

FEATURE – USDA ROLLS OUT FIRST WAVE OF ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

INTRO: Many U.S.D.A. programs received funding released under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, with the goal of providing economic assistance and new job opportunities for Americans. U.S.D.A.'s Rod Bain has more.

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY TOM VILSACK RECENTLY ROLLED OUT THE INITIAL COMPONENTS OF USDA'S PORTION OF THE ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE, ADDRESSING BOTH SIDES OF THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT. FIRST ON THE RECOVERY SIDE OF THE EQUATION, THERE ARE NEW MONIES FOR THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Secretary Tom Vilsack – A family of four will receive about \$80 dollars of additional assistance each month beginning April First. That \$145 million dollars will generate another \$261 million dollars of economic activity in the communities.

ON THE REINVESTMENT SIDE, SECRETARY VILSACK SAYS THERE WILL BE INCREASED FUNDING FOR WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN RURAL AREAS, WHICH WILL TRANSLATE INTO JOBS.

Secretary Tom Vilsack – These projects will put people immediately to work. With just this announcement today, we're going to put 13,000 Americans in Rural America back to Work.

THE SECRETARY SAYS THEIR WILL BE ADDITIONAL RURAL HOME OWNERSHIP FINANCING AND NEW HOUSING CONSTRUCTION OPPORTUNITIES. ALSO, MONIES FOR THE FOREST SERVICE AND A DIRECT LOAN PROGRAM FOR BEGINNING AND SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMERS WILL AID IN JOB CREATION. AND, SIGN UP IS UNDERWAY FOR A CONSERVATION PROGRAM TO RESTORE FREQUENTLY FLOODED LANDS.

Secretary Tom Vilsack – The sign up ends March 27th; a very condensed time period. We hope to put folks to work taking several projects to fruition quickly.

JOINING SECRETARY VILSACK ON STAGE DURING THE ANNOUNCEMENT WERE FARMERS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY. ONE FARMER PROVIDED HIS OPINION OF THE STIMULUS PACKAGE.

Chris Peterson, Iowa Farmer – I believe the Secretary and the Obama Administration are sincere about helping and doing as much as possible. Quite frankly, the family farmers now have a voice and someone who will listen to us and see what they can do about our situation out there.

FOR THE US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M ROD BAIN.