

WASHINGTON FARM BUREAU NEWSWATCH

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PROTESTORS ARMED WITH BAMBOO STICKS CLASHED WITH SECURITY FORCES at the opening of a weeklong World Trade Organization meeting in Hong Kong. (AP/Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Dec. 13) The confrontation occurred after an estimated 4,500 protestors, mainly South Korean farmers, marched through the city beating drums and gongs. Police said the protesters also included farmers from Japan, India, Brazil and the Philippines. Farmers from developing nations have accused the United States, European Union and other richer nations of failing to reduce tariffs and farm subsidies enough for them to compete in a global market. The United States, which already has some of the lowest import tariffs, has proposed cutting domestic farm subsidies by 60 percent and eliminating export subsidies for farm products over the next five years.

TENSIONS OVER FOOD DONATIONS FROM THE UNITED STATES TO DEVELOPING countries also caused a ruckus on the first day of the WTO meeting in Hong Kong. Calling for "radical reform" by the United States, the European Union asserted that U.S. food programs distort international markets and are geared primarily to aid U.S. producers, rather than provide humanitarian relief. U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman responded by saying he did not understand the EU's "obsession" with food aid.

JAPAN ANNOUNCED SUNDAY IT WOULD BEGIN ACCEPTING IMPORTS OF U.S. BEEF and beef products from cattle 20 months of age and younger. (AP/Spokesman-Review, Dec. 12) According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, more than 94 percent of all U.S. beef and beef products would be eligible for export. Japanese inspectors will visit U.S. meat processing plants to certify them for export. Japan banned U.S. beef in 2003 after a dairy cow in Washington was found with bovine spongiform encephalopathy. Before the ban the United States exported \$1.4 billion worth of beef and beef products to Japan. Australia has now replaced the United States as Japan's largest supplier of beef.

WASHINGTON WILL GET ITS EIGHTH OFFICIAL WINE-PRODUCING APPELLATION next month when the federal Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau formally recognizes the Wahluke Slope as an American Viticultural Area. (Tri-City Herald, Dec. 13) There are now about 20 growers in the 81,000-acre area, producing about 20 percent of the state wine-grape crop.

A SURVEY RELEASED LAST WEEK BY THE PEW HISPANIC CENTER SHOWS THAT most undocumented Mexican workers had jobs in Mexico, but crossed into the United States illegally to find better job quality and higher wages, and to join family members already in the country. (Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Dec. 7) A survey of nearly 5,000 illegal immigrants found that they generally achieved their goals, easily finding jobs in the agriculture, construction, hospitality and manufacturing sectors. While Mexican workers make some of the lowest wages in the United States, they make about twice as much as they were making in Mexico, according to the survey. The survey also found that recent illegal immigrants are less likely to be farm workers and more likely to find jobs in construction or hospitality.

FARM BUREAU MEMBERSHIP NATIONWIDE HAS TOPPED 5.7 MILLION FAMILIES, according to year-end figures from the American Farm Bureau Federation. State Farm Bureaus added more than 94,000 families to their ranks in 2005. Washington Farm Bureau finished the year with an all-time high of 34,683 member families.

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\* 2005 Washington Farm Bureau. Washington Farm Bureau NewsWatch is a periodic update on news of interest to agriculture. Contact Dean Boyer, director of public relations, 1-800-331-3276 or, send e-mail to [dboyer@wsfb.com](mailto:dboyer@wsfb.com) to receive NewsWatch by fax or e-mail.