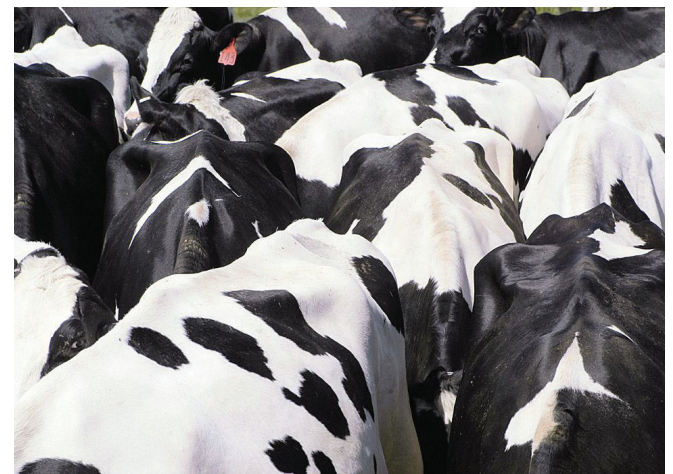
“The priorities of the membership are going to quickly become my priorities,” she said. “I’m just really excited, with the knowledge and background that I have, of what I can bring to the table for them.”

The fact that Hajny also has her own consulting company and hay operation offers “great synergy,” she said.

“Ag-based clients are my favorite,” she said. “They speak to my heart.

Dairy group seeks clarification on milk pricing changes

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press



Capital Press File photo

A coalition of dairy farmers wants specifics from USDA on what is needed to hold a national hearing on changing the milk pricing formula in federal milk marketing orders.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in December said the dairy industry must reach a consensus on milk pricing changes before USDA will consider conducting a national hearing on the issue.

In a letter to Vilsack, the American Dairy Coalition asked whether he is requiring consensus on the need for a meeting or on a specific proposal.

“Currently, there is an industry-wide consensus that the Class I pricing change made in the 2018 Farm Bill needs amending. Some differences lie in how this should be accomplished,” the coalition said. “However, since the change was made legislatively without a vetted hearing process, dairy farmers share a strong consensus that ‘righting this wrong’ is a great place to start in opening an FMMO hearing.”

The coalition is based in Wisconsin.

The issue involves the Class I mover, which sets the base price for Class I milk — sold as beverage — to which a location differential is added. It was changed in 2019 from the “higher of” Class III or IV advance prices to the “average of” those two prices plus 74 cents per hundredweight.

The change was intended to provide better risk management for fluid milk processors. But it caused unintended consequences when Class III

prices skyrocketed due to government purchases of cheese for pandemic-related food boxes for the needy.

That left a significant gap between Class III and IV prices, pulling the “average of” lower than what the previous “higher of” would have been.

In addition, processors pulled milk out of federal order pools to avoid paying the high Class III prices. The value in those pools declined, leading to negative producer price differentials, or PPDs. The PPD is the difference between Class III milk prices and the prices of the other three milk classes.

“The change from the ‘higher of’ to an ‘average-plus’ formula for Class I milk resulted in the inequitable loss of (\$3 billion) to dairy farmers. This estimate includes the \$750 million cumulative devaluation of the Class I milk price (compared with the previous Class I mover) since the new formula was implemented in May 2019,” the coalition said.

“This created an environment for massive de-pooling and negative PPDs further affecting farmers whose milk

is used in all classes, and in turn, farmers saw additional losses of premiums they paid for purchased risk management tools that failed to protect them from the dysfunction that ensued within and outside of the FMMOs,” the coalition said.

The coalition pointed out the legislation creating the change states it can be amended via a USDA hearing process after two years of implementation.

“Our voice was pre-empted in the last farm bill when it came to making federal milk pricing changes, and our dairy farmer members paid the price for that. We do not want to see this happen again,” the coalition said.

Therefore, it is necessary to return to the previous Class I mover formula now, while the industry continues building consensus about what milk pricing might look like in the future, the group said.

The group also commented on “make allowances” for processors, transparent milk pricing for farmers and forming a USDA working group with farmer representation to review new pricing solutions.

EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNTS

Coverage can begin on the first of any month.

ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS

- in -

OREGON & SW WASHINGTON

SPECIAL RATES FOR MEMBERS

- Farmers
- Nurseries
- Ranchers
- Landscapers
- Food Producers
- Beverage Companies

25+ Medical & Dental Plans

TO LEARN MORE & GET A FREE QUOTE:

503-922-4868 | kristic@lacoinsurance.com

Available through Leonard Adams Insurance, a fourth generation family-owned company, meeting insurance needs since 1933.

WESTERN PACKAGING

Your Future is Our Future...

WE SPECIALIZE IN BULK BAGS!

BAGS:

- Seed Bags
- Fertilizer Bags
- Feed Bags
- Potato Bags
- Printed Bags
- Plain Bags
- Bulk Bags
- Totes
- Woven Polypropylene
- Bopp
- Polyethylene
- Pocket Bags
- Roll Stock & More!

HAY PRESS SUPPORT:

- Hay Sleeves
- Strap
- Totes
- Printed or Plain
- Stretch Film (ALL GAUGES)

WAREHOUSE PACKAGING:

- Stretch Film
- Pallet Sheets
- Pallet Covers

LOCATIONS:

Albany, Oregon (MAIN OFFICE)
Ellensburg, Washington

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Phone: 855-928-3856
Fax: 541-497-6262
info@westernpackaging.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE IS OUR TOP PRIORITY!

www.westernpackaging.com