

POLICY

Climategate closed

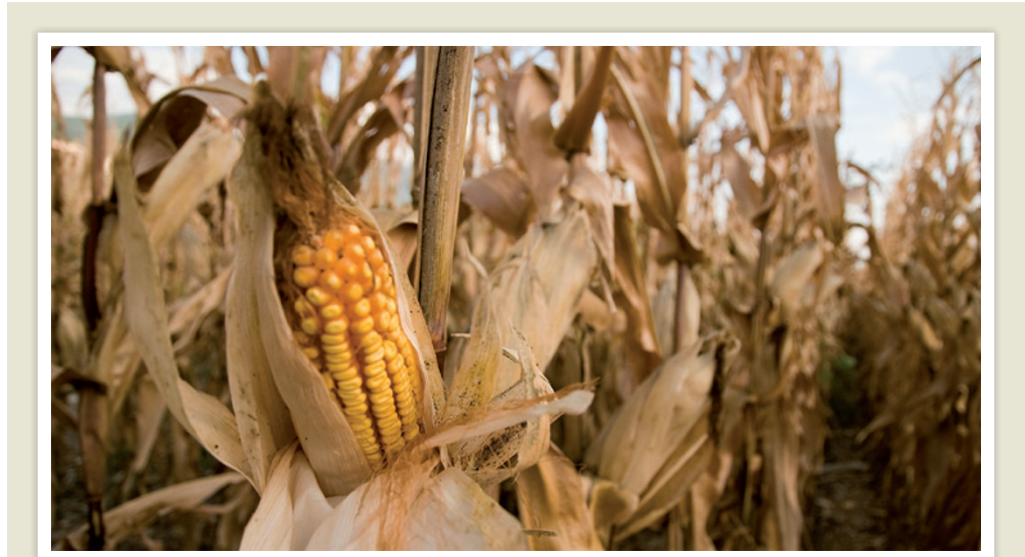
Regional police have closed their investigation into the November 2009 release of e-mails from scientists at the Climatic Research Unit (CRU) at the University of East Anglia (UEA) in Norwich, UK. The Norfolk constabulary said on 18 July that they had no realistic prospect of identifying the offenders within legal time constraints, but that the data breach “was the result of a sophisticated and carefully orchestrated attack on the CRU’s data files, carried out remotely via the Internet”. The investigation cleared anyone associated with UEA from involvement with the crime. See go.nature.com/rzkbwg for more.

Romania plagiarism

Two investigations into the case of alleged plagiarism by Romania’s prime minister, Victor Ponta, have reached opposite conclusions, increasing the tension in a fierce struggle over political power in Bucharest. Ponta is accused of copying large sections of his 2003 PhD thesis on the International Criminal Court (see *Nature* **486**, 305; 2012). On 19 July, the government-appointed National Ethics Council rejected the plagiarism charges

JOURNALISM AWARD

Freelance journalist Stephen S. Hall last week won the American Geophysical Union’s Walter Sullivan award for Excellence in Science Journalism—Features for his article ‘At fault?’ (*Nature* **477**, 264–269; 2011), which examined why seismologists were placed on trial after an earthquake devastated L’Aquila, Italy, in 2009.



S. MCCALL/GETTY IMAGES

US crops wilt in drought

The most extensive US drought in more than half a century has seen prices for maize (corn) and soya beans leap to record highs. The National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, North Carolina, said on 16 July that moderate to extreme drought was affecting 55% of

the continental United States — the highest proportion since December 1956. On 23 July, the US Department of Agriculture said that it would help farmers and ranchers by allowing haying and grazing on some land usually protected in conservation programmes.

against Ponta. But one day later, an ethics commission set up by the University of Bucharest — which awarded Ponta his PhD — said that he did copy and paste large sections of his thesis. See go.nature.com/mfm8x8 for more.

Science education

US President Barack Obama announced a plan on 17 July to create a corps of exceptional, or ‘master’, teachers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Using \$1 billion dedicated for the purpose in Obama’s 2013 budget request, the corps would start with 2,500 teachers — rising to 10,000 in the next four years — who would receive an annual bonus of up to \$20,000 for their work. The budget request may not pass Congress, but \$100 million from an existing

teacher-incentive fund is now being used to help schools to identify and develop effective STEM teachers.

Clinical trials

The European Commission has adopted proposals for new rules to replace its directive on clinical trials, which set out how medical research is regulated across Europe. Many scientists criticize the decade-old directive for being excessively bureaucratic, and think that it has driven clinical research away from Europe. The reforms, formally proposed on 17 July, would create a centralized applications procedure for trials that are run in more than one country, and include a plan to inspect the regulation of trials in other countries such as China and India. See go.nature.com/fhslei for more.

EVENTS

Arctic iceberg

A 120-square-kilometre floating tongue of ice broke off the Petermann glacier on the Greenland ice sheet on 16 July. Although almost twice the area of Manhattan, it is less than half the size of the 260-square-kilometre iceberg that broke free of the same glacier (one of Greenland’s largest) in August 2010.

Fukushima work

Workers on 18 July removed two unused fuel rods from the spent fuel pool of Fukushima Daiichi’s unit 4 reactor. The reactor was shut down at the time of the earthquake and tsunami that led to meltdowns in other reactors last March, but the stability of its fuel pool — holding fresh as well as spent fuel rods — has

R. SACHS/GNP/CORBIS

caused concern. The rods will reportedly be checked for signs of corrosion and moved to another building on site. A more permanent structure will be built over unit 4 before fuel removal can begin in earnest next year.

RESEARCH

Child study revamp

Leaders of the US National Children's Study have released a revised design for the ambitious effort to track influences on the health of 100,000 American children from before birth to age 21. An earlier proposed revamp, designed to cut costs, had been criticized for its selective sampling method; the new proposal, released on 24 July, would enrol women from birthing hospitals across the country, creating a sample representative of the US population. To cut costs, it would track only some 60% of participants while they are in the womb. The US Congress may require a report from the Institute of Medicine before any changes are made to the current design.

PEOPLE

Sally Ride dies

Scientist, astronaut and educator Sally Ride (pictured), who was the first US woman in space, died on



23 July, aged 61. Ride's first space flight was aboard the shuttle *Challenger* in June 1983; she later served on the commissions investigating the *Challenger* and *Columbia* shuttle disasters. After working at NASA, she headed the California Space Institute in San Diego, and founded a company, Sally Ride Science, to encourage students to study the sciences. See go.nature.com/immsvq for more.

BUSINESS

Gene therapy

Europe's drugs regulator has for the first time recommended a gene therapy for approval. Glybera, a treatment for a rare disease in which patients cannot produce enough lipoprotein lipase (an enzyme crucial for breaking down fat), was backed by the European Medicines Agency's Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use. The 20 July recommendation

must also be endorsed by the European Commission before the therapy becomes available, but a rejection would be unusual. The treatment is owned by uniQure, a company based in Amsterdam; it has been tested on only 27 patients. See go.nature.com/ieekp for more.

Sequencing prize

A US\$10-million contest to sequence the genomes of 100 centenarians in 30 days has its first entrant: Ion Torrent (a subsidiary of Life Technologies). The company, based in Guilford, Connecticut, said on 23 July that it would attempt to win the Archon Genomics X Prize, which is offered by the non-profit X Prize Foundation in Playa Vista, California. The contest requires a cost-per-genome below \$1,000. See page 417 for more.

Second obesity pill

Just weeks after it approved its first weight-loss drug in 13 years, the US Food and Drug Administration on 17 July gave the green light to a second obesity treatment: Qsymia (phentermine plus topiramate) from Vivus of Mountain View, California. Just like the recently approved Belviq (lorcaserin), Qsymia was rejected by the agency in 2010 because of safety concerns. New data led to its

COMING UP

29 JULY–3 AUGUST
Europe's largest congress on plant science takes place in Freiburg, Germany; topics include the consequences of climate change, and genetically modifying plants to feed the world's population.
go.nature.com/m12812

2 AUGUST
The governing board of the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas meets publicly in Austin. Its agenda includes approval decisions on seven research grants, worth US\$39 million, that were sidelined in March amid controversy over the institute's review process (see *Nature* 486, 169–171; 2012).
go.nature.com/qzpdov

approval — although it carries a warning that those taking the drug should have their heart rates monitored. See go.nature.com/vtcifa for more.

Gene patents redux

A court ruling that allows companies to patent DNA was challenged again in a Washington DC appeals court hearing on 20 July. A court decided last year that patents on genes are valid, as part of its ruling on patents held by Myriad Genetics of Salt Lake City, Utah. But the case was reopened after two separate patents covering a way to determine drug dosage, from Prometheus Laboratories in San Diego, California, were overturned because they were based on 'laws of nature' (which cannot be patented in the United States). See go.nature.com/8pklwr for more.

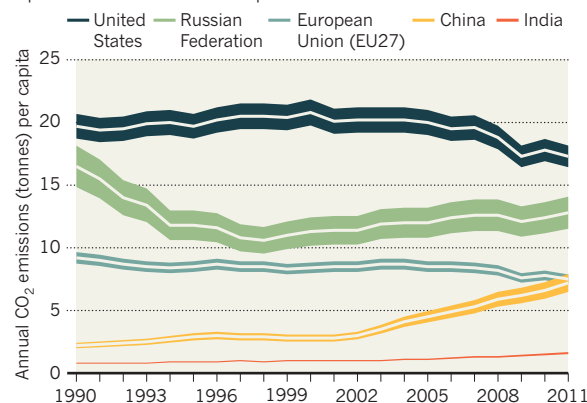
NATURE.COM
For daily news updates see:
www.nature.com/news

TREND WATCH

For years, China has played down concerns about its rising carbon dioxide emissions, saying that on a per-capita basis they are lower than those of their counterparts in the industrialized world. But according to an analysis of 2011 emissions, released on 18 July by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre and the PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, this is no longer true (see chart). Total emissions rose 3% in 2011 to around 34 billion tonnes. See go.nature.com/ouxnfg for more.

CHINA'S EMISSIONS RISE

China's per-capita carbon emissions are now on a par with those from the European Union.



SOURCE: JRC/PBL