

# "Aq Notes"

**A SUMMARY OF NEWS, EVENTS AND FACTS FROM USDA**

## Veneman talks to FSA Employees, Farmers and Students in three-state swing

Despite a trip truncated by winter weather conditions, Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman last week met with Farm Service Agency (FSA) employees in Georgia, farmers and ranchers in Texas, and agriculture students at Ohio State University. Building on themes from President Bush's State of the Union address on Jan. 29, Veneman encouraged employees who will be charged with implementing a new farm bill. She also revealed that the administration's fiscal year 2003 budget would call on Congress to sharply increase funding for homeland security and the protection of agriculture.

Veneman was originally scheduled to meet with USDA employees in Kansas City, Mo., where the FSA data center and other key USDA farm support operations are located. An ice storm in Missouri changed the venue to sunny Savannah, Ga. where an FSA meeting was already underway. Veneman told the group that early planning for a new farm bill is critical. "We ...have some things we know we're going to have to do, like updating (crop) bases. We want to be prepared when this bill reaches the President's desk, that we hit the ground running and get it implemented as quickly as possible," Veneman said. The Secretary also met with a group of farmers in a meeting arranged by Reps. Jack Kingston and Saxby Chambliss. Rep. Kingston, who also participated in the meetings, represents the Savannah area.

While in San Angelo, Texas on Thursday, the Secretary reassured farmers and ranchers that if Congress does not pass a law in time to apply it to 2002 crops, she believes additional assistance will be forthcoming. Veneman said, "I believe even if there is not a farm bill that applies to the 2002 crop, there will be supplemental assistance. One way or another our farmers and ranchers will be taken care of." (CONTINUED, next page)

## Leaders of Tomorrow—

What would it be like to see first hand the deliberations, meetings, and unexpected turn of events that Cabinet Secretaries handle every day? Secretary Ann M. Veneman intends to "adopt" 4-H and FFA students for a day so they can find out. That's just one part of a new initiative--"Leaders of Tomorrow" -- launched by Veneman at Ohio State University on Feb. 1.

The Secretary also will participate in a lecture series at 10-12 university and college agriculture schools throughout the year to reach out to the next generation of food and farm sector leaders. She will also showcase language and fine arts from K-6 students who will be asked to help tell the story of agriculture. Works will be displayed at USDA and available on a new website: [www.usda.gov/leadersoftomorrow](http://www.usda.gov/leadersoftomorrow). As Secretary Veneman told Ohio State University students: "The President has challenged each of us to try to give back, to help our communities and become mentors. The goal of this initiative is to help inspire young adults to be more involved, encourage public service and learn more about agriculture, one of the most dynamic sectors of our economy."



Secretary Veneman, joined by TX Commissioner Susan Combs, meets with San Angelo, TX farmers and ranchers.

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Get the latest Farm Bill information from USDA's Farm Policy website:

[www.usda.gov/farmpolicy](http://www.usda.gov/farmpolicy)

## ~~~~~ **Upcoming Events With Secretary Veneman**

2/4 USDA FY 2003 Budget Release, 2:00 p.m.

2/5 USDA African American History Month Observance 10:00 a.m. Jefferson Auditorium Washington, D.C.

2/6 – USA Rice Federation, 9:30 a.m. Washington, D.C.

2/8 – National Cattlemen's Beef Association

2/11 – National Cotton Council, Dallas, TX

## Quotables...

"Members, you and I will work together in the months ahead on other issues: productive farm policy, a cleaner environment, broader home ownership, especially among minorities, and ways to encourage the good work of charities and faith-based groups. I ask you to join me on these important domestic issues in the same spirit of cooperation we've applied to our war against terrorism..."

*President Bush's State of the Union Address, Jan. 29, 2002*



Secretary Veneman, Gov. Taft and Rep. Tiberi meet with FFA members in Columbus, OH., as part of "Leaders of Tomorrow" mentor initiative.

"In her first year as our 27<sup>th</sup> Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary Veneman has faced, and successfully met, daunting and often unexpected challenges from the foot and mouth disease scare to energy shortages in California to the new concerns about the safety of our food supplies brought on by the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, and now she is providing leadership as a major farm bill works its way through Congress. Secretary Veneman, I would like to thank you..."

*Ohio State University President Brit Kirwan Feb. 2, 2002*

## Veneman on farm bill preparations, budget priorities---

(CONTINUED, from Page 1) The Secretary also announced proposed budget increases for homeland security that officially will be unveiled in the President's FY 2003 Budget:

- \$48 million increase for animal health monitoring to improve rapid response to an animal or plant pest or disease outbreak;
- \$19 million increase for the Agriculture Quarantine Inspection program to hire more inspectors, expand canine teams and increase state-of-the-art X-ray machines. This additional funding will increase staff at ports of entry to 3,974 a 55 percent increase in three years.
- \$5 million increase to strengthen the capability of APHIS to assess and monitor outbreaks of disease in foreign countries;
- \$12 million increase for other APHIS programs to expand diagnostic, response, management and other scientific and technical services.
- \$28 million increase for the Food Safety Inspection Service—a record increase—to support food safety activities and maintain approximately 7,600 meat, poultry and egg product inspectors. Of that amount \$14.5 million is earmarked to improve the information technology infrastructure, to improve risk management systems, and \$2.7 million for slaughter epidemiological surveys and risk prevention activities.
- Increases totaling about \$34 million to support research aimed at protecting the U.S. food and agriculture system from attack.

After touring cotton and cattle operations and a meat processing plant with Texas Agricultural Commissioner Susan Combs, Veneman said: "the new funding reinforces this Administration's commitment to strengthening our protection systems to ensure agriculture and our food supply is guarded against threats."

While weather conditions postponed a planned trip to Michigan, Veneman traveled to Columbus, Ohio, where she talked with students at Ohio State University and met with local farmers in a meeting arranged and attended by Ohio Gov. Bob Taft, Rep. Patrick Tiberi, and Agriculture Director Fred Dailey.

## Pesticide Data Program turns up a scintilla of residues

The Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) annual search for pesticide residues in food found that of 10,907 samples analyzed in 2000, only 1.2 percent contained residues. In a report released Jan. 31, AMS found that of the portion with residues only 0.2 percent exceeded federal tolerances or levels allowed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). EPA uses the data to monitor implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act. For that reason, the AMS sample in 2000 included predominantly those foods children eat like fruits and vegetables, rice and peanut butter. The samples are collected on the way to retail outlets--the point closest to consumption. Samples originated from 38 states and 21 foreign countries. 80 percent of the samples tested were domestic; 19 percent imports. 43 percent contained no detectable residues. For the complete results go to [www.ams.usda.gov](http://www.ams.usda.gov).

## ...USDA Relief efforts in Afghanistan

The United States continues to be the largest donor of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. For the remainder of fiscal year 2002, the U.S. will donate \$45 million in food and funding to support relief and recovery efforts. This is part of the \$297 million first-year commitment by the U.S. to assist in rebuilding Afghanistan announced Jan 21 at the International Conference for Reconstruction Assistance.

Between fiscal years 1999 and 2001, the U.S. provided more than 570,000 metric tons of food assistance to the Afghan people, most of it wheat, in addition to other humanitarian assistance. The new donation will bring the total value of USDA donations to nearly \$220 million since 1999. U.S. food aid has helped avert widespread famine in a country where millions of people suffer from three years of severe drought and large-scale displacements.