

FEATURE – INCREASING TRADE IS USDA PRIORITY

INTRO: The U-S Department of Agriculture and the Office of the U-S Trade Representative are trying to remove trade barriers for U-S farm goods. The USDA's Bob Ellison has more. (1:30)

INCREASING TRADE FOR U-S FARM PRODUCTS WAS THE TOPIC OF DISCUSSION FOR AGRICULTURE SECRETARY TOM VILSACK AND U-S TRADE REPRESENTATIVE RON KIRK. VILSACK SAID WHILE THE TRADE PICTURE HAS BRIGHTENED, WORK IS NEEDED TO GET AMERICAN AG PRODUCTS INTO MORE MARKETS.

Tom Vilsack, Agriculture Secretary: The first quarter of this fiscal year has been the best quarter that we've had in trade since we've been keeping records. And the president's budget has asked for additional resources to break down barriers of sanitary and phytosanitary barriers that exist that prevent us from having open markets.

KIRK SAID ROADBLOCKS LIKE SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY BARRIERS TO U-S FARM EXPORTS MUST BE OVERCOME THROUGH PROPER CHANNELS TO ENSURE FAIR TRADE.

Ron Kirk, United States Trade Representative: In many cases the enforcement work that we do at the U.S. Trade Representative's Office and the WTO is all about getting our partners to behave the way we've asked them to. And whether it's poultry in the European Union, or whether it's beef in Russia or pork in China, getting them to open those markets and allowing us to have fair access can be helpful to us.

VILSACK SAID INCREASING TRADE NOT ONLY HELPS AGRICULTURE, BUT THE OVERALL ECONOMY AS WELL.

Vilsack: We know that increasing exports and that means not just better bottom lines for farmers and ranchers in this country but just as importantly in this time when we are focused on jobs it helps to create jobs. A billion dollars of ag exports will increase jobs by eight to nine thousand jobs.

IN WASHINGTON D-C FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M BOB ELLISON.