

# GROWERTALKS

JZ on D.C.

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## U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack Meets With Agricultural Workforce

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Secretary Tom Vilsack of the United States Department of Agriculture hosted AmericanHort President and CEO Ken Fisher, along with other principals of the Agricultural Workforce Coalition, for a follow-up conversation following the May 20 roundtable with Department of Labor Acting Secretary Julie Su. Acting Secretary Su did not participate in the follow-up meeting because of pending litigation against her

and DOL.

This meeting primarily focused on the Farm Labor Survey and how data received from the survey is used to set H-2A Adverse Effect Wage Rates (AEWR), ultimately resulting in challenges to growers. The proposed DOL heat rule and Hurricane Helene recovery efforts were also discussed.

—Rachel Pick, Senior Manager, Advocacy & Government Affairs, AmericanHort

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## EPA Launches Pesticide and Endangered Species Educational Resources Toolbox

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has launched an online Pesticide and Endangered Species Educational Resources Toolbox to support its efforts under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The toolbox provides a variety of materials, such as handouts, webinars and guidance documents, to help educate stakeholders on pesticide use and species protection. This resource aims to assist crop consultants, retailers and others in navigating ESA requirements. EPA plans to continue expanding the toolbox with new educational content. View the Toolbox [HERE](#).

—Kamron Newberry, Advocacy Project Coordinator, AmericanHort

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## Ag Deputy Secretary Pays Dramm a Visit

In late October, U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small visited Dramm Corp. in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. The visit coincided with an announcement that the Biden-Harris Administration is making investments in farms and local businesses by expanding domestic fertilizer production, and increasing independent meat and poultry processing capacity, which they hope will increase competition and lower fertilizer costs for farmers and food costs for consumers.

The USDA has awarded over \$120 million to fund six fertilizer production projects in Arkansas, California, Illinois, South Dakota, Washington and Wisconsin through the Fertilizer Production Expansion Program (FPEP), which is funded by the Commodity Credit Corporation and provides funding to independent business owners to help them modernize equipment, adopt new technologies, build production plants and more.

“We are so very honored to have had USDA Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small and several other USDA representatives visit our company,” said Heidi Dramm Becker, Corporate Relations for Dramm and one of the family owners. “They were down-to-earth, kind and inquisitive, showing genuine curiosity about our efforts in manufacturing natural fish fertilizer, commercial grower equipment and irrigation, as well as retail watering tools. The grant we were awarded allows us to expand and improve our fish processing plant in Algoma so we can produce and provide more quality fertilizer that enhances the soil from which our food is grown.”

Dramm is using a \$776,000 grant to increase its production capacity and expand its network of customers and farmers while reducing their carbon footprint and increase employee safety. Using fish offal collected from commercial and sport fishermen, Dramm produces a liquid fish fertilizer suitable for organic and traditional farming while keeping millions of pounds of waste out of landfills and fresh waterways.

“We are grateful for the Fertilizer Production Expansion Program Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and for the visit today from Deputy Secretary Torres Small and her team,” said Hans Dramm, president and one of the family owners. “It is very exciting to receive this level of attention and to showcase our commitment to producing high-quality products for the commercial horticulture, agriculture and consumer sectors. Dramm is proud of our Wisconsin-based work and the advancements we are making to our fertilizer production facility with the support of the USDA’s FPEP grant.” —JZ

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