

POLITICO

More lawmakers jump on school lunch changes — Dairy industry touts new insurance, but farmers unsure — GMA to take Vermont to court over GMO law

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With help from Jenny Hopkinson

MORE LAWMAKERS JUMP ON SCHOOL LUNCH CHANGES: Rep. Rodney Davis, an outspoken critic of many of the USDA's school lunch regulations, now has a list of 40 lawmakers, including three Democrats, who plan to sign a letter asking Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to hit the pause button before advancing more restrictions on sodium, requiring schools to jump from 50 percent to 100 percent whole grain and imposing restrictions on when certain school lunch items can be sold a la carte.

Republican Reps. Kristi Noem, Vicky Hartzler, Candice Miller, David Valadao, Louie Gohmert and Doc Hastings are among the signees, as well as Democrats Ann Kirkpatrick, Mike McIntyre and Colin Peterson, ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee. Davis' letter to Vilsack can be found here: <http://politico.pro/1nkbThF>

The Illinois lawmaker made a similar point back in December when he introduced a bill to mandate that the White House and the USDA follow the school lunch regulations. In February, he suggested that state dinners should have to follow the same guidelines and even added up all the calories on the menu for French President Francois Hollande: 2500 calories and 153 grams of fat.

And the same tactic may be coming on menu labeling: The congressman tells MA that he plans to introduce a similar bill if he thinks FDA's menu labeling regulations are too burdensome. "If it's as crazy as what some people think it's going to be, then I'm going to introduce a bill that would require the White House, the White House cafeteria, the state dinners and the USDA cafeterias to label all their menus," Davis said in an interview. He added that he finds no reason the House and Senate cafeterias should be exempt either. More on Davis' previous bill here: <http://bit.ly/18BC34c>

Happy Friday! Welcome to Morning Ag where your host is happy to announce that I'll be filling in for Jenny Hopkinson on Fridays — except for next week, when I'll be on vacation, unplugged and reading on a beach. Happy weekend, everyone! Thoughts, news, tips? Send them to jhopkinson@politico.com or @jennyhops. Follow us @[Morning_Ag](#) and @[POLITICOPro](#).

DAIRY INDUSTRY TOUTS NEW INSURANCE, BUT FARMERS UNSURE: “Industry representatives and government officials are scrambling to extol the virtues of a new dairy insurance program in the 2014 farm bill, saying it will be a huge hit with milk producers across the country, even in drought ravaged California, once it is implemented in September,” reports Pro Agriculture’s Bill Tomson.

“But some farmers aren’t convinced. Ray Prock, owner of California-based Ray-Lin Dairy, says he’s worried the program payments won’t be as generous for California farmers who generally pay higher feed costs than those in the Midwest.”

Dairy farmers across the country still need to learn about the benefits of the program, which are ensconced in the 1,000-page [Agriculture Act of 2014](#), said Chris Galen, Senior Vice President of Communications for the National Milk Producers Federation. The USDA plans to spend millions of dollars in the coming months to educate farmers, and dairy industry groups will be doing their part, he said. Pros can read Tomson’s story here: <http://politico.pro/1hBQRUB>

** A message from [POWERJobs](#): Jobs on our radar this week: Program Manager, Hunger Impact Area at AARP Foundation, Public Affairs Manager at Association of Equipment Manufacturers, and Director, Health Policy Project Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation at NCLR. Interested? Apply to these jobs and more at www.POWERJobs.com; finally, a career site made for YOU! **

GMA TO TAKE VERMONT TO COURT OVER GMO LAW: The Grocery Manufacturers Association responded to Governor Peter Shumlin’s signing of Vermont’s mandatory GMO labeling bill by confirming it will file suit against the state to overturn the law and will do so sometime soon.

“Consumers who prefer to avoid GM ingredients have the option to choose from an array of products already in the marketplace labeled ‘certified organic.’ The government therefore has no compelling interest in warning consumers about foods containing GM ingredients, making this law’s legality suspect at best,” the group said in a statement. “In light of this fact, in the coming weeks GMA will file suit in federal court against the state of Vermont to overturn the law.”

GMA’s statement can be found here: <http://bit.ly/SG4TPG>

CHEFS FOR GMO LABELING?: Chef Tom Colicchio told reporters Thursday that while he is likely the most outspoken in his business on the need for GMO labeling, other chefs are also in support of such a requirement. “A lot of other chefs feel the same way,” Colicchio said on a call to discuss the signing of Vermont’s GMO labeling bill, although he added he doesn’t know why his colleagues aren’t speaking up. “I don’t know whether other chefs don’t have the time to do it,

don't feel compelled to do it" or are worried that may lose customers. "Hopefully they will find their voice on this issue and a host of other issues," he said.

HILL HEARS FROM 'SUPERMOMS' ON ANTIBIOTICS: Nearly three dozen parents, veterinarians, farmers and doctors held more than 65 meetings on the Hill this week to talk antibiotics in agriculture as part of the second annual "Supermoms Against Superbugs Advocacy Day," sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Infectious Diseases Society of America, Keep Antibiotics Working, MomsRising and others.

Meetings were held with Reps. Louise Slaughter and Henry Waxman as well as FDA's Deputy Commissioner for Foods and Veterinary Medicine Mike Taylor and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

"The issue is big enough that people are really listening," said Julie Ott, owner of James Ranch in Durango, Colo., who met with Sens. Michael Bennet and Mark Udall as well as Rep. Scott Tipton, according to the event's organizers. "Now that we've met face to face, we can keep this momentum growing and tackle antibiotic overuse. We're doing it on my farm and we can do this nationwide."

NATIONAL CONFECTIONERS RESPOND TO 'FED UP': The NCA responded to the controversial new food documentary "Fed Up," calling it "the latest in a series of documentaries to adopt a short-sighted, confrontational and misleading approach to food, diet and nutrition."

"The film asserts, in much the same way that saturated fat was once proclaimed the route of all weight gain evil, that sugar is addictive and the cause of rising obesity rates in America," says Susan Smith, NCA's senior vice president of communications, in a statement today. "It is no secret that sugar has always and continues to be essential to the composition of candy products."

The group adds that candy is "not a leading source of added sugars in the diet, contributing only about 6 percent of added sugars according to the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans."

NCA also notes that it supported USDA's Smart Snacks in School rules as part of school lunch reform, even though it meant most candies will not be allowed to be sold in schools. The statement can be found here: <http://politico.pro/1jmUwdC>

Speaking of 'Fed Up,' yesterday Katie Couric appeared on top-rated morning show Good Morning America to promote the film and urged Americans to join her in the "Fed Up Challenge" to give up all sweeteners, including honey, fruit juice and artificial sweeteners, for 10 days starting Monday. The GMA clip can be found here: <http://abcn.ws/1sq0Rr2>

MA's INSTANT OATS

--Hearings are underway in Iowa to weigh a new livestock farm rule, according to the Des Moines Register: <http://dmreg.co/Qk9C7v>

-- Fifteen USDA employees earned the department's Unsung Hero awards, which are given to honor extraordinary effort and helpfulness to colleagues, among other things, Federal Times reports: <http://bit.ly/1nmRUPr>

--The Oregon Supreme Court has cleared the way for proponents of GMO-labeling on food to start collecting signatures to get the issue on the ballot this fall, The Oregonian reports: <http://bit.ly/1s88CQr>

--Legal critic Walter Olson offers a food policy round up on Overlawyered: <http://bit.ly/1mHgBa7>

--In case you missed it: One-year-old magazine Modern Farmer recently won a National Magazine Award for a magazine section, beating out the likes of Vanity Fair and GQ, and is now "the talk of the media world," according to Mashable: <http://on.mash.to/1kx2COI>

--And apparently sustainable ag pubs are on a bit of a streak: Civil Eats was recently named the James Beard Foundation's 2014 Publication of the Year. Here's the JBF blog post: <http://bit.ly/1m3Yqsh>

THAT'S ALL FOR MA! See you tomorrow! In the meantime, drop your host and the rest of the team a line: jhuffman@politico.com and @JsnHuffman; mkorade@politico.com and @mjkorade; btomson@politico.com and @billtomson4; and HBottemiller@politico.com and @hbottemiller. You can also follow @POLITICOPro and @Morning_Ag