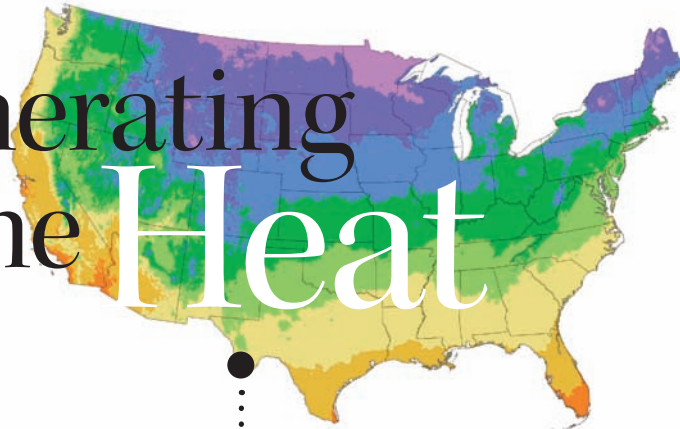


Generating Some Heat



EARLIER THIS YEAR, the USDA released a new map of U.S. growing zones created with more sophisticated and extensive data than previous versions. The map replaces a version that was released in 1990.

The new map relies on data from some 8,000 weather stations and takes into account elevation, topography, prevailing winds, proximity to large water bodies and other factors not used to create the previous version. Perhaps the biggest change is that the map shows winters are getting warmer across the country.

Used by gardeners, plant wholesalers, crop insurers and farmers to determine what areas of the country are too warm or cold for particular plants, the map has already generated some heat of its own. Many observers say the map is further evidence of climate change.

■ **WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?**
 See the full map with key and an interactive feature that lets you search growing zone by ZIP code. Visit go.myFarmLife.com/usdamap.

The USDA says the map alone can't prove it.

The controversy is similar to that surrounding a now-retracted growing zone map released in 2003. After environmentalists and casual observers alike pointed to it being proof of man-made climate change, it was pulled by the agriculture department, which said the methodology used to create it was outdated.

According to a story in *Wall Street Journal*, the warmer winters are allowing cotton to be grown in Kansas, and the Midwest corn-growing region to expand north and west into South and North Dakota, as well as into Manitoba.

press, the sensor, which is installed in a collar, picks up on subtle movements of the head. Such measurement can show, for instance, if the animal's hind legs begin to lower, a potential indication of illness. In addition, the Silent Herdsman collar can detect if the is cow is coming into heat, a technology that's already on the market.

Overall, the new technology is expected to save animals from extended distress, and reduce

time and money expenditures for farmers, as it will require less on-site monitoring of herds. It can also assist in making insemination more productive, as alerts will allow for better timing.

The developers of the system recently began promoting Silent Herdsman in North America. See embeddedtech.co.uk for more information.

FarmLIFE FIVE

Quick cuts about life on the land.

THIS ISSUE: *Kids, summer and growing up on the farm.*

■ **ROLL CALL.** Each year, 132 million children ages 5 to 14 work in agriculture worldwide. More than 400,000 children ages 12 to 17 are hired in the U.S. annually. In Canada last summer, more than 63,000 young people ages 15 to 24 worked in ag.

■ **SUN SAFETY.** As much as 25% of sun exposure happens by age 18, so kids should wear sunscreen and clothing that covers them up, even sunglasses. One bad burn can double the risk of skin cancer down the road.

■ **HANDS-ON FARMING.** Even in this age of automation, machines still can't replace us humans, at least not completely. While detasseling machines remove up to 90% of the tassels in a seed corn field, we the people—and oftentimes teenagers—have to step in and complete the job, since the automated equipment can't adjust quickly to height differences in plants. Removing the flowers, aka tassels, off the plant helps prevent pollination when farmers are attempting to hybridize their corn.

■ **VIRTUAL FARMING.** If your little sprouts aren't out working the fields, it could be they're playing Minecraft. The online game, which has some 241,920,000 log-ins each month, offers players the chance to plant sugarcane and wheat, and breed pigs and chickens. The game doesn't, however, completely replace real-world farming experience. To wit: Throwing eggs makes them hatch. Also, sheep's wool can be changed to pink, orange, magenta, or lime ... while it's still on the animal.

■ **FARM-RAISED CELEBS.** Charlize Theron (South Africa), Martina McBride (Kansas), Tom Wopat (Texas), Carrie Underwood (Oklahoma) and Oprah Winfrey (Mississippi).

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