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Daily Environment Report

Afternoon Briefing - Your Preview of Today's News

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Power Plants Get Two-Year Reprieve for Parts of Wastewater Rule

Posted September 13, 2017, 03:33 P.M. ET

By [Amena H. Saiyid](#)

Power plants won't have to meet new limits until 2020 on toxic wastewater that comes from air pollution control systems and bottom furnace ash, the EPA announced Sept. 13.

The Environmental Protection Agency said it was postponing by two years compliance dates that would be required of more than 1,000 power plants nationwide, as it reconsiders how strictly it should limit those two sources of wastewater.

The postponement, requested by electric power utilities, applies to new Obama-era limits on wastewater generated by transporting bottom ash and by operating flue gas desulfurization units used to capture sulfur dioxide emissions.

The agency's final unpublished [rule](#) follows submission of public comment on postponing the 2015 rule's compliance deadlines for all six categories of wastewater containing arsenic, selenium, nitrates, mercury, zinc, and other pollutants that more than 1,000 power plants nationwide discharge. The rule's deadlines for the four other streams will still start Jan. 1, 2018, but the compliance deadlines for these two wastestreams now will be pushed back to Jan. 1, 2020.

A national industry group that represents power plant operators, including subsidiaries of Ameren Corp. and American Electric Power, sought a deadline extension because the EPA is revising parts of a 2015 rule setting effluent limits for technology they would be required to use to treat wastewater (RIN: 2040-AF14).

UN Says Hurricane Irma Shows Trump Needs to Re-Engage on Climate

Posted September 13, 2017, 8:39 A.M. ET

By [Sunil Jagtiani](#)

President Donald Trump or his successor will likely re-engage with the global fight against climate change because of the weight of scientific evidence, the head of the United Nations Environment Program said.

Europe, China and India will take the leadership role on the issue in the meantime, Erik Solheim said in an interview in Bangkok. The evolution toward renewable energy in place of fossil fuels is unstoppable, he added.

“We’ll expect the Trump administration itself to come back to the climate issue, or the next president of the U.S.,” Solheim said. “If you want to see the need for this, look to Houston or the Caribbean with Irma. The violence of the weather is waking up everyone.”

The Trump administration last month began the formal process of exiting the Paris climate accord and is seeking to eliminate an array of climate funding, transforming the U.S. from a leader in global climate diplomacy into an outlier. Solheim said disavowing evidence of global warming, while relying on science for everything from medical advances to space exploration, is untenable over the long term.

“How can it be possible to believe in all the benefits of science in every other area, but say in this area we don’t want to believe in science?” Solheim said in the interview last week.

The State Department said in August it had notified the UN that the U.S. will pull out of the Paris pact as soon as it can under the terms of the 2015 accord, adding Trump would agree to remain in the deal if it was reconfigured to be better for U.S. interests.

Hurricanes Irma and Harvey on some estimates caused total damage of about \$150 billion. Irma tore through the Caribbean last week before hitting Florida, while Harvey struck southeastern Texas late August. German and British scientists said climate change made Irma much stronger.

Climate change aside, there are a number of areas where the UN environment arm and the U.S. are in agreement, such as curbing illegal trade in wildlife, Solheim said.

The UN Environment Program is trying to work more with the private sector and tap financial markets to tackle pollution, he added.

“At the end of the day that is the most important of all,” Solheim said. “Unless the big money of insurance companies, banks and pension funds goes green, we will fail.”

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Cities Swimming in Raw Sewage as Hurricanes Overwhelm Systems

Posted September 13, 2017, 8:12 A.M. ET

By Jennifer A. Dlouhy and Ari Natter

Hurricane Harvey took aim at one of the nation’s most industrial regions, releasing a stream of toxic pollutants from chemical plants, refineries and Superfund sites in Texas. But when its bigger sister Irma slammed into Florida, environmental alarms rang over a different kind of discharge: raw sewage.

Millions of gallons of poorly treated wastewater and raw sewage flowed into the bays, canals and city streets of Florida from facilities serving some of the nation's fastest-growing counties. More than 9 million gallons of releases tied to Irma have been reported as of late Sept. 12 as inundated plants were submerged, forced to bypass treatment or lost power.

Such overflows, which can spread disease-causing pathogens, are happening more often, as population shifts and increasingly strong storms strain the capacity of plants and decades-old infrastructure. The Environmental Protection Agency estimated last year that \$271 billion is needed to maintain and improve the nation's wastewater pipes, treatment plants and associated infrastructure.

"There's no sewer system in the world that can be built that's completely leak proof," said Nathan Gardner-Andrews, chief advocacy officer for the National Association of Clean Water Agencies. Plants generally are designed to handle twice their normal capacity, but "when you get some of these rain events and you're talking four to six to eight inches of rain in an hour, the engineering is such that you cannot build a system to hold that capacity."

A treatment facility in Clearwater, Fla., discharged 1.6 million gallons of wastewater into a creek, according to filings with the state's Department of Environmental Protection. The incident, which occurred after a power line snapped, was just a trickle compared to a 30-million-gallon discharge of raw sewage after Hurricane Hermine caused a pump failure in 2016, said David Porter, the city's public utilities director.

That scene was replayed across the state this week, as electrical outages caused lift station pumps to stop running in St. Petersburg and Orlando, prompting at least 500,000 gallons of overflows. A pipeline broke in Miramar, Fla., sending sewage spilling across a parkway as contractors hunted for the rupture. And operators of a Miami-area wastewater treatment plant blamed a power outage for 6 million gallons of sewage released into Biscayne Bay.

Late Tuesday, there was no visible sewage or garbage in the Biscayne Bay water along Brickell, Fla., but in nearby Bayfront Park, the air was heavy with a foul odor.

As wastewater treatment lagged, utilities across the state warned residents to boil water before drinking it. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said it has deployed specialists to Florida to help get wastewater systems back online.

Estimated releases of untreated and poorly treated wastewater tied to both Irma and Harvey are expected to continue climbing. Even Hurricanes Hermine and Matthew—modest by comparison to this season's double whammy—forced the release of some 250 million gallons of wastewater without full treatment between Aug. 31 and Oct. 15, 2016, according to a report by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

After Hurricane Sandy ravaged the northeast U.S. in 2012, damaged treatment plants and pumping stations caused untreated sewage to flow into local waterways for weeks. All told, facilities in the eight states hardest hit by the super storm released 11 billion gallons of untreated and partially treated sewage, according to one assessment.

Wastewater treatment facilities are especially vulnerable to flooding because they are traditionally built in low-lying areas, near whatever river or waterway they discharge into. That approach works in normal conditions, but coastal treatment plants increasingly are outmatched during intense downpours and fierce storms, especially amid rising sea levels.

“Any time there is a large event—any kind of flood—they get overwhelmed and you have these raw sewage discharges,” said Ken Kopocis, who served as the top official in the EPA’s water office under President Barack Obama.

That influx can overcome treatment facilities as well as the sewer systems designed to ferry water to them. In Middleburg, Fla., Sept. 12, a pretreatment system overflowed amid rising floodwaters, with a reported 250,000 gallons of untreated liquid released. Workers blocked off culverts to try and contain the spill and set up pump stations to pull water from ditches so it could be treated.

Normal flood stage at the site near Black Creek is 24 to 25 feet, but water was set to climb three feet higher. “We’ve never seen flooding like this,” said Dennis Martin of the Clay County Utility Authority.

Sewage discharges carry both health and economic risks, as officials may order the closing of affected beaches and rivers for swimming and boating long after storm clouds have passed. When untreated water or raw sewage is spilled, it can deliver toxic chemicals from roads, E. coli from human waste and other pathogens that have the potential to cause viruses, parasitic infections, rashes and other health conditions.

“We focus on the water and the flooding and the impacts to homes and everything else, which is super important,” said Danielle Droitsch, a program director with the Natural Resources Defense Council. “But understanding environmental contamination issues is more complicated. We don’t necessarily see the pollution, sometimes you can’t smell it and yet it’s there.”

Treatment plants are designed to remove most pollutants from wastewater before it is discharged—frequently into the same rivers used to supply drinking water to communities downstream. Initial treatment is focused on removing solid waste, pulling out heavier sludge after it settles in massive tanks and skimming off floating grease, plastics and other materials. A secondary, microbial treatment is meant to remove dissolved organic compounds, with hungry bacteria chewing through lingering contaminants.

During rainy storms and floods, inundated utilities generally focus on treating as much wastewater as possible, sometimes bypassing the secondary, microbial cleaning process when they near max capacity.

‘Protect those bugs’

“The secondary treatment process is a very finely tuned group of organisms and bacteria, and if you get too much flow through this secondary process, it kills all your bugs,” Gardner-Andrews said. “So what you’re trying to do as a treatment plant operator during these extreme events is protect those bugs at all cost so once the rain goes away and the waters get back to normal you’re back online immediately.”

Many parts of Florida and Texas face infrastructure challenges even when they aren’t deluged by rain because of rapid population growth. Some of the nation’s fastest-growing counties are in the hurricane zone, according to U.S. Census data compiled by Bloomberg.

Four of the 10 fastest-growing coastal counties in the eastern U.S. are in Florida. The Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach metropolitan area grew by 9 percent, adding about 500,000 people from 2010 to 2016. And St. Johns County, south of Jacksonville, grew by almost 24 percent during the same time frame, adding roughly 45,000 people.

Aging infrastructure may not be able to keep up with the demands of a surging southern population. In many cases, such as in south Florida, elements of the sewer system range from 60 to 70 years old, with pipelines that are even older, said Kelly Cox, a staff attorney and program director for the environmental group Miami Waterkeeper.

“You throw a hurricane on top of that, and you are starting to see a lot more problems,” she said.

To become more resilient, utilities need to assess their risks and take action such as building berms, constructing dikes or adding elevation, Kopocis said, but “this stuff isn’t necessarily cheap.”

Some solutions may lie well beyond the treatment plants themselves. Cities constructed of impermeable concrete and pavement can encourage more ecologically sustainable development—everything from green roofs to more porous materials.

Local government officials and utilities also are lobbying Congress to pack wastewater spending into a broad infrastructure package, reminding lawmakers that already aging plants are going to be taxed by more frequent, more intense storms.

“If these outlier events are now going to become the norm, then we really need to be looking significantly at how do we make these utilities more resilient.” Gardner-Andrews said. “These weather events are a perfect example of why water in general needs to be a critical part of any infrastructure package.”

—With assistance from John McCormick, Terrence Dopp, Bailey Lipschultz and Nathan Crooks.

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Hurricanes Highlight Failure to Enforce Flood Insurance Rules

Posted September 13, 2017, 12:18 P.M. ET

By [Christopher Flavelle](#)

As the floodwaters of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma recede, they may reveal more than moldy drywall and fetid trash. They could lay bare the federal government’s failure to police a basic tenet of its own disaster policy: that properties with -government-backed mortgages in risky areas carry flood insurance. The government has known for decades that homeowners in flood zones often don’t have the insurance they should. Just two years ago, the Federal Emergency Management Agency estimated that as few as half of the 1.5 million residential structures required to carry flood insurance actually do. It can’t be sure, though: FEMA isn’t responsible for tracking that kind of data—nor is any other agency.

“This is a huge blind spot,” says Samantha Medlock, a senior adviser to President Obama on flood insurance policy. Homeowners with lapsed insurance could “mistakenly believe that if their luck runs out, the federal government will come in and take care of them,” she says.

The magnitude of the risk is revealed partly by the numbers of uninsured homes in the paths of the recent storms. More than 80 percent of homeowners in the Texas counties hit by Harvey lack flood insurance, according to a Washington Post analysis. In Florida, FEMA estimated in 2015 that as many as 43 percent of those required to have coverage didn’t. And as climate change and coastal development increase the number of homes at risk, it’s becoming harder for the federal government

to keep ignoring the problem.

When a mortgage is issued, the lender is supposed to check whether the home is in a flood plain, and if so, it should require the owner to acquire insurance. When that mortgage is sold to investors, the company that services it must make sure the premiums are paid or pay them through escrow. If the coverage lapses, the servicer is supposed to buy coverage on the homeowner's behalf, then add the premiums to the mortgage payments.

Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and government entities own or guarantee 60 percent of U.S. mortgages. Lisa Tibbitts, a spokeswoman for Freddie Mac, says the insurer conducts yearly reviews of its loan portfolio, including rates of flood insurance coverage. "These reviews reveal a very low percentage of noncompliance," she says.

And yet, since 2012, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, which regulates federal banks, has fined at least 27 institutions for failing to meet their obligations on flood insurance. Experts in flood insurance policy say the process appears to break down after the mortgage is made. Homeowners required to carry insurance typically keep paying their premiums for just two to four years, said University of Pennsylvania researchers in a 2012 study.

"There are plenty of areas to pass the buck in the chain of mortgage finance," says Nela Richardson, chief economist for Redfin Corp. "That's what makes it ultimately hard to track." The National Mortgage Servicing Association, a trade group that represents servicers, didn't respond to a request for comment. Four of the five largest servicers as identified by Inside Mortgage Finance declined to provide information about how many of their mortgages even require flood insurance, let alone how many comply. About 4 percent of mortgages at Wells Fargo & Co., the country's largest servicer, require the insurance, according to spokesman Tom Goyda. He declined to say how many of those homeowners had stopped paying their premiums or how much time typically goes by between a policy lapsing and Wells Fargo finding out about it.

Mortgage lenders and servicers that are lax about flood insurance tend to be penalized lightly. In March 2013 the OCC, which regulates federal banks, determined that Amarillo National Bank had been making or renewing loans without requiring the necessary flood insurance. The fine? All of \$7,250. In July 2015, Sumner National Bank of Sheldon in Illinois was fined just \$3,000 for allegedly engaging in a pattern of "making, modifying, or renewing loans" without requiring coverage. First Federal Community Bank in Dover, Ohio, got dinged for \$1,800. The banks neither admitted nor denied liability.

Ignoring flood insurance could soon become more costly for the mortgage industry, says Carolyn Kousky, a flood insurance expert at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. "So far there hasn't been enough of a default risk to motivate lenders to do more on their own, voluntarily, but we're seeing worse and worse events," she says. "After Harvey, we might see a different kind of response."

That's because uninsured homeowners with severe damage may decide their only option is to abandon the property and stop making mortgage payments. "If you've lost your home and you don't have insurance, that's a good time to walk away from your property," said R.J. Lehmann, an insurance expert at the R Street Institute, a libertarian research organization in Washington.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac can force servicers to buy mortgages they've sold or had guaranteed if they don't have the required flood insurance, according to the Federal Housing Finance Agency. Susan Wachter, a professor of finance at Wharton, says that's true—but it only works if the servicer has the money. And as flood events increase, so does the risk that individual servicers, which

increasingly aren't banks, will run out of funds.

"Servicers may be contractually on the line, but if they don't have the capital, then they can't pay up," Wachter says, adding that taxpayers could be further exposed if clusters of homes default at the same time, reducing the value of houses around them.

Some experts have suggested that the federal government should require all homes to have flood insurance. Another possibility is to have policies last as long as 10 years.

Whatever the fix, Harvey and Irma have given the federal government a brief window to change its policy.

"We can capitalize on this," says Howard Kunreuther, a director of the Risk Management and Decision Processes Center at Wharton. "If you don't take advantage after a disaster, you're missing a critical opportunity."

—With assistance from Heather Perlberg, Joe Light, and Jeanna Smialek

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Hunting, Species Protections Cut in Bill Approved at House Panel

Posted September 13, 2017, 03:42 P.M. ET

By [Brian Dabbs](#)

Hunters and gun enthusiasts would face fewer restrictions on using their weapons on federal land under a broad legislative package the House Natural Resources Committee approved Sept. 13, despite unanimous Democratic opposition.

The hunting and fishing [bill](#), sponsored by Rep. Jeff Duncan (R-S.C.) would indefinitely bar the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating lead metal shots and tackle, which environmental groups argue contaminate fish.

In a 22-13 vote, the panel approved the package to expand gun rights on federal land and ease fishing restrictions, while rejecting measures to permanently authorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund and study the environmental effects of a Mexico border wall.

Duncan's bill also broadly expands protections for firearm use on federal land and decreases the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives's authority to regulate rifle ammunition and silencers.

Republicans tout the bill as a boost to lawful recreation activities, but that position isn't shared across the aisle.

Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.), the ranking member on the committee, blasted the bill as a service to the National Rifle Association, and other Democrats followed suit. "This is the worst legislation I've come across in my time in Congress," Rep. Lacy Clay (D-Mo.) said.

Gray Wolf Protections Dropped

Committee members rejected 13-22 an attempt to block the legislation's instruction to delist the western Great Lakes gray wolf population from Interior Department protections.

The Democratic amendment intended to counteract a decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit last month that said the Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency within the Interior Department, failed to follow legal requirements in assessing the consequences of listing the species.

The Interior Department removed protections for the western Great Lakes gray wolf in 2011, claiming the population had recovered adequately. The legislation also would remove the gray wolf Wyoming population from protective status. The D.C. Circuit appeals court earlier this year gave the Interior Department the option to remove protections for that population.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund permanent reauthorization amendment failed 12-22, while the border wall amendment failed 12-22. Grijalva sponsored both amendments. The committee postponed consideration of several other Endangered Species Act bills originally planned for votes.

Encana Subsidiary Fined for Oil, Gas Spill on Game Ranch

Posted September 13, 2017, 03:29 P.M. ET

By [Tripp Baltz](#)

An Encana Corp. subsidiary agreed to pay a \$225,000 fine for spilling oil and gas on a game ranch in western Colorado.

Hunter Ridge LLC agreed to pay the fine in a settlement the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission approved Sept. 11. The company also will clean up water and soil contaminated by a leaking pipeline at the private big game hunting reserve operated by Bishop Ranch LLC near Parachute, Colo.

Encana discovered the leak in June 2016 and immediately eliminated the source of the release, Doug Hock, spokesman for the company in Denver, told Bloomberg BNA Sept. 13. Encana has since sold all of its Colorado assets, including its interest in Hunter Ridge, he said.

Carbon Rally Hits Brick Wall as Lawmakers Wrestle Glut Fix

Posted September 13, 2017, 8:26 A.M. ET

By [Mathew Carr](#)

After the biggest jump this year, European carbon price gains are unlikely to stick.

Emission allowances will fall 14 percent this month to levels that will probably be about the same by year-end, according to the median forecast in a survey of eight traders and analysts. Last week, prices jumped to a 20-month high on optimism over reforms to strengthen the world's biggest emissions market.

But futures fell this week as plans to limit the impact of Brexit on the 12-year-old carbon market highlighted the struggle European Union lawmakers face as they combat an oversupply. Efforts to reform the cap-and-trade system have repeatedly failed to increase the penalty for polluting, with

emission prices slumping by two thirds in the past 10 years.

“It’s probably not the end of the correction,” said Eugen Weinberg, the head of commodities research at Commerzbank AG in Frankfurt. “Some of the gains were excessive. Whoever was speculating on higher prices are probably taking their chips off the table.”

Carbon prices got a fillip earlier this month as France and Germany said they want agreement on a market overhaul before a United Nations climate meeting in Bonn in November. That was tempered this week as the EU started drafting measures to protect its trading system from the potential impact of Britain’s utilities and factories leaving the market. The U.K. was the bloc’s fourth-largest carbon emitter last year.

December allowances fell 1 percent this week to 7 euros (\$8.39) a metric ton on the ICE Futures Europe exchange in London. The contracts rose 21 percent last week.

Prices will decline to 6 euros a ton by the end of the month and be around there by the end of the year, according to the survey. The range for the end of 2017 was 5.50 euros to 8.25 euros. Prices need to be about 16 euros a ton to encourage utilities to switch to cleaner burning natural gas from coal, according to Bloomberg calculators.

As ministers debate proposals to control the glut, including a market reserve starting in 2019, supply is still swelling. Total auction sales this year will amount to a record 951 million metric tons, a third more than last year when the bloc was withholding supply as part of a past effort to deal with the glut.

Any good news about lawmakers progressing reforms is probably already priced in, said Elchin Mammadov, an analyst with Bloomberg Intelligence in London.

“The carbon price could come down as traders take profit,” Mammadov said.

—With assistance from Ewa Krukowska.

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China Plans to Expand Ethanol Use in Vehicles Nationwide by 2020

Posted September 13, 2017, 8:15 A.M. ET

By [Bloomberg News](#)

China plans to expand the use of ethanol gasoline for vehicles nationwide by 2020 from only 11 provinces now to improve the environment and accelerate reform in the agricultural sector.

The nation’s development in renewable liquid fuel is lagging behind other clean sources such as wind and solar, the National Energy Administration [said](#) in a statement on its website Sept. 13. China’s stockpiles of expired grain and annual output of more than 400 million metric tons of straw and forestry waste can be use as feedstock for expanded ethanol production, it said.

Fuel in the trial provinces requires gasoline to be blended with 10 percent ethanol, a formula that will likely be expanded nationwide, Tian Miao, a Beijing-based senior analyst at Sun Hung Kai Financial Ltd., said by phone. The NEA statement didn’t provide details on the mix. Biofuels accounted for

only 1 percent of country's oil product consumption in 2016, according to the NEA.

"Gasoline use will definitely get a blow from the replacement," Tian said.

China has overtaken the U.S. as the biggest importer of crude as its domestic production slips and demand for transportation fuels such as gasoline grows. Oil's grip on the world's largest automobile market may also weaken as the country intends to set a deadline to end the sales of fossil-fuel powered vehicles.

The volume of gasoline impacted may be between 10 million to 15 million tons by 2020, according to Li Li, a research director with ICIS China. The country's demand for gasoline is forecast to rise by an average 5.6 percent annually through 2020, according to China National Petroleum Corp.'s Economics & Technology Research Institute.

Expansion of fuel ethanol production and use will speed up reduction of the country's corn stockpiles, Li Qiang, chief analyst with Shanghai JC Intelligence Co., said. To meet growing ethanol demand in the future, China may either import U.S. supplies for blending or even U.S. corn, Li said.

—With assistance from Sarah Chen.

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Net Zero Plan for Carbon Sink Emissions Moves Ahead in EU

Posted September 13, 2017, 02:35 P.M. ET

By Stephen Gardner

European Union governments and landowners would have to make sure that net greenhouse gas emissions from forests and other carbon sinks remain at or below zero through 2030, under a draft regulation European Parliament approved Sept. 13.

The regulation could have an impact on agriculture, forestry, and wood-based industries such as pulp and paper, as governments and businesses implement systems to promote more sustainable practices to ensure that their land use, land-use change, and forestry (LULUCF) emissions do not rise.

Under the regulation, EU countries' land-use emissions from 2020 to 2030 would be compared against the average of carbon emissions and removals from 2000 to 2012. Countries with net LULUCF emissions reductions between 2020 and 2025 could bank credits for use in the second half of the 2020s, or to offset emissions from sectors such as construction and transportation, which are subject to separate EU rules.

Ulrich Leberle, raw materials director of the Confederation of European Paper Industries in Brussels, told Bloomberg BNA Sept. 13 that the regulation would broadly benefit companies that process or use forest products because it would encourage active sustainable forest management and hasten the transition from "fossil-based materials being substituted by bio-based materials."

Forest resources in the EU are underutilized and the regulation would reduce the need for imported materials that might come from countries without sustainability standards, Leberle added.

Norbert Lins, a German center-right lawmaker responsible for preparing the European Parliament's position on the LULUCF regulation, said at a Sept. 13 briefing that rules on carbon sinks would complement existing EU measures on emissions trading. They would also address emissions reductions for economic sectors not covered by emissions trading. Together, all these measures would put the EU on track to meet its international climate commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030 compared to 1990, Lins said.

European Parliament lawmakers sitting in Strasbourg, France, adopted the draft regulation on LULUCF Sept. 13 in a 532–144 vote, with 20 abstentions.

To be finalized, the Parliament's version of the draft regulation must be reconciled with that of the Council of the EU, which represents the governments of the bloc's 28 countries. The council has not yet agreed on its position on the draft regulation.

Ab Inbev Buys Enough Wind Power to Brew 20 Billion Beers

Posted September 13, 2017, 11:18 A.M. ET

By [Joe Ryan](#)

Anheuser-Busch InBev NV, the world's largest brewer, agreed to buy 152.5 megawatts from a wind farm Enel SpA is building in Oklahoma. That's enough power to make 20 billion 12-ounce (355-milliliter) bottles of beers a year.

The deal with the Thunder Ranch wind farm will supply about half of the electricity that AB InBev buys each year, up from about 2 percent now, the company said in an emailed statement Sept. 13. The move is part of the company's plan to power all its operations with renewable energy by 2025.

Enel, Italy's biggest utility, is building Thunder Ranch in Garfield, Kay and Noble counties, between Oklahoma City and the Kansas border. The project, totaling 298 megawatts, is scheduled to be operational by the end of the year.

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Dow Soybeans Opposed in EU; Monsanto Corn Wins in Italy

Posted September 13, 2017, 03:15 P.M. ET

By [Stephen Gardner](#)

The European Union should stop importing Dow AgroSciences' genetically modified soybean products because it encourages greater use of hazardous herbicides in non-EU countries, the European Parliament said Sept. 13.

Lawmakers voted 433-216 in favor of the nonbinding resolution to halt imports of food and feed derived from the Dow soybeans (DAS-68416-4).

The Parliament doesn't have the authority to block the approval of the soybean—that power rests with regulatory committees of member states—but regularly adopts resolutions objecting to approved genetically modified crops on the grounds that the bloc's system for authorizations is flawed and undemocratic.

The regulatory committees commonly deadlock on whether to go ahead with approvals because EU countries are divided on genetically modified crops. In such cases, the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, adopts the authorizations if the European Food Safety Authority has found the genetically modified crops to be safe.

Regulatory committees of EU country representatives examined the bloc's authorization of the Dow soybean, and the "file is now on the desk of the Commission for final EU import authorization," Filip Cnudde, Dow's EU government affairs and science policy leader, told Bloomberg BNA.

Dow "regrets" that the Parliament continues to adopt nonbinding resolutions "against biotech products," even though the European Food Safety Authority has cleared the products' safety, Cnudde said.

'Based on Science'

The Parliament also said Dow's soybeans shouldn't be approved because they are resistant to herbicides containing 2,4-dichlorophenol, which is classified in the EU as harmful to skin and toxic to aquatic life. The chemical's use in non-EU countries could rise if cultivation of the soybean increases to meet the bloc's demand, the lawmakers' resolution said.

The chemical "may be present" in imported soybeans and soy products and could pose a risk to reproductive health, according to the lawmakers' resolution.

Industry group EuropaBio said in a statement to Bloomberg BNA Sept. 13 that, in line with the EU approvals system, the commission should authorize the soybean based on the European Food Safety Authority's positive assessment.

Cnudde said the commission should "keep the approval process based on science."

Court Backs Monsanto Corn

In a separate development, the EU Court of Justice Sept. 13 ruled that Italy wrongly adopted emergency measures in 2013 that blocked the country's cultivation of Monsanto's MON810 genetically modified corn.

Italian authorities adopted an emergency ban on environmental and health grounds, despite the European Food Safety Authority finding MON810 to be safe. Italian farmers that subsequently cultivated MON810 were prosecuted.

EuropaBio told Bloomberg BNA that the ruling sent "an important signal in favor of science-based decision making, and against bans of safe products," but would not have a "direct impact" on genetically modified crops in the EU.

The EU Court of Justice said in a Sept. 13 statement that such an emergency ban could not be implemented "where it is not evident that genetically modified products are likely to constitute a serious risk to human health, animal health, or the environment."

The EU updated its rules on cultivation of genetically modified crops in 2015 to allow EU countries to opt-out of EU-level authorizations, thus making use of emergency measures to block cultivation redundant. Subsequently, 19 EU countries including Italy implemented opt-outs for all or part of their

territory.

Juliette Leroux, an official with the Green political group in the European Parliament, told Bloomberg BNA Sept. 13 that the 2015 rules meant the Court of Justice's ruling was "not really relevant anymore," because it related to now obsolete legislation.

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