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DID YOU KNOW?

A new federal budget deal was signed by President Obama in early November, and it includes \$3 billion in cuts to federally subsidized crop insurance over the next 10 years. Crop insurance protects farmers and ranchers from loss due to natural disasters and declines in the prices of commodities.

Critics of the new budget argue that other federal subsidies for farmers were cut as part of a farm bill in 2014, and that the government needs to support agriculture as droughts and low prices continue to threaten the industry. For more information on crop insurance, contact Winton-Ireland, Strom &

What the Trans-Pacific Partnership Means for Farmers and Ranchers

An agreement was recently reached regarding the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a trade agreement between 12 countries along the Pacific Rim. The agreement is designed to promote international trade by cutting taxes and tariffs on imports and exports, as the Pacific Rim region accounts for 40 percent of the global economy.

According to the federal government the TPP eliminates foreign taxes on crops and livestock exported from the United States. Currently, these can be as high as 35 percent for soybeans and fruit. President Obama also believes that the agreement will prevent countries in the Asia-Pacific market from creating preferential trade deals with one another.

The TPP has been criticized by some

experts in the agriculture industry who believe that the agreement could remove or weaken domestic environmental protections, food safety standards and more. Critics also believe that benefits from the TPP are limited to specific products, and could lead to an imbalanced market.

While the agreement may go into effect as early as the first quarter of 2016, it could be delayed by the ratification process.

USDA Invests in Key Aquifer

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced that it will invest \$8 million in the Ogallala Aquifer, the largest aquifer in the country. The Ogallala Aquifer underlies eight states in the Great Plains region, and provides water to nearly one-fifth of the corn, wheat, cotton and cattle produced in the United States.

This new investment will supplement the Ogallala Aquifer Initiative, an effort to reduce the aquifer's use and improve water quality. Funds from the initiative and the USDA will be distributed to farmers and ranchers across the region underlying the aquifer, and can be used to implement water conservation practices.

