U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture



Collin C. Peterson, Minnesota Chairman

http://agriculture.house.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Thursday, March 26, 2009 Media Contact: April Demert Slayton (202) 225-6872 april.slayton@mail.house.gov

House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin C. Peterson Statement on Vilsack Announcement of Dairy Purchases

WASHINGTON - House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin C. Peterson applauded U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's announcement today that USDA plans to purchase about 200 million pounds of nonfat dry milk for domestic feeding programs, offering relief to dairy farmers and low income families challenged by tough economic times.

In January, a bipartisan group of 36 Members of Congress sent a letter encouraging Secretary Vilsack to use USDA authority to make dairy purchases for feeding programs. The Members expressed concern for dairy farmers who are faced with milk prices 25 percent lower than last year and feed prices 15 percent higher. They also highlighted the fact that a record number of Americans, more than 31 million people, qualified for benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at the end of 2008.

"This is a win-win situation that will offer relief to our nation's dairy farmers who are suffering from high input costs and declining milk prices and to low income American families who are finding it harder to put healthy food on the table during these difficult economic times," Chairman Peterson said.

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U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture



Collin C. Peterson, Minnesota Chairman

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE May 22, 2009

Media Contact: April Demert Slayton (202) 225-6872 april.slayton@mail.house.gov

Peterson Applauds Vilsack Announcement on DEIP

WASHINGTON - Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin C. Peterson expressed his appreciation for Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's decision to use the Dairy Export Incentive Program to assist U.S. dairy farmers who are suffering from record low prices nation-wide. Peterson strongly encouraged the Administration to take this action to provide relief to dairy farmers.

"I want to thank USDA Secretary Vilsack for supporting U.S. dairy farmers by using the Dairy Export Incentive Program (DEIP). Dairy farmers across the country are struggling to survive because of low prices and too much product on the market, and DEIP is an important tool that we can use to manage surplus and support producers," Peterson said. "I have encouraged Secretary Vilsack to take these steps to help dairy farmers, and I am pleased that we are able to announce the DEIP purchases today."

Chairman Peterson and a bipartisan group of members on the House Agriculture Committee wrote to encourage Secretary Vilsack to use DEIP and other programs to help struggling dairy farmers. Peterson also discussed the issue during regular conversations with Secretary Vilsack.

The Dairy Export Incentive Program provides incentive payments to U.S. dairy exporters to counter foreign dairy subsidies and to develop markets for U.S. dairy products abroad. Use of the program is consistent with existing U.S. commitments under the WTO Uruguay Round Agreement. It is one tool that U.S. policy makers can use to support U.S. dairy producers during difficult economic times.

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U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture



Collin C. Peterson, Minnesota Chairman

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE June 24, 2009

Media Contact: Scott Kuschmider (202) 225-1496 scott.kuschmider@mail.house.gov

Subcommittee Reviews Farm Policy Implementation

WASHINGTON – Today, the House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management held the first of two hearings this week to review implementation of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA), commonly known as the Farm Bill. Congressman Leonard Boswell of Iowa is Chairman of the Subcommittee.

"For me, the Farm Bill is one of the most important pieces of legislation Congress works on because every man, woman, and child has a vested interested in agriculture," said Chairman Boswell. "The programs in the 2008 Farm Bill ensure our farmers have a strong safety net they can rely on, thus guaranteeing the United States has the safest, most plentiful, and affordable food supply in the world. While there have been some bumps along the way to implement the programs, producers are eager to have the rules and regulations finalized so they can continue providing the world with an adequate and affordable food supply."

"It has been over a year since the 2008 Farm Bill was enacted and it is appropriate for this Subcommittee to look at how it is being implemented in the countryside," said Ranking Member Jerry Moran of Kansas. "We also need to examine the effectiveness of the various farm programs and determine whether the programs could be improved in the future."

The Subcommittee heard testimony from a panel of witnesses representing major farm and commodity producer groups. Enacted into law last May, the FCEA made historic investments in nutrition, conservation, renewable energy and farm programs while including significant payment limit and income eligibility reforms. The bill garnered the support of more than one thousand farm, specialty crop, conservation, nutrition, consumer and religious organizations.

The Subcommittee will continue its review of farm policy implementation tomorrow at 10 a.m. Under Secretary of Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services James Miller is scheduled to testify.

Written testimony provided by the witnesses is available on the Committee website: http://agriculture.house.gov/hearings/index.html. A full transcript of the hearing will be posted on the Committee website at a later date.

Witness List:

Panel I

- Mr. Bob Stallman, President, American Farm Bureau Federation, Washington, D.C.
- Mr. Ron Litterer, Chairman, National Corn Growers Association, Greene, Iowa
- Mr. John W. Hardwick, Chairman, National Cotton Council, Cordova, Tennessee
- Mr. Erik Younggren, Secretary-Treasurer, National Association of Wheat Growers, Washington, D.C.
- Mr. Roger Johnson, President, National Farmers Union, Washington, D.C.

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U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture



Collin C. Peterson, Minnesota Chairman

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE June 25, 2009

Media Contact: Scott Kuschmider (202) 225-1496 scott.kuschmider@mail.house.gov

Subcommittee Continues Review of Farm Policy Implementation

WASHINGTON – Today, the House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management held its second hearing in as many days to review implementation of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA), commonly known as the Farm Bill. Congressman Leonard Boswell of Iowa is Chairman of the Subcommittee.

"We had good discussion today on the status of many vital programs to our farmers and ranchers safety net," said Chairman Boswell. "USDA is working hard to ensure our county Farm Service Agency offices are up to speed on programs such as Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE). I am also anxious to see the rules for the Supplemental Revenue Assistance (SURE) disaster program. With the implementation of this program we will decrease the need for Congress to pass ad hoc disaster assistance every year and increase the producer's ability to make the best decision for their operation."

"Yesterday we heard from producers about their concerns with implementation of the 2008 farm bill," said Ranking Member Jerry Moran. "It was good that we were able to raise their concerns with Under Secretary Miller today. I hope USDA will quickly work to address the concerns that were raised by Subcommittee members in today's hearing."

The Subcommittee heard testimony from new USDA Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services (FFAS) Under Secretary James Miller. FFAS oversees three agencies charged with implementing FCEA provisions: the Risk Management Agency, the Farm Service Agency, and the Foreign Agricultural Service. Yesterday, the Subcommittee reviewed FCEA implementation with witness testimony from major farm and producer groups.

Written testimony provided by witnesses for both hearings are available on the Committee website: http://agriculture.house.gov/hearings/index.html. A full transcript of the hearing will be posted on the Committee website at a later date.

Witness List:

Panel I

Mr. James Miller, Under Secretary of Agriculture, Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

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USDA MOVES TO THE MICROSOFT CLOUD

First Cabinet-Level Agency Leveraging Cloud Services to Increase Collaboration, Communications and Productivity

Washington, Dec. 8, 2010 - The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today that it is on the verge of going live with a commercial cloud service offering for its Enterprise Messaging Service (EMS) which includes email, web conferencing, document collaboration, and instant messaging. USDA will become the first cabinet-level agency to move its e-mail and collaboration applications to the "cloud," a rapidly growing form of computing involving flexible, scalable services delivered over the internet.

With the maturity of commercial cloud services, and as part of its internal EMS solution to consolidate 120,000 users spread across 21 email systems, USDA awarded a competed contract to Dell in May 2010 for Microsoft Online Services. This migration is the culmination of USDA CIO Chris Smith's effort to streamline agency messaging, reduce costs and improve efficiencies that build on existing infrastructure and allow USDA to extend its on-premise software investments agreements to the cloud solution. The software as a service deployment will include Exchange Online for messaging and calendaring, SharePoint Online for document collaboration, Office Communications Online for instant messaging and Office Live Meeting for web conferencing.

Over the past six months USDA has worked closely with Dell and Microsoft on a comprehensive set of plans and actions required to successfully migrate 120,000 plus users to the cloud solution. USDA expects to begin moving employees within the next four weeks and has granted Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) Authority to Operate (ATO) for the Microsoft cloud infrastructure, certifying that it provides a trustworthy foundation for operations.

"Migrating an enterprise of USDA's size and complexity from multiple environments, across multiple agencies, requires not only a trusted enterprise-ready solution, but also a partner who is able to work with us and navigate everything from archiving to authentication to mobile phone support," said USDA CIO Chris Smith. "USDA's IT modernization will allow us to streamline our operations and help us use taxpayer dollars more efficiently. With a focused cloud roadmap, we saw a clear opportunity to achieve our cost savings and consolidation goals, and tap into the promise of the cloud."

With a distributed workforce and broad mission -- ranging from natural resource conservation and improving rural prosperity to homeland security and food safety -- USDA agencies of all sizes will leverage enterprise collaborative capabilities, such as global address lists, full calendar synchronization, integrated voice mail and email, delegated administration, read receipts, distribution lists and offline capabilities. Using the agency's existing enterprise directories, USDA's move to a consolidated cloud service will deliver the latest secure innovations and updates in real time. Significant improvements in productivity and communication across USDA's operations means that, for example, employees at USDA will now be able to collaborate within and across mission areas, see colleagues' availability, choose the most appropriate medium to communicate in, and streamline messaging through improved capabilities for mass communications.

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"USDA's vision of maximizing efficiencies and improving productivity across a vast enterprise through the cloud will be a model for large government agencies," said Curt Kolcun, Microsoft's vice president of U.S. Public Sector. "With the Microsoft cloud productivity solution, USDA employees will benefit from having better access to information, improved collaboration and information sharing. This comprehensive approach lays out a foundation for greater innovation, money savings and better citizen services."

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Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Announces New Steps to Meet the Challenge of Climate Change

CANCUN, Mexico, Dec. 9, 2010 - Calling it "one of the greatest threats facing our planet," Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that USDA is taking action to meet the challenge of climate change. Speaking at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, the Secretary said USDA continues to take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions "by helping farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to be even better conservationists."

"We remain focused on steps to advance clean energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions while growing our economy," said Vilsack. "Farmers, ranchers and forest owners have a great deal to contribute to mitigating climate change, while also ensuring that farms adapt to climate change, and they can benefit by embracing a range of conservation practices."

Vilsack said USDA will demonstrate ways landowners can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon sequestration while improving their financial bottom line. The effort includes providing opportunities to leverage private sector demand for greenhouse gas mitigation services, evaluating how emerging greenhouse gas markets can work in concert with USDA programs to protect the environment, and building capacity within USDA to understand voluntary greenhouse gas markets and to explore improved approaches for greenhouse gas accounting systems.

Among the steps announced today, Vilsack said USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide \$15 million in Conservation Innovation Grant funds and other assistance to support large-scale demonstration projects to accelerate the adoption of new approaches to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and promote carbon sequestration on private lands. As part of this, NRCS will provide financial assistance to support eligible producers as they implement conservation practices associated with these selected GHG projects.

Additionally, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) will implement a project to provide information to landowners who enroll in certain tree planting conservation practices under the Conservation Reserve Program and who voluntarily request an estimate of the amount of carbon stored as a result of these practices. FSA will develop a communications tool to link companies, organizations and participants in carbon storage activities and information sharing. The project will begin next year.

Vilsack also announced the release of USDA's Climate Change Science Plan. The plan's objective is to incorporate management of the challenges created by climate change into the scientific missions of USDA. It provides a guide for the Department on scientific priorities to better serve USDA stakeholders by providing them with information about the impact of climate change and it outlines options to mitigate emissions and help producers adapt to expected change.

In addition, the Secretary announced that institutions in seven States were awarded Federal funding for research on the economics of reducing agricultural greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. USDA will fund studies to examine the economics of agricultural participation in proposed greenhouse gas markets, including the potential impacts on GHG reduction. The projects will help identify cost-effective ways farmers can reduce emissions and also help

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design the incentives for their participation in greenhouse gas markets or other agricultural programs. For more information click here.

He also noted that the U.S. Forest Service, which manages 193 million acres of forest and grasslands, has taken a number of steps over the last year to integrate climate change considerations into day-to-day operations. A scorecard has been developed to measure the progress of each of the National Forests and Grasslands in integrating climate change considerations into forest management. Also, the Forest Service has developed a National Roadmap for Responding to Climate Change to make forests more resilient to climate change impacts, manage greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon storage. As part of the scorecard and the roadmap development, the Forest Service is integrating climate change into a new National Planning Rule that will govern the way management plans are written for all National Forests.

Vilsack underscored USDA's commitment to working with international partners through the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases, which was launched a year ago at the Copenhagen Climate Change meeting. The alliance is focused on identifying ways to sustain and improve food production systems, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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Statement from Agriculture Secretary Vilsack on U.S.-Mexico Agricultural Trade Relationship

MERIDA, Mexico, Dec. 10, 2010 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today issued the following statement following his meeting with Mexican Agricultural Secretary Francisco Mayorga on agriculture and trade:

"Today, Secretary Mayorga and I had a very productive exchange on a wide range of issues of pressing importance to both the United States and Mexico. Our two countries have a mutually beneficial relationship that serves us well. Mexico is the second largest market for U.S. agricultural exports, while the United States is by far the largest export market for Mexican agricultural products.

"Our countries have been committed to making North America a competitive production area for exporting agricultural products to the world since the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. This involves the ever-deepening integration of Canadian, Mexican and U.S. production, processing and marketing infrastructure as well as adoption of modern production technologies.

"Our highly integrated agricultural sectors will present challenges to our agricultural relationship from time to time, however we both expressed a commitment to work together to quickly resolve any issues before they negatively affect trade. The United States government will continue to work with the Mexican government to achieve positive, measurable results from our collaboration on a broad range of activities, including agricultural extension education, biotechnology, animal and plant health, disease control, and trade liberalization."

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China Agrees to Significant Intellectual Property Rights Enforcement Initiatives, Market Opening, and Revisions to its Indigenous Innovation Policies That Will Help Boost U.S. Exports at the 21st Session of the U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade

WASHINGTON, Dec.15, 2010 — Today marked the end of the 21st session of the U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT) in Washington, DC. The JCCT was co-chaired by U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke and U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk along with Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack also participated in the discussions. Today's outcomes will make U.S. businesses more competitive in China, help boost U.S. exports and jobs, and increase market access for U.S. businesses, creators, innovators, entrepreneurs, farmers and ranchers seeking to do business in China.

Specifically, China agreed to significant initiatives in several areas, including intellectual property rights enforcement, open and neutral technology standards, clean energy, and government procurement. Importantly, on indigenous innovation, China agreed not to discriminate in government procurement based on the origin of intellectual property or to use discriminatory criteria to select industrial equipment. China also agreed to resume talks on beef market access.

"The 21st JCCT was both productive and effective," said Secretary Locke. "We were able to make progress on significant issues in a number of areas, and on other issues we have established channels that will allow us to continue our robust engagement and pursue timely solutions."

"China agreed to a series of intellectual property rights commitments that will protect American jobs. The commitments build on China's recently announced Special Campaign against counterfeiting and piracy," Ambassador Kirk said. "These commitments will have systemic consequences for the protection of U.S. innovation and creativity in China. We expect to see concrete and measurable results, including increased purchase and use of legal software, steps to eradicate the piracy of electronic journals, more effective rules for addressing Internet piracy, and a crack down on landlords who rent space to counterfeiters in China."

"China's announcement that it will not discriminate in government procurement decisions based on where the intellectual property component of the products was developed is a valuable outcome for America's innovators and entrepreneurs who can continue to create American jobs and selling to the Chinese Government without concern that they will be unfairly blocked from the market. We were also able to obtain China's commitment to accelerate its accession to the WTO's Government Procurement Agreement," said Ambassador Kirk. "China agreed to work with provincial and local governments and to submit a robust revised offer of coverage in 2011."

"China also committed to revise a major equipment catalogue, which covers heavy machinery and other industrial equipment, and not to use it to discriminate against foreign suppliers or provide prohibited subsidies," added Secretary Locke. "I am pleased as well with China's pledge to adhere to openness, non-discrimination, and transparency in its smart grid market, and to cooperate with the United States on smart grid standards, creating more opportunities in a market that is estimated to be worth \$600 billion," said Secretary Locke. "Similarly, China's commitment on technology neutrality for 3G and future technologies will

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ensure market access for American businesses to one of the world's largest telecommunications markets."

Agriculture Secretary Vilsack said, "I am pleased with the progress made today towards resolving our differences on beef access. Technical talks will resume as soon as possible with the goal of re-opening China's market in early 2011. This is a vital outcome for our farmers and ranchers, underscoring the importance of the JCCT in providing a forum for our stakeholders."

The United States and China also signed seven new agreements covering agricultural collaboration, soybean exports, statistics, and promotion of investment in the United States. In addition, the U.S. Trade Development Agency signed the Operating Framework Agreement that marks 10 years of its China program as well as grants for State Grid Smart Grid Standards Development and an Integrated Real Time Water Monitoring System Feasibility Study and Pilot Project.

Established in 1983, the JCCT is the main forum for addressing bilateral trade issues and promoting commercial opportunities between the United States and China.

For more details, you can download the JCCT fact sheet at www.commerce.gov or www.ustr.gov.

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USDA Announces Final Environmental Impact Statement for Genetically Engineered Alfalfa

WASHINGTON, Dec. 16, 2010 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced the availability of the final environmental impact statement (EIS) that evaluates the potential environmental effects of deregulating alfalfa genetically engineered (GE) to be resistant to the herbicide glyphosate, which is known commercially as Roundup. This GE alfalfa is commonly referred to as Roundup Ready (RR) alfalfa.

"Our goal with the EIS, first and foremost, is to recognize and consider the many concerns that we have heard from all segments of agriculture," said Secretary Vilsack. "We are equally committed to finding solutions that support not only the developers and users of biotechnology products, but growers who rely on purity in the non-genetically engineered seed supply."

USDA considered three alternatives during the preparation of the final EIS: 1) to maintain the RR alfalfa's status as a regulated article; 2) to deregulate RR alfalfa; or 3) to deregulate RR alfalfa with geographic restrictions and isolation distances for the production of RR alfalfa. USDA has thoroughly analyzed the potential environmental impacts of the proposed alternatives and has listed two preferred options: deregulation as one option and the other deregulation accompanied by a combination of isolation distances and geographic restrictions on the production of GE alfalfa seed and, in some locations, hay.

By listing both options as preferred, USDA has considered plant pest issues as well as broader environmental and economic issues related to the coexistence between genetically engineered, non-genetically engineered, and organic alfalfa production.

USDA maintains that biotechnology holds great promise for agriculture here in the United States, and around the world. There's absolutely no doubt of the safety of the many products USDA's regulatory system has approved. The examination of these issues through the EIS process, however, highlighted some of the challenges USDA faces in the area of biotechnology regulation as it aims to meet the expectations of its diverse stakeholders.

"We have seen rapid adoption of biotechnology in agriculture, along with the rise of organic and non-genetically engineered sectors over the last several decades," Vilsack said. "While the growth in all these areas is great for agriculture, it has also led, at times, to conflict or, at best, an uneasy coexistence between the different ways of growing crops. We need to address these challenges and develop a sensible path forward for strengthening coexistence of all segments of agriculture in our country. All are vital and a part of rural America's success. All should be able to thrive together."

Vilsack said that USDA will use this opportunity to begin a conversation on how to move forward and find strategies for strengthening coexistence. "We will partner with all those who want to roll up their sleeves and work with us and each other to find common sense solutions to today's challenges. And we will do so openly and transparently."

It is important to note that the EIS USDA is releasing today is not a decision document. It is an analysis of the impacts of the various alternatives with regard to their potential

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environmental and related economic impacts. The final EIS will be available for public review for at least 30 days before USDA will publish a record of decision on how it will proceed.

APHIS will be submitting the EIS to the Environmental Protection Agency for publication in the Federal Register, and USDA anticipates that EPA will publish a notice that the final EIS on RR alfalfa is available for public review in the Federal Register on December 23, 2010. A copy of the EIS provided to EPA can be reviewed at $http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/downloads/alfalfa/gt_alfalfa\%20_feis.pdf.$

Note to Reporters: USDA news releases, program announcements and media advisories are available on the Internet and through Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds. Go to the APHIS news release page at www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom and click on the RSS feed link.

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