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In mid-November I made the trip from North Bennington, Vermont to Manhattan, a mere four hours away. In the course of a brief train ride, I was swept from a village of 1,600 people, all speaking some version of English, to a borough of 1.6 million, speaking over 800 languages. I was struck by many contrasts, but one stood out as I reflected on my trip: the impact of geography on so many factors in our lives. Just ask a farmer on the inside edge of the drought zone in 2012.



Over the past year as an industry, we experienced the roller coaster of springtime forecasts for bin busting grain production followed by crop crushing drought and spiraling crop price increases. The effect of geography on farm profitability in 2012 varied widely. Some grain farmers who harvested average or higher crop yields will enjoy strong incomes as will grain producing livestock and dairy producers on the margin of the drought stricken area. For others, the year will cause reflection on the ability of their business to carry on.

Another reminder from my trip to the Big Apple was the demand of 98% of the population for access to fresh, wholesome food at affordable prices. There is nothing like jostling along 6th Avenue to jog one's memory that all these people need to eat, *everyday*, and we are the ones who make that happen.

The voice of Alliance members makes a difference in assuring we operate under a fair and rational regulatory structure that provides safe and reasonably priced food. As you will see in this month's newsletter story about the FDA response to concerns of feed ingredient standards, the Alliance makes a difference in Washington, and state capitals throughout the northeast.

As I reflect on the work of the Alliance during 2012 I am thankful to the support of our entire membership as we continue to advocate, educate and collaborate for agricultural producers and businesses. While we can't change the weather, we can impact issues to benefit our members, farmers and consumers.

As 2012 winds to a close, I hope everyone enjoys a restful and fulfilling holiday season and all the best for 2013.

Sincerely,

Art Whitman



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[Alliance Successful on Thruway Toll Fight](#)

In response to strong opposition from the business community, including the Northeast Ag and Feed Alliance, Governor Cuomo and Thruway Authority Executive Director Thomas Madison announced that there will be **no** toll increase for commercial vehicles using the NYS

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Thruway. The Authority undertook an extensive review of their operations and created a three year fiscal plan that avoids any toll increases. Sufficient operations savings have been found including transferring the \$60 million annual State Police Thruway patrol expense to the State of New York.

Success on this issue can be attributed to an effective campaign that included Northeast Ag and Feed Alliance. Many thanks go to all who presented testimony at the hearings or sent statements into the official record.

Alliance Influences FDA Feed Regulation Process

The Ag and Feed Alliance has collaborated with Congress, FDA and industry stakeholders, under the leadership of the Animal Feed Industry Association (AFIA), to advocate on behalf



of the feed industry and counter the effects of the Food and Drug Administration Act (FDAAA) of 2007. As drafted, the FDAAA used the term "ingredient standards" and directed the FDA to develop rules for pet food ingredient standards. FDA was to extend that to all animal foods, as it regulates feed and pet food. The problem has been that "standards" were not defined in the law, and AAFCO (The American Association of Feed Control Officials) uses the term "definitions," as do state feed laws based on the AAFCO Model Feed Bill.

The Alliance coordinated with AFIA, AAFCO, 17 state feed and grain associations and the eight major animal agriculture trade associations expressing their support for fixing this issue either administratively or via a legislative fix. This attention led to FDA agreeing to extend its MOU with AAFCO until 2015. This agreement comes as FDA is committed to ensuring that the industry will have the ingredient review/approval processes it needs while the permanent fix is agreed upon and able to be enacted. More information will be coming in the next few weeks as we work out the details of the permanent fix.

Election Impacts on Northeast Agriculture

New England and New York are fortunate to have so many returning federal delegates currently serving as champions on the House and [Senate Agriculture Committees](#).

Congresswoman Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Congressman Bill Owens (D-NY), Congressman Chris Gibson (R-NY), Congressman Peter Welch (D-VT), Congressman Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Congressman Joe Courtney (D-CT) all serve on the House Agriculture Committee and all were re-elected this November. Chris Collins a newly elected New York Republican Congressman was just named to the House Agriculture Committee. Long standing Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Senator Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY) serve on the Senate Agriculture Committee. Many of the gains for the northeast in the pending farm bill can be attributed to our considerable strength on these committees.

In addition to the Agriculture Committees, the [Agricultural Appropriations Subcommittees](#) also make crucial funding decisions for programs that serve northeast agriculture. We are fortunate to have Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) who also won re-election serving as ranking member of the Subcommittee. Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) serves on the Senate Agricultural Appropriations Subcommittee.

Members of the northeast delegation may have additional opportunities to serve on these key

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committees in the upcoming 113th Congress. Five seats will be opening up on the House Agriculture Committee for Democrats as a result of one retirement and four election defeats. The Republicans will have three seats as a result of one retirement and two election defeats. The Senate Agriculture Committee will have three new seats as a result of two retiring Democrats and one defeated Republican. Because the Democrats picked up some seats in both the House and the Senate, additional Democratic seats may be offered on these committees in January.

In Maine the senate seat vacated by the retirement of Olympia Snowe, a reasoned voice on agricultural issues, has been won by former governor Angus King, an Independent who will most likely caucus with the Democrats.

The Vermont gubernatorial election was easily won by incumbent Democrat Peter Shumlin of Vermont. While Shumlin has been challenged on GMO labeling initiatives his support of the Working Lands Investment Act demonstrates a firm commitment to agriculture. In New Hampshire the win by Maggie Hassan kept the Governor's office in Democratic control.

Farm Bill Outlook For Dairy

As this issue of the Alliance newsletter goes to press it appears unlikely that Farm Bill legislation will be considered before the federal recess.

U.S. Senators Charles Schumer, D-N Y and Patrick Leahy, D-VT recently called on House Speaker John Boehner, R-OH, to allow the bipartisan farm bill the Senate passed in August to be brought to the House floor for a vote. "This would affect every New York family," Sen. Schumer told reporters in a telephone press conference. He predicted milk prices to double to \$6 a gallon and higher prices for all dairy products. On the floor of the Senate Leahy remarked "The farmers already confront enough uncertainty running their businesses. When we let farm programs expire without enacting a new farm bill, it needlessly compounds that uncertainty and it is irresponsible."

In related news, New York Senator Kristen Gillibrand joined with others including, northeast senators Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Susan Collins (R-ME) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT) in a letter to Senators Debbie Stebenow (D-MI) and Pat Roberts (R-KS) thanking them for their efforts on dairy pricing reform contained in the Senate version of the Farm Bill. Gillibrand and her peers also emphasized the need to maintain the dairy pricing reform measures in the Farm Bill that is currently stalled in the House.



Because farm legislation expired on September 30, 2012 federal dairy policy is poised to revert to the 1949 system of payments, causing many within the industry to forecast a doubling of the price of milk on store shelves. Despite the dire predictions for escalated prices many within the industry feel that the underlying 60 year old legislation could be repealed, temporarily extending the current price support program buying time for continued discussions in the House.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Alliance Sponsors 10th Annual Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge

The Alliance was a silver level sponsor of the 10th annual Northeast Regional Dairy

Challenge hosted this year by the University of Maine. The contest drew 105 students from nine northeast colleges and two Canadian universities to Waterville, Maine, on November 1-3, 2012.

The Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge is an innovative, three-day educational competition designed to prepare students for dairy careers. Working in mixed-university teams of four or five students, participants assessed all aspects of a working dairy farm, including facilities, nutrition, financials, reproduction, animal health and much more. Students collaborated on a 20-minute team presentation that detailed their observations and suggestions to a panel of judges and participating farm families. Teams were ranked as platinum, gold or silver based on how well their evaluations matched the judges' evaluations of the dairy operation.

Maine farms evaluated during the 2012 competition included Stonyvale Farm, Exeter; The Wright Place, Clinton; and Piper Hill Farm, Embden. All students also attended an industry career fair, and they participated in educational workshops at Flood Brothers dairy farm near Clinton. Team-building and fun activities were held through the weekend to encourage networking among students and agribusiness sponsors.

For the first time, a Technology Seminar for area dairy producers was held in conjunction with the Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge. Dr. Mike Van Amburgh, Associate Professor in the Department of Animal Science at Cornell University, spoke on Early Life Nutrition and Management Impacts Long-Term Productivity of Calves. Tom Kilcer, owner of Advanced Ag Systems, presented Forage Management and Alternative Forages to Enhance Quality and Reduce Purchased Feed Costs.

The 2013 Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge will be hosted by the Miner Institute in Chazy, New York. For more information about next year's contest, please contact Wanda Emerich of Miner Institute at emerich@whminer.com.



Members of the Shur-Gain Team evaluate heifer facilities at Stonyvale Farm. From the left: Sheldon Grant of McGill University, Dakota Grove of Penn State University, Mackenzie Reynolds of Cornell University and Mary Collins of SUNY Cobleskill

As the Alliance moves to increase its efforts in support of members for advocacy, education, and collaboration in agriculture, we are changing the form and frequency of our newsletter. Over the last six years, the newsletter has been published monthly and distributed almost entirely via e-mail. The January 2013 newsletter will launch a new approach to membership communications.



The ad hoc Communication Committee comprised of Jenny Mills, Elanco, chairperson; Jeff Durkin, Cornerstone Nutrition; Rene Lavoie, Cooperative Feed Dealers; Evan Wisell, Alltech; Allison Wilshere, Cargill; and Alliance staff Louise Calderwood and Rick Zimmerman reviewed our current communication strategies and developed a proposal for improved interaction with members.

An assessment of the current newsletter readership indicates we far exceed the industry norm for the

number of subscribers who open the newsletter e-mail. As we strive to be even more effective in our communication efforts over the upcoming months look for a shift away from the current monthly newsletter format to a quarterly release. We will increase the stories related to members' businesses (promotions, hires, new construction) and will invite guest articles from members as well.

As we reduce the annual editions of the full newsletter expect to see more frequent e-mails with timely and current updates of industry news. These short e-mails will be released every couple of weeks to keep Alliance members informed of timely issues important to agriculture and our organization.

In addition to a change in the format of our e-mail communication, the Alliance will be increasing our use of Facebook. A sub-group of Alliance members will take on the responsibility of posting Facebook updates of interest to membership; topics such as current events that affect members, member spotlights and promotion of upcoming Alliance events will be included. For members who currently receive their newsletter in paper format, we will continue to support that service as well.

Please contact Louise Calderwood at 802-586-2239 or rcalderwod@aol.com (that's right-only one "o") with company or industry news that you would like to have featured in the Alliance newsletter, e-mail blasts or Facebook page.

[NEAFA Annual Meeting](#)

REGISTER TODAY!
February 4-5, 2013

Northeast Ag & Feed Alliance is once again returning to the Albany Marriott on Wolf Road in Albany, NY for our 2013 Annual Meeting. You won't want to miss our top notch speakers such as Dennis Gartman, Jeff Simmons and Mary Ledman. We are also planning sessions on Commodity Markets Outlook, National Issues, Business Succession Planning and Communicating with Consumers on Food Issues.

Registration and sponsorship information was mailed to all members at the beginning of December, but you can also find this information by going to our website at:

www.northeastalliance.com



Remember, if you missed one, past issues of NEAFA News are always available on our website at:

www.northeastalliance.com/newsletter.html

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year From Your
Northeast Ag & Feed Alliance Team



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NEAFA News is a publication of the Northeast Ag & Feed Alliance.

Calendar of Events:

AFIA & USPOULTRY Poultry Protein and Fat Council's 6th Annual Pet Food Conference
January 29, 2013
Georgia World Conference Center
Room B-401/402
Atlanta, Georgia
For more information: www.petfoodconference.com

International Feed, Poultry & Meat Expo

January 29-31, 2013

Atlanta, Georgia

For more information: <http://www.ife13.org/>

NEAFA Annual Meeting

February 4-5, 2013

Marriott Hotel - Wolf Road

Albany, New York

For more information: www.northeastalliance.com

Purchasing & Ingredient Suppliers Conference

March 13-15, 2013

Omni Forth Worth

Fort Worth, Texas

For more information: www.afia.org

NEAFA/ PRO-DAIRY Herd Health and Nutrition Conferences

April 10, 2013, Syracuse, NY

April 12, 2013 West Lebanon, NH

Sponsorships available

For More information: www.ansci.cornell.edu/prodairy/HHNC/sponsors.html

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