

AGRICULTURE OUTLOOK FORUM 2010
February 18, 2010 Arlington, Virginia

WELCOME by DEPUTY SECRETARY KATHLEEN MERRIGAN

Good morning. I'm Kathleen Merrigan, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2010 Agricultural Outlook Forum. Speaking for Secretary Tom Vilsack, I want to extend a warm welcome to everyone here in the audience, and Arlington, Virginia, more than 1,799 guests, and to everyone who will be watching the webcast of these events this evening.

Many thanks to Chief Economist Joe Glauber and World Board Chairman Jerry Bange for chairing our Steering and Program Committees as they organized the USDA's 86th Annual Forum.

They've planned an exciting and wide-ranging agenda for you over these next two days. More than 120 speakers and moderators will lead discussions on virtually every segment of agriculture. They join us from all over the world and are highly distinguished in their fields. My thanks to all of them and to their contributions for this conference.

I also want to recognize the young people seated in front of me. Right here they are, folks. This is the fourth year of the Outlook Student Diversity Program. I'm glad to welcome these 22 students from Land Grant universities, Hispanic serving institutions, and American Association of State Colleges of Agriculture and Renewable Resources institutions.

And a word of appreciation to the sponsoring organizations CHS, the Farm Credit System, and USDA's Economic Research Service. You are giving these students the first-hand chance to gain an understanding of U.S. agriculture directly from the experts. This is a great opportunity for them. Please ready several of the winning essays online. We are proud you're all with us today.

Students, would you please stand?

I won't ask anyone else to stand, but also want to give a special welcome to our FFA members in the audience as well as the West Texas A&M University Ag Policy class students and University of Maryland Ag students and their professors who are attending the Forum. We're pleased to have you all join us here today. Welcome.

Secretary Vilsack will present the keynote address.

And we are privileged that U.S. Trade Representative Ronald Kirk will be our guest speaker this morning.

Following a break after the first plenary session, Marie Ruel, Division Director of the International Food Policy Research Institute, will lead a distinguished panel on

“Sustainability, Stakeholders & Customers: Achieving a Healthier & Secure Future.”
These panelists are leaders in their field, and we are honored to have them with us:
Walter Robb: Co-President & COO, Whole Foods Market; Fedele Bauccio: CEO, Bon
Appétit Management Company; Richard J. Schnieders: Recently Retired CEO, Sysco
Corporation; and Nina Fedoroff: Science & Technology Advisor to the U.S. Secretary of
State.

We thank you for being here as well.

I also want to note that tonight’s dinner speaker, Dr. Roger Beachy, Director of USDA’s
National Institute of Food and Agriculture and our Chief Scientist will share his thoughts
on Science, Sustainability, and Society.

And that tomorrow’s Grains and Oilseeds and Livestock and Poultry luncheons have will
be combined. Wesley Batista, CEO of JBS, USA, will be the speaker. If I mentioned all
the outstanding speakers presenting at the Forum, we’d be here all morning so please,
let’s begin with the economic outlooks.....

*After Ambassador Kirk finished, Merrigan thanked the speakers and asked the audience
to reconvene at 10:15 with the distinguished panel.*

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