



Top Stories

10/24/17 – President Donald Trump [signed](#) a \$36.5 billion emergency aid package into law in response to recent natural disasters that hit parts of the United States and its territories. The package delivers nearly \$18 billion to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, \$16 billion to the National Flood Insurance Program, \$577 million to wildfire response efforts, and allows Puerto Rico to receive up to \$4.9 billion in loans to pay employees, and fund other services. This is the second package of emergency funding, and Trump has told lawmakers he will seek a third installment in November.

10/18/17 – The Energy Information Administration [issued](#) a report showing that exports of crude oil and refined petroleum products reached record levels in the first half of 2017, having increased by more than 300,000 barrels per day from the first half of 2016. Crude oil exports reached a high of .9 million barrels per day, and the U.S. exported the product to 27 countries in the first half of 2017, compared to 19 in the same period in 2016. The increase can be attributed to the removal of several [restrictions](#) on exporting U.S. crude oil in Dec. 2015.

10/17/17 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) withdrew the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) [interim final rule](#). Additionally, USDA announced it will not finalize the rule on [Unfair Practices and Undue Preferences in Violation of the Packers and Stockyards Act](#). Both rules were intended to enhance the power of livestock growers in relationships with buyers and processors.

10/13/17 – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [announced](#) it will increase regulation of the herbicide dicamba to stem crop damage resulting from drift, classifying the

chemical as a “restricted use pesticide.” That classification allows only certified applicators, or someone in the presence of a certified applicator, to use the product. Additionally, EPA said it will require special dicamba training for sprayers and bar application in winds over 10 mph — down from 15 mph under the former rules. Farmers will also have to keep specific records to ensure compliance and help trace future crop damage.

9/29/17 – The Department of Energy (DOE) [approved](#) an additional \$3.7 billion increase in federal loan guarantees for the [Vogtle nuclear project](#) in Georgia. DOE previously approved \$8.33 billion for the project.

9/29/17 – DOE [submitted](#) a proposed rule on grid resiliency pricing to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) that aims to stop the closing of coal-fired and nuclear power plants. The rule calls for full-cost recovery for power generating units that provide essential power and “ancillary” services, and have a 90-day fuel supply on site in case of natural or man-made disruptions. The rule calls on FERC to use its authority under the Federal Power Act (FPA) to establish “just and reasonable rates” for the electricity market.

From Congress

10/25/17 - The House Judiciary Committee approved (17-16) [H.R. 4092](#), which would revamp and expand the agricultural guest-worker program. The bill would eliminate the H-2A visa and replace it with an H-2C program that would allow agricultural employers including meat processors, dairy farmers and loggers who have year-round work to apply. The bill also eliminates requirements that employers provide workers with

transportation and housing, and it exempts workers from Fair Labor Standards Act compliance. The bill would also move the visa program from the Labor Department to USDA.

10/19/17 – The Senate approved the nomination of [Greg Ibach](#) to be the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. He is the immediate past President of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture. The Senate Agriculture Committee also approved [Bill Northey](#) although his confirmation by the full Senate is the subject of a hold by Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas). Northey was nominated to be the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm Production and Conservation and is currently serving his third term as Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture.

10/17/17 – A bipartisan [letter](#) from 80 members of Congress urged the Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, and FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, to improve, through its Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity, the regulatory structure for biotechnology products that was put into effect last year by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the FDA.

10/5/17 – A bipartisan group of 38 Senators [called](#) upon EPA Administrator Pruitt to reverse proposed cuts to biodiesel and cellulosic ethanol volumes in the Renewable Fuel Standard, while also praising the agency for setting conventional biofuel volumes at the maximum allowed by law.

10/4/17 – The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee [advanced](#) the nomination of [Steven Winberg](#) to the Senate floor. Winberg, who is nominated to be assistant secretary of energy (fossil energy), was previously the vice president for R&D for CONSOL Energy Inc., and was the board chair for the FutureGen Industrial Alliance.

10/4/17 – The Senate confirmed, by voice vote, [Steve Censky](#) as Deputy Agriculture Secretary, and Ted McKinney as Under Secretary for Trade. Censky was previously the American Soybean Association's chief executive officer, and McKinney previously [served](#) as the director of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture. Additionally, the Senate confirmed [Howard R. Elliott](#), to be administrator of the Pipeline and

Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. Elliot previously served as group vice president of Public Safety, Health, Environment and Security for CSX Transportation in Florida. [Bruce Walker](#) was also confirmed by voice vote to be the assistant secretary of Energy Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability. Walker most recently served as the deputy county executive for the County of Putnam and the acting energy sector chief for the Hudson Valley Infragard.

9/27/17 – The U.S. and Mexico [signed](#) a Colorado River water-sharing pact, called Minute 323, aiming to establish procedures to reduce off-take during times of drought. The pact will carry forward for another nine years.

From the Administration

10/25/17 – The Department of Interior (DOI) [issued](#) a report that it was beginning to engage in an effort to speed up permitting for energy projects and minerals mining by adjusting existing policies designed to protect wildlife and conservation areas. This could affect how it grants rights of way as well as new guidance on FERC-licensed interstate pipelines. Additional changes may include rescinding or revising rules affecting offshore and oil gas drilling.

10/25/17 – EPA [released](#) guidance to assist farmers in reporting air releases of hazardous substances from animal waste at farms, ensuring that farmers have enough time to review and prepare for the Nov. 15 reporting deadline. In 2008, EPA issued a final rule exempting farms from reporting such releases, but in 2017 the D.C. Circuit Court vacated the rule.

10/25/17 – DOE [released](#) a memo stating its intention to revisit how it handles the development of energy efficiency standards. In responding to an [executive order](#) aimed at reducing rules that "unnecessarily encumber" energy development, Energy Secretary Rick Perry says the agency is focusing on four areas where it wants to shed burdensome regulations, particularly on energy efficiency.

10/23/17 – The Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [published](#) a new Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) guide

to help farmers and food manufacturers identify when and which compliance deadlines they are subject to. Signed into law in 2011, FSMA aims to ensure the safety of the U.S. food supply, shifting the focus from responding to contamination to preventing it.

10/20/17 – The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico will begin an [expansion project](#), which should be completed by 2020. It is the first expansion to take place since a radiation release in 2014 contaminated part of the repository.

10/16/17 – USDA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) [reviewed](#) the policies and processes behind Food Safety and Inspection Service's (FSIS) in-country inspection of countries that export meat to the U.S. OIG found that FSIS did not consistently audit equivalent countries, and that they had not consistently performed, completed or documented audit procedures.

10/13/17 – FERC [approved](#) both the Atlantic Coast Pipeline as well as the Mountain Valley Pipeline Project.

10/11/17 – The National Academies of Sciences [issued](#) a report on safely transporting hazardous liquids and gases in a changing U.S. energy landscape, recommending the need for more frequent and detailed inspections of freight railroad tracks to prevent potentially catastrophic crashes.

9/27/17 – [According](#) to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Office of the Inspector General, the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) is on track to meet deadlines for inspections for domestic food facilities that were set by the Food Safety Modernization Act, but is not doing enough to follow up with companies when problems are identified.

9/27/17 – EPA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) [found](#) that the agency failed to perform the recommended amount of inspections for imported pesticides. The OIG found that only 73 of 46,280 shipments were inspected in 2016, significantly lower than EPA's goal of 2 percent, or 926 inspections.

10/2/17 – The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) requested the administration weigh in on a challenge to Virginia's uranium mining ban. An appeal to the ban was filed after the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals [upheld](#) a lower court's dismissal of a uranium company's lawsuit seeking to overturn a Virginia law banning uranium mining, on the basis that the federal Atomic Energy Act pre-empts the state's ban. SCOTUS will decide whether to take the appeal in 2018.

Other