

# Earthweek: Diary of a Changing World

By Steve Newman

Week ending Friday, May 10, 2024

## Dairy Protection

A new report in *The New England Journal of Medicine* suggests that U.S. dairy farm workers should now wear protective gear to prevent infection from avian influenza in cattle.

The virus is believed to have been circulating among U.S. dairy cows since late last year. It infected one worker in March who was wearing gloves but no respiratory or eye protection.

The worker suffered conjunctivitis, or pink eye, but showed no signs of respiratory infection or fever.

He had been in close contact with sick cows that had experienced decreased milk production, reduced appetite and lethargy due to bird flu infections.

## Earthquakes

Strong aftershocks continued to jolt a wide area of Taiwan following the deadly April 3 temblor that caused 18 fatalities and collapsed buildings.

• Earth movements were also felt in the Philippine islands of Leyte and Samar, Vancouver Island, northern Utah, central Oklahoma and the northeastern Caribbean.

## Leafhopper Plague

Argentina's typically abundant corn crop is being ravaged by an invasion of leafhopper bugs, which are now infesting fields formerly too cool for them to thrive and damage crops.

With climate change bringing less winter frost to curb their numbers and regular summertime heat waves for them to feed in, leafhopper populations in Argentina are now at 10 times the average level, according to agriculture experts.

The ravenous bugs are currently being found about 1,000 miles south of their traditional habitats.

The Rosario provincial grain exchange in the main corn region of the country estimates that leafhopper-related corn losses will be \$1.13 billion this year.

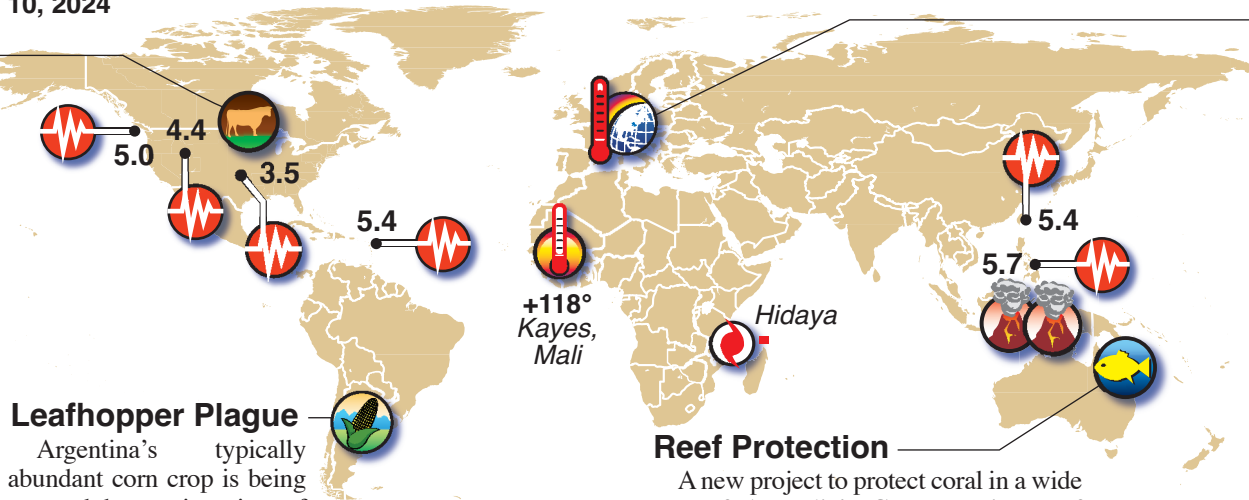
## Eruptions

Indonesia will permanently move almost 10,000 residents from the danger zone around Ruang volcano in North Sulawesi province due to the threat of further explosive eruptions.

Authorities raised the alert status of the volcano to the highest level and warned of a possible tsunami if parts of the mountain collapse into the ocean.

• Indonesia's Mount Ibu spewed ash high above the island of Halmahera in the eastern province of North Maluku.

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## Reef Protection

A new project to protect coral in a wide area of Australia's Great Barrier Reef may be expanded after initial efforts to cull predatory and destructive crown-of-thorns starfish showed great success.

Preliminary undertakings to remove the relentless feeders in a test area kept that part of the reef stable and even resulted in an increase in coral coverage by up to 44%.

Divers from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority kill the starfish by injecting them with either vinegar or ox bile, which also keeps them from releasing larvae to infest other areas.



Once cleared of destructive starfish, Great Barrier Reef coral managed to survive and even grow during recent bleaching events. Photo: CSIRO

## Heating Records

A combination of climate change and El Niño resulted in the world's oceans being the hottest on record every single day during the past year, according to data from Europe's Copernicus Climate Change Service.

The BBC analysis reveals that ocean warmth was hotter by a wide margin than in any previous year, and that the first four months of 2024 have already been significantly warmer than in the same period last year.

A survey by *The Guardian* of hundreds of the world's climate scientists highlights that the experts believe global heating will now far surpass the goals to limit it, rising this century to at least 2.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels.

"[Authorities] will be overwhelmed by extreme event after extreme event ... I could not feel greater despair over the future," Greta Pecl at the University of Tasmania told the daily.

## African Cyclone

Coastal Tanzania was drenched by heavy rainfall from Cyclone Hidaya, which formed unusually far north off the coast of Africa.

