



HSUS, UEP Reach Agreement to Petition Congress to Set National Hen Housing Standard

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and the United Egg Producers (UEP) recently agreed to jointly petition Congress to set one national hen housing and space standard through federal legislation. Currently, states are free to set their own standards. The legislation would transition the commercial egg industry from one that primarily uses conventional cage housing to one that uses colony cages. The goal is to have the law in place by June 30, 2012 and to fully implement the transition to colony cages by Dec. 31, 2029.

The law would supersede laws in states such as Arizona, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington. It would also address the vague language of California's proposition adopted in 2008 that would become effective in 2015. UEP says the law will help producers that have customers in several states so they do not have to worry about meeting conflicting state standards.

In the states that currently have laws to regulate hen housing, HSUS successfully sued UEP to impose those standards. UEP met with HSUS leadership to reach this agreement. As part of the accord, HSUS agreed that it would no longer sue UEP to set requirements for hen housing.

If such a law were to pass, it could open the door to further regulations of other livestock. Many livestock groups are concerned with the agreement, arguing that if such a law were passed, it would give HSUS a foothold in on-farm regulations which could affect all types of livestock and animal agriculture.

From the President ...

Where does time go? I started this summer with great hopes and so after purchasing over \$500 worth of seeds off to planting we go. I have been working farmers markets for quite a few years, and so the more the merrier. Local produce sells and I am learning that local meats do as well. A good product, a good presentation, and the right price make for sales and relationships.

I have always felt the same way about the Alaska Farmers Union. We represent farmers, consumers and the public in general. We support programs that are buy local, buy American, and ideas like sustainability and conservation. We network and we work together. It is about Alaska with a national twist. I noticed somewhere in my materials from the national office the following statements or goals:

- be transparent;
- be shaped by national security demands;
- be framed in a context of economic opportunity across the board;
- increase renewable energy production;
- provide economic opportunities for livestock and commodity producers;
- ensure that one sector does not benefit at the expense of another;
- be economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially acceptable;
- provide open and fair access to markets;
- help producers manage risk;
- reward solutions that improve human health;
- minimize/reduce price volatility in the long run;
- help manage volatility in the short run.

Sounds familiar. Go National Farmers Union! On that same note, we all have opportunities in the Farmers Union. New members or members that have not already gone on a legislative fly-in (up to two) can have a chance to go to Washington D.C., for the fall fly-in and will be reimbursed up to \$1000 for their expenses. The dates of the fly-in are September 11-14. If there are more than two eligible members the local board will have to draw to see who can go...but we need to know. So if you haven't renewed your membership please do so soon and let us know. The fly-in is your chance to speak directly to your legislators at their offices. I will be going since there will also be a national board meeting at the same time. We are looking forward to some new faces in Washington. This is your chance to support the ideals and beliefs of our membership. No other farm organization can say they are as "grassroots" as NFU/AFU. --Bob

*Announcement from
Executive Director of the
Alaska Farm Service
Agency Danny
Consenstein*

Payments will be going out to Alaska growers to help compensate for our high costs of transporting materials needed for growing crops and raising livestock in Alaska.

This is a new USDA program that only applies to Alaska, Hawaii and other outlying areas not in the lower 48.

Like a Cost of Living Allowance (COLA), it pays a small percentage of the additional, transportation-related costs of doing business as a farmer, rancher or grower in Alaska.

Hopefully, this will help Alaska businesses compete with imported food from the lower 48 and around the world. A stronger agricultural sector will help keep more of our "food dollars" in our communities, create jobs, improve our health, and increase our food security.

If you have questions about this program, feel free to give me a call.

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*Proposed National Leafy Green Marketing Agreement is
the Wrong Direction for Food Safety*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) recently issued its proposed rule to establish a proposed national marketing agreement regulating leafy green vegetables. This rulemaking was the result of a request by the largest players in the leafy greens industry, who petitioned USDA to write regulations based on the statewide leafy green marketing agreements established by the industry in California and Arizona in the wake of the 2006 E. coli outbreak in California spinach.

However, if this agreement is allowed to move forward, it will, in effect, be affording the largest produce handlers (meaning processors, shippers and packers of leafy green vegetables) the power to establish on-farm practices for all growers of leafy greens, regardless of size.

The phrase "largest produce handlers" is not hyperbole. In fact, the 150 signatories on the California and Arizona leafy green marketing agreements comprise nearly 90 percent of U.S. leafy green production.

The agreement would establish regulations that conflict with the realities of small and medium-sized diverse farms, certain conservation measures and organic production methods and that are enforced through burdensome record-keeping requirements and commodity-specific metrics.

Proponents of the agreement argue that it is voluntary and therefore shouldn't ad-

versely affect farmers because they can always choose to sell to handlers who are not part of the agreement. However, if no handlers will accept produce outside of the agreement, it certainly is no longer voluntary.

Despite all of the problems the proposed agreement poses, the core of the issue is the effect it would have on American consumers' confidence in the safety of our food supply. All Americans have the right to safe food, and claiming that certain foods sold in the U.S. are "safer" than others only for the purpose of gaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace is disingenuous and unethical.

We cannot let marketing agreements be the "cops on the beat" when it comes to food safety. Last year Congress passed the first update to food safety laws in more than 70 years, but if the House gets their way, the administration won't have the money necessary to implement the law. On June 16, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 217-203 to strip \$87 million from already-strapped Food and Drug Administration (FDA) food safety programs. The FDA is responsible for the safety of leafy greens, both domestic and imported.

The proposed National Leafy Green Marketing Agreement will not make our food safer, but will only serve to put additional power in the hands of an already-concentrated industry and place another burden on small family farmers while ignoring the threat of foodborne illnesses from processing and imported vegetables. It's time to get serious about food safety in this country, but it's clear a marketing agreement isn't the answer.

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