

"Ag Notes"

A SUMMARY OF NEWS, EVENTS AND FACTS FROM USDA



President George W. Bush greets families displaced by the Arizona forest fires at Round Valley High School in Eagar, AZ., 6/26/02

Additional Farm Bill News —

Secretary Veneman has announced that USDA is accepting applications for the newly created Payment Limitations Commission (PLC) and the National Board on Rural America (NBRA).

Applications for the PLC must be received by 7/12/02 and can be obtained at: www.fsa.usda.gov

Applications for the NBRA must be received by 7/19/02 and can be obtained at: www.rurdev.usda.gov

USDA also announced a plan for implementation of the new Peanut Quality Program, including interim appointments to the Peanut Standards Board. For more information visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Veneman continues efforts to ease drought impact

Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman has opened USDA's drought tool box in an effort to tackle lingering drought conditions throughout much of the country.

In the past several weeks, the Secretary has announced a number of programs available to farmers in states stricken by severe drought conditions. USDA has expedited emergency declarations, to trigger emergency loans for producers in disaster struck counties. Last week, the Secretary approved emergency haying of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage in select counties in Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma and Wyoming. Earlier the Secretary opened CRP haying in 28 counties in South Dakota and 33 counties in Montana. Counties also continue to be approved for emergency CRP grazing.

"Many parts of the country have experienced severe drought conditions and USDA continues to examine every available program to assist producers during these difficult times," Veneman said. "This emergency haying will provide forage for livestock and help producers in these areas most severely impacted by drought conditions."

The Secretary also has made Emergency Conservation Program funds totaling \$1.9 million available in South Dakota and \$90,000 available in Montana, plus an additional \$2 million as needed.

USDA also offers other programs to assist drought stricken producers, including emergency farm loans, federal crop insurance, the emergency conservation program and the noninsured crop disaster assistance program. Since the beginning of the year, all or portions of 16 states have been declared drought disaster areas, making farmers in those areas eligible for emergency farm loans.

Three Agencies Team Up to Strengthen Fire Training—

On the same day that President Bush visited families in Arizona displaced by wildland fires, Secretary Veneman, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, and Interior Secretary Gale Norton launched the National Interagency Joint Apprenticeship Program for Wildland Fire. "Coordinating interagency recruitment and cooperation is the right thing to do," Veneman said. "It's critical to providing trained, safe and competent fire suppression and management personnel for the future."

The Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program originally was established in 1990. In 1998, USDA's Forest Service had three such programs and Interior had one, all operating independently. This agreement integrates these programs to bring better coordination, planning and training

Labor Secretary Chao said, "no other generation of firefighters will be as well prepared and drilled in safety measures as this one." Interior Secretary Norton added that the program would fill a critical need since "30 percent of the fire management work force is expected to retire over the next five years."

Quotables...

"Creating more jobs and strengthening our economy are critical priorities. And Congress can act to create jobs by giving me trade promotion authority. Expanding trade means new jobs for American workers. Congress has debated trade now for more than a year. It's time to stop talking; it's time to start acting. Congress should act to create American jobs before it goes home for the August recess..." President George W. Bush, 7/8/02



Secretary Veneman and Ambassador Zoellick reaffirm the Bush Administration's commitment to expand markets for U.S. agricultural goods. They are accompanied by Terry Stokes, CEO of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and Rodger Wasson, President of the California Strawberry Commission.

~~~~~  
On July 8<sup>th</sup>, the Department of Justice, on behalf of the USDA, filed a request with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8<sup>th</sup> Circuit asking the court to stay the decision issued by the U.S. District Court in South Dakota that the Beef Promotion and Research Act is unconstitutional. If the request is granted the Beef Promotion and Research Program will continue without interruption during the appeal process.

## Farm bill implementation continues--Veneman-Zoellick implement MAP, push for TPA—

Secretary Veneman and U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick conferred with farm groups late last month to set a framework for boosting exports, which depends for success on Congressional implementation of TPA.

"Expanding opportunities for U.S. agricultural exports is one of the most important contributions this administration can make to sustained economic prosperity for America's farmers and ranchers," Veneman said. "The ability of our farmers and ranchers to take full advantage of export markets depends on passage of Trade Promotion Authority."

Ambassador Zoellick added, "We need TPA to open markets for our farmers and ranchers. With TPA the U.S. will be able to negotiate from a position of strength. Securing TPA goes hand in hand with a strategy that includes: the use of trade promotion programs for agriculture products overseas; aggressive plans for world trade negotiations and free trade agreements; attacks on trade barriers and subsidies that hurt U.S. agriculture; and efforts to increase world demand through economic growth and sustainable development."

As part of farm bill implementation, Secretary Veneman announced allocation of \$100 million in Market Access Program and Quality Samples Program funds—a \$10 million increase called for by the new farm law. Sixty-seven groups will use the funds "to market U.S. products and expand food and exports of everything from catfish and asparagus to popcorn and wine. The farm bill President Bush signed in May more than doubled the funding of this very successful program to \$200 million by 2006," Veneman said.

## Veneman honors USDA employees—9/11 heroes

Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman yesterday honored 88 USDA employees across the nation for exemplary service and achievements in the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual USDA Honor Awards Ceremony.

"The Honor Awards celebrate the breadth and diversity of our department and also offer a good opportunity to showcase the important work we do in improving people's lives," said Veneman "We are extremely proud of all USDA employees, particularly those being honored here today, for their teamwork and dedication to public service."

The 88 award winners come from every USDA mission area from food safety to scientific research. But Secretary Veneman made special note of USDA employees response to the September 11 terrorist attacks including: The U.S. Forest Service teams who assisted in search and rescue at the World Trade Center; the U.S. Forest Service team that assisted at the Pentagon; the NYC Office of Inspector General for protecting local USDA employees and facilities; the disaster food stamp program team; the Wildlife Services Trade Center Disaster Response Team for their efforts at the Staten Island Landfill; USDA employees James A. Fortner and Jane E. Servais for voluntary efforts at the Pentagon; and finally the Homeland Security Emergency Support Team, the Crisis Response Group and the Terrorism Response Group.

Forest Service employee Rebecca Ann Welch, who saved two campers last year, received the Plow Honor Award, USDA's highest honor.

**USDA is an equal opportunity employer**