

Today is _____, _____ the _____. This is Ken Morgan's Northcoast Ag Report, our lead story is about _____ when we return

Nominees for top USDA positions weighed in at the Senate Ag Committee on crop insurance, climate change, rural development, unfair foreign trade practices and other hot-button farm issues.

Deputy Secretary Nominee Stephen Censky, a past Foreign Ag Service Administrator and CEO of the American Soybean Association, fielded the first tough question from Senate Ag Chair Pat Roberts...tape

Cut #1 _____ :28 OC:... "management program."

One of Censky's goals is crop diversification through crop insurance, research and extension. Another—preparation for and adaption of crops to changing weather and climate. Broadband expansion to rural America was a third. Censky also vows to champion "appropriate" renewable fuels levels.

Indiana Ag Secretary and nominee for USDA Undersecretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs Ted McKinney told Senate Ag he'll be a "happy warrior" to chase export deals and build relations overseas...tape

Cut #2 _____ :19 OC:... "to do that."

McKinney adds, he'd use science to defend against foreign non-tariff trade barriers to US farm exports.

Not part of today's hearing, Iowan Sam Clovis, nominated by the President to be USDA undersecretary for Research, Education and Economics.

Beef Cattle Contribute to Sustainable Food System

A recent study by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization says cattle raised for beef production play a key role in maintaining a sustainable food system. Meat industry publication

Meatingplace reports that the research essentially counters claims that beef production consumes too much human-edible feed, finding that cattle are net contributors to the global protein supply, and concludes that “modest yield improvements” can reduce further land expansion for feed production. The research shows that 86 percent of the feed cattle consume is grasses grown on marginal lands, not edible to humans. The study says: “Livestock play, and will continue to play, a critical role in adding value to these residual products, a large share of which could otherwise be an environmental burden.”