



ASAAP Update



Dear ASA Action Partnership Members:

Our efforts are yielding significant results. Since we were together in March in Washington DC, spring planting has been the primary focus of our farmer leaders and Board, but still much activity in many important areas happened as a result of the funding support and good input that you and your organizations provide to ASA. The challenges and opportunities for our industry never let up. Here are a few of the many projects, programs and issues we've been working on:

BIODIESEL

ASA Supports Responsible Growth in Biodiesel RFS Levels - ASA issued a statement this May lauding Sens. Heitkamp, Durbin, Klobuchar, Franken, Cantwell and Donnelly, for speaking up in support for biodiesel. In a press conference, the senators highlighted the need for reinstatement of the biodiesel tax credit and for EPA to increase the proposed 2014 Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) volumes for biodiesel. The senators, others representing biodiesel and feedstock producers, outlined the negative impact that the lapse of the credit has had on the burgeoning industry and the additional uncertainty resulting from the EPA's 2014 RFS proposal.

In addition, ASA recently sent a letter to The White House and our administration to make the case for increasing the proposed 2014 RFS. That letter can be viewed [here](#).

ASA Lobbies for Biodiesel Tax Credit Extension - ASA has been pushing and has put its support behind the Chairman's Mark of tax extenders legislation from the Senate Finance Committee, which contains a two year extension of the dollar-per-gallon Biodiesel Tax Credit. The draft legislation contains language from a standalone bill offered by Sens. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) and Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) to extend the credit.

BIOTECHNOLOGY and REGULATORY

ASA: Coexistence Efforts are Working, Enhancements Unnecessary - In [comments](#) submitted to USDA, ASA President Ray Gaesser urged the Department to take both a practical and a scientific approach to enhancing agricultural coexistence. He also urged USDA to consider the already extensive work on coexistence underway in the industry. In Gaesser's comments, ASA, which provided separate recommendations to USDA both as part of the AC21 Committee and as a member of the AgBiotech Alliance, reinforced its position that "there is no real evidence that current efforts to achieve coexistence between neighboring producers are not working."

McCarthy Details Regulatory Approvals Coordination in Hearing - EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy detailed the ways EPA and USDA are working together to streamline the review and approval process of new weed-resistant and herbicide-tolerant crops during a hearing of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies. Administrator McCarthy said that decisions on some products are coming soon. The Administrator's testimony came following a [letter](#) from ASA and fellow farm groups earlier in March calling for swifter approvals for new traits.

ASA/ISGA Discusses Biotech Approvals on Mission to China – The International Soy Grower Alliance (ISGA) held its first mission to China in March, focusing discussion on the importance of timely biotech approvals in order to meet food demands in China and across the globe. It is estimated that China will require approximately five million more incremental metric tons per year of soybeans over the next decade to meet its food security needs. ISGA continued to stress, the only way they will be able to meet China's and the rest of the world's food needs is through the adoption of new technologies, including biotechnology. Representatives of ASA, the United Soybean Board and the U.S. Soybean Export Council joined counterpart organizations from other soy-growing nations on the trip.

Biotech Labeling – This pending legislation was previewed at our March ASAAP meeting. In April, as member of the steering committee of the broad-based Safe, Affordable Food, ASA welcomed the introduction of new legislation from Rep. Mike Pompeo (KS) to establish a federal voluntary labeling standard for foods made with genetically modified organisms or GMOs.

DATA AND TECHNOLOGY

ASA Forms Working Group to Focus on Ag Data - Shortly after the March ASAAP meeting, ASA formed an Ag Data Working Group which includes several ASA farmer-leaders and a few representatives from the United Soybean Board and State Soybean Associations. One of the primary activities of this group recently has been to develop answers to a list of questions around the topic of data ownership and security that resulted from a meeting organized by AFBF in April. The participants in this work group have been highly engaged and provided valuable feedback that Bev Paul in ASA's Washington office has been compiling in order to share back to the Farm Bureau and other farmer driven agricultural organizations. ASA expects this topic to continue to evolve over time and will continue to monitor and stay active on this issue.

SOYFOODS AND PHOs

In comments submitted to FDA this spring and in a recent meeting with White House and FDA staff, ASA warned against the agency's attempt to remove trans fats from the marketplace by banning partially hydrogenated oils, or PHOs. ASA cautioned that because FDA had taken the unprecedented step of banning a process, rather than a material, the rule could have the unintended consequence of stifling future innovations. Additionally in ASA's comments, the association urged FDA to take into account the time that the soy industry would need to ramp up production of high oleic soybean oil, which can replace partially hydrogenated vegetable oil in many baking applications without the addition of trans fats. Finally, ASA cautioned policy makers that if FDA finalized its proposed rule to removing GRAS status for PHOs, the result would be the replacement of domestic soybean oil with palm oil in many food ingredients -- a lose/lose situation for both U.S. agriculture and consumers.

TRADE AND NEW MARKET ACCESS FOR SOY AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS

ASA Encourages Full Market Access for Agriculture Products in TPP – ASA in April joined several agriculture groups in signing on a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman and U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack praising previous efforts to expand market access with Japan, but seeking assurances that the U.S. will not close Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations with Japan’s participation, unless the country agrees to eliminate tariff and non-tariff trade barriers to agriculture. TPP negotiations set an important standard for future trade agreements, and a positive outcome could mean billions in future exports and thousands of American jobs, but only if all 12 participating countries agree to address trade barriers comprehensively.

IMPROVEMENTS IN TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Recognizing the importance of waterways transportation to the soybean supply chain, ASA continues to urge conferees from the House and the Senate to finalize their conference report on the nation's waterways legislation as quickly as possible. The WRDA establishes policies and funding mechanisms for waterways infrastructure, including locks and dams, dredging, and port maintenance activities. ASA also welcomed significant steps for waterways infrastructure in the congressional appropriations process early in the year, including \$1.6 billion for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Construction General Account, and much-needed revisions to the FY14 cost-sharing formula for the Olmsted Lock & Dam project, which will free up \$81.5 million for other projects that have been delayed because of Olmsted’s cost overruns. More recently, ASA testified before the Surface Transportation Board about rail bottlenecks affecting farmers and shippers in the Upper Midwest. ASA will also be advocating for improvement in trucking capacity and efficiency through an increase in federal truck weight limits and continuation of the hours of service exemption for agricultural truck drivers in the surface transportation reauthorization bill.

WATER AND REGULATORY

EPA Releases Proposed Rule on Waters of the U.S. – In April, the Environmental Protection Agency released its proposed rule clarifying the agency’s jurisdiction over waters of the United States under the Clean Water Act. ASA continues to review the language in the proposed rule, and EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy has given her assurances to ASA and to other farm groups on multiple occasions that the majority of farm operations will fall under current agricultural exemptions in the Clean Water Act. ASA will review the proposed rule in its entirety to discern any additional impacts it may have on soybean farmers.

ASA Submits Comments to EPA Regarding Spray Drift in Pesticide Risk Assessment – ASA joined several agriculture groups in April to submit comments to EPA regarding spray drift in pesticide risk assessment. The groups urged EPA to embrace the use of Drift Reduction Technologies (DRTs) and standard operating procedures already in use, and quickly implement its long- awaited program for verification and use of drift reduction technologies, among other suggestions.

ASTA, ASA Meet with EPA on Seed Treatment Stewardship – ASA joined leaders from the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) in a meeting with EPA staff to update them on ASTA’s education campaign about seed treatment stewardship. ASA has joined ASTA in promoting the campaign, which aims to raise awareness with farmers about the importance of stewardship of treated seed. The campaign includes video and print material for applicators, farmers and pesticide safety educators.

CONSERVATION

ASA President Ray Gaesser Joins National Working Group on Cover Crops and Soil Health –In March, ASA President Ray Gaesser was a speaker at the opening session of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program’s National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health. After this event, a working group was established to provide follow-up review and action on ideas and recommendations provided during the conference. On July 10-11, Ray and others in the working group will be meeting with leaders at USDA’s offices in Washington to discuss progress and opportunities with cover crops and soil health. Secretary Vilsack has identified cover crops and soil health as key components of the USDA initiative on multi-cropping.

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

Through generous support from ASAAP members, AGCO, DuPont Pioneer and FMC, ASA membership development and engagement efforts are in full swing. With support from these companies, we are able to award ASA’s top recruiters and provide incentives for recruitment. The top recruiters are honored annually at a special event held during Commodity Classic. Support for membership development efforts have also allowed us to distribute grants to several state associations to help with their membership engagement meetings this summer in their states. Planning is currently underway for these events. Most of these meetings will be held in August and early September.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

New this summer, ASA is partnering with [eLegacy Connect](#) to host a series of Succession Planning workshops for farmers. The workshops are open to ASA members and non-members and provide farmers with the valuable information and advice on how to protect their legacy and successfully transition their farm to the next generation. This new program is primarily sponsored by AGCO and Farm Credit, with additional support from several state soybean associations including Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and South Dakota.