



# VICFA | Voice

**Our Mission:** *To promote and preserve unregulated direct farmer-to-consumer trade that fosters availability of locally grown or home-produced food products*

July 2011

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## USDA and Corporate Agribusiness Continue to Push Animal ID Scheme

**Consumers and Independent Producers Lose if Big Ag Wins on Animal Traceability**

*By Judith McGeary of Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance*

WASHINGTON, DC (June 21, 2011): The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is expected to issue its new proposed rule for mandatory animal traceability very shortly. While USDA already has traceability requirements as part of existing animal disease control programs, the proposed framework goes much further to require animal tagging and tracing even absent any active disease threat. The framework has raised significant concerns among family farm and ranch advocates, who criticize the agency for failing to provide a coherent, factual explanation for the new program's necessity.

“USDA brags about the success of past programs, but has abandoned the principles that made them successful,” argued Bill Bullard of R-CALF USA. “Past programs were based on sound science and were developed in response to the transmission, treatment, and elimination of specific identified diseases. USDA’s new approach is a one-size-fits-all approach that does not specifically aim at the control of livestock diseases.”

The USDA has presented its traceability scheme as an animal health program, but it has also reiterated the importance of the export market to the United States in promoting its new plan. The powerful meatpacking lobby has continued to push for such mandated traceability requirements in order to develop international standards for exports. Critics have suggested this is not in the American public's best interest, however, since the U.S. is a net importer of beef and cattle and the profits from the export market go to a small handful of massive meatpacking companies.

“Factory farms can easily absorb the added economic burdens, and the meatpacking industry stands to benefit from a marketing standpoint,” asserted Judith McGeary, a livestock farmer and executive director of the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance. “However, the extra expenses and labor will fall disproportionately on family farmers

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and ranchers, accelerating the loss of independent businesses to corporate industrial-scale producers.”

“Consumers need the USDA to start focusing on the animal health and food safety risks posed by industrialized meat production,” said Patty Lovera of Food & Water Watch. “If USDA devoted as much energy to preventing animal diseases as it has to promoting animal tracking, our food system would be in much better shape.”

Many cattle organizations agree that tracing breeding-age cattle may be appropriate for efficient disease control, but USDA’s proposal goes far beyond that by calling for the identification of every cow that crosses state lines, including feeder cattle that are processed at a young age. Because of the sheer numbers of feeder cattle, this requirement could unduly burden small ranchers and sales barns and further erode competition in the marketplace.

“The large volume of the animals that USDA proposes to track could overwhelm the capabilities of state agencies, making it impossible to retrieve useful data if there is in fact a disease outbreak,” stated Gilles Stockton, a Montana rancher and member of the Western Organization of Resource Councils.

Additionally, the centuries-old tradition of hot-iron branding cattle would be demoted from an official identification device. “The brand is a part of our ranching heritage and a long accepted method of animal identification,” stated Rep. Denny Rehberg, R-Mont, in a letter to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack.

A coalition of farm, ranch and consumer groups urges citizens to contact their Congressional representatives and the USDA with their concern that mandatory animal traceability helps only a few giant corporations, at the expense of American family farmers and consumers.

“If Americans don’t want their food supply to cave like the banking and housing industries, it’s time to

take action,” stated Mark Kastel of The Cornucopia Institute. ■

***For more information, contact:***

- Judith McGeary, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, 512-484-8821
- Bill Bullard, R-CALF USA, 406-252-2516
- Patty Lovera, Food & Water Watch, 202-683-2465
- Gilles Stockton, Western Organization of Resource Councils, 406-366-4463
- Mark Kastel, The Cornucopia Institute, 608-778-2038



## **VDACS Slated To Vote August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011 On Animal ID Regulations**

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, in lock-step with the newly proposed Federal rule (see press release in this Newsletter), is slated to vote whether or not to give final approval to regulations which would require all livestock entering Virginia to be identified. Yes, NAIS is back in another form!

VICFA formally opposed the regulations during the comment period this past Spring, and several VICFA members spoke against their implementation at the public hearing in March. The vote to approve the final regulations will be held at the regularly scheduled Board meeting, which begins at 2:00 p.m. August 9<sup>th</sup>. However, the meeting will be held in Chatham, Va., north of Danville, instead of in Richmond.

Watch for Action Alerts to follow on this matter. For more information contact Christine Solem at (434) 973-6505 ■

### **FARMERS MARKET REPORT**

Remember to tune in each Friday at 7:45 am for the Farmers Market Report, presented by VICFA President, Wayne Bolton. Listen at 92.9 FM (WVHL, Kickin’ Country), or listen online directly from our website: [www.vicfa.org](http://www.vicfa.org). We update the website each week, so be sure to check back often!

# VICFA Notes

## Come to our July Meeting

The July Meeting will be held in Paris, VA  
on July 10, 2011.

We will share in a potluck lunch at 1:00 pm, followed by our general business meeting from 2:00 - 4:00 pm. VICFA membership meetings are open to the public. Please bring a dish and a big helping of enthusiasm to share. Broaden our reach - invite a friend or neighbor to join you.

**Sunday, July 10, 2011**

at Liberty Farm, hosted by Martha Boneta  
1037 Gap Run Road  
Paris, VA 20130  
(571) 839-1143

*Note: This is a working farm. There is no residence on site. Simply drive up, past the iron gates; and park inside of the privacy fencing in front of the barn. The meeting will take place in the barn.*

### DIRECTIONS:

Locate the I-66 and US 17 North (Exit 23). From here, take US1 7 North, towards Delaplane / Paris. Go 7.6 miles; and turn left on Gap Run Road. Liberty Farm (address 1037) is about 1/10<sup>th</sup> mile, on the right.

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**REMEMBER:** VICFA Meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of every month. Non-members are always welcome to attend. **LOOKING AHEAD:** Our August Meeting will be at Guy and Sue Freesens' *Charis Eco Farm*, in **Staunton, VA**. Our September Meeting will be held at Charles and Marilyn Barnes' *Cove Branch Farm*, in **Newcastle, VA**. We hope to see you there!

# VICFA

PO Box 6838  
Charlottesville, VA 22906

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## VICFA

Virginia Independent Consumers and Farmers Association  
President, Wayne Bolton  
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Secretary, Anne Buteau

Members At Large: Richard Altice, Suzi Croes,  
Christine Solem, Emily Turtlewoman, Martha Boneta

Website: [www.VICFA.org](http://www.VICFA.org)

E-group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/VICFA>.

Editorial Review: Lois Smith and Anne Buteau  
Proof Reader: Anne Buteau  
Contributing Columnist: Judith McGeary  
Designer: Shannon Sankar

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## Share this newsletter with a friend - encourage others to join VICFA!

Annual membership is \$25.00.

Please make check payable to VICFA and send to PO Box 6838, Charlottesville, VA 22906.

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Producers, please list the products that you sell:

\*Do you want to be listed in the Membership Directory?  Yes  No

Note. Your directory listing will contain all of the above information unless you indicate otherwise below.

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