

News Net Briefs

California receives tainted livestock feed

Just as USDA said Japan would be lifting its beef ban, H.J. Baker & Bro. Inc. admitted that it was recalling three feed ingredients



(two used in a supplement fed to dairy cows) that may have been contaminated with cattle remains in violation of a 1997 ban to protect against mad cow disease, according to press reports. A sample tested by the Food and Drug Administration was positive for cattle meat and bone meal, a sign the FDA is finally taking its regulatory job seriously. The two feed ingredients given to dairy cows — Pro-Lak and Pro-Amino II — were made by H.J. Baker between August 2005 and June. The third recalled ingredient, Pro-Pak with Porcine Meat and Bone, was mislabeled. It is used in poultry feed. The company shipped the ingredients to feed manufacturers and dairy farms in Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi and Tennessee. The firm is headquartered in Westport, Conn.

Africa gets help with fruit, veggie trade

The U.S. Agency for International Development announced the dedication of \$5 million to strengthen plant-health inspection services required for African countries to trade fruits and vegetables. The announcement follows the African Growth and Opportunity Act Forum. To improve trade capacity, the United States has undertaken efforts to help African countries export fresh fruits and vegetables to the U.S. market. The plant-health inspection program falls under the five-year, \$200 million African Global Competitiveness Initiative announced by President Bush at the AGOA Forum in 2005.

Big hopes for mini iceberg

A California produce company is marketing a smaller version of iceberg lettuce with the hope that America's miniature craze stays strong in the food market, reports the *Chicago Sun Times*. Boggiatto Produce is the only U.S. grower licensed to grow and sell the smaller lettuce product, which measures no larger than a 12-inch softball and debuted at last year's National Restaurant Association show.

Chilled fruit keeps nutrients

Minimal processing of fruit — cutting, packaging and chilling — does not affect the nutritional content even after nine days, says an international study that could promote healthy eating on a limited timescale, reports *FoodNavigator*.

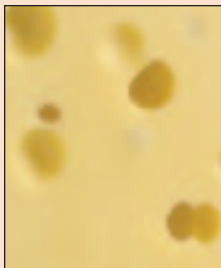
Ventria's biotech rice finds place to call home

The Sacramento firm Ventria has found a Kansas home for its rice, which produces proteins that help children recover from diarrhea, reports *The Sacramento Bee*. Ventria Bioscience abandoned plans to grow biotech rice in California and Missouri. Topeka, Kan., has proposed \$2.25

million in incentives to build a \$10 million rice-processing facility there. Officials hope a plant would provide a market for as much as 30,000 acres worth of the special rice, grown by Kansas farmers. Unlike California and Missouri, Kansas has no rice industry — and thus no rice farmers anxious about GMO marketing problems.

UK issues warning about 'atypical' scrapie

Due to scientific uncertainty over a bovine spongiform encephalopathy-type disease that affects sheep and goats, the United Kingdom is issuing precautionary advice about eating mutton and proposing European Union-wide labeling rules for mutton products, reports *FoodNavigator*. The new disease is similar to classic scrapie, a sheep-brain-wasting disease, but does not affect humans. The "atypical scrapie," however, might affect humans, the scientists say. Controls are similar to those for BSE in cattle, measures relating to feed and the removal of certain parts of the animal before the meat goes into the food chain.

**Cholesterol-lowering cheese works**

Cheese enriched with plant stanols helped to lower cholesterol levels in subjects, according to results of a new study. Cholesterol-lowering foods could be a lucrative trend, according to industry executives, says the *DairyReporter.com*.

USDA to boost organic funds

Funds for the Organic Transitions research program could be increased from \$1.8 million to \$5 million for the next fiscal year after the House of Representatives passed an amendment to its 2007 Agriculture Appropriations Bill, reports the *FoodNavigator*.

Santa Cruz adopts genetically engineered crop freeze

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors voted recently in favor of a county moratorium that prohibits genetically engineered crops, says the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The action stemmed from a report commissioned by the board, which noted lack of adequate federal and state oversight of biotech crops. Santa Cruz joins three other California counties that have adopted such ordinances; however, the state Assembly is considering a bill that would take away the right of municipalities and counties to enact regulations on GMO crops. Fifteen states have already passed laws to prevent local seed regulation.

USDA expects meat, poultry production to slow in 2007

Consumption of meat and poultry isn't expected to increase much in 2007, according to the USDA, reports *FoodNavigator*. Meat and poultry production will likely edge up only 2%, the agency says.

Sweet, seedless mandarin is born

By LEN RICHARDSON

WHAT'S juicy, sweet and seedless, fits in your pocket, and peels well? It's the Tango, the newest mandarin variety from the citrus breeding program at the University of California Riverside.

Mikeal Roose, a professor of genetics at UCR, led the decade-long research effort to develop the seedless selection of the parent mandarin variety W. Murcott (Afourer). The method used to develop the Tango isn't new, but it has not been widely used to develop seedless mandarin varieties in the past.

"It's one of the first mandarins to be irradiated to generate this particular mutation," Roose says of its seedless quality. "There's been a growing public demand for seedless fruit, which has been moving research in this direction."

Mandarins popular

A recent study by the UC Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education Program shows mandarin oranges have a growing global market with good growth potential in the United States, where per-capita consumption of mandarins is about 3 pounds per year.

The trick for Roose was finding an existing variety that showed promise, and that's where the W. Murcott mandarin emerged as a viable parent variety. The tasty, easy-to-peel, mid- to late-season mandarin, which reaches maturity in February and March, has been widely planted throughout California, with 2 to 3 million trees estimated in production.

The variety's major setback, according to Roose, has been an increasing problem with seedy fruit caused by cross-pollination with other citrus varieties, such as other mandarins, oranges, tangelos and lemons. To stem the problem, in 1995 Roose and staff scientist Tim Williams began irradiating bud wood and seeds of several seedy but otherwise promising mandarin varieties. Advanced trials including 3,160 trees from 35 irradiated mandarin selections and six hybrid selections were planted at UCR, Irvine, Indio, Santa Paula, Arvin, Lindcove and Woodlake.

Key Points

- New mandarin variety is sweet and seedless.
- Tango's flesh is deep orange in color, finely textured and 50% juice.
- UCR will release 33,000 buds to growers and nurseries.

The most promising selection derived from irradiated W. Murcott buds was known during testing as W. Murcott IR1 — and now is formally named Tango.

"Maybe we had a certain amount of luck in selecting a variety that, in its seeded form, was already a winner," Roose says.

Ongoing observation of 15 to 20 trees planted in 2001-02 shows that all the trees produce good crop quality and are consistently low seeded in trials where cross-pollination occurred. The average number of seeds per fruit has been less than 0.2 in samples of 25 to 50 trees at each of three locations. That compares favorably with unaltered W. Murcott trees, which averages eight to 15 seeds.

Tango matures in Riverside from late January through April. The fruit size is moderately large at about 2.3 inches across with a weight of about 3.2 ounces per fruit. The fruit is deeply oblate with a deep-orange rind color and smooth rind texture. The flesh is deep orange, finely textured and juicy (50% juice). The peel is easy to remove.

Preparing for release

UCR has been preparing for Tango's release by creating a supply of about 33,000 buds to be released to growers and nurseries. UC does not sell trees to the public. A system of distribution of this limited bud-wood supply has been developed in consultation with the citrus growers and nursery industries.

The California Citrus Board and the California Citrus Nursery Advisory Board supported Roose's research.

UC has filed for patent protection on Tango. A license to propagate and sell the variety will be available to any California nursery that completes the standard license agreement.

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Contact us:

Editor: Len Richardson
lrichardson@farmprogress.com
 125 Ryan Industrial Court, Suite 107
 San Ramon, CA 94583
 Phone: (925) 855-9409
 Fax: (925) 855-9578

Contributing Editors:

Brenda Carol; Don Dale; Eric McMullin;
 John Spitzer, Livestock; John A. Otte, Economics

Executive Editor: Dan Crummett**Corporate Editorial Director:**

Willie Vogt, (651) 454-6994,
wvogt@farmprogress.com

Sales: Sandy Creighton (559) 433-9343**Subscription Questions:**

(800) 441-1410



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