

FEATURE – VILSACK TOUTS HARD WORK AND GOVERNMENT HELP IN SMALL FARMERS' SUCCESS

INTRO: Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack visited a small family farm to see first hand how hard work and government programs helped immigrants achieve the American dream. The USDA's Bob Ellison has more. (1:44)

FIDEL AND HILDA CASTILLO STARTED FARMING ON A COUPLE OF ACRES IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FIFTEEN YEARS AGO. TODAY THEY RUN A SUCCESSFUL FIFTY ACRES NEAR PLANT CITY FLORIDA. AGRICULTURE SECRETARY TOM VILSACK VISITED THE CASTILLOS TO SEE THEIR SUCCESS STORY FIRST HAND.

Tom Vilsack, Agriculture Secretary: The notion that folks can come buy small acreage and over time with government assistance and help and hard work and dedication and a little luck they can they expand their operation and they can support their family.

USDA'S NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE PROVIDES COST SHARING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR FARM IMPROVEMENTS. OFFICIALS SAY THESE AND OTHER FARM BILL PROGRAMS ARE HELPING SMALL FARMERS SUCCEED IN AN INCREASINGLY GLOBALIZED INDUSTRY.

Carlos Suarez, USDA NRCS: Here on the Castillo Farms, we have helped through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to put irrigation systems on the ground, to assist them with the water savings and with the water efficiency and the production of their crops.

Richard Macheck, State Director, USDA Rural Development: It lets those small farmers know that there is hope out there for them. And somebody is going to look out there for them. And there is a niche in this worldwide market for the small farmer.

Tim Manning, USDA Farm Service Agency: Working with our socially disadvantaged producers and having the Secretary is a wonderful event to help us reach out to all the socially disadvantaged and limited resource producers.

IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING FOOD AND FIBER, VILSACK SAID FAMILY FARMS LIKE THE CASTILLOS HELP PROVIDE JOBS.

Vilsack: This is a farm family that is supporting a number of workers who obviously will earn incomes and spend those incomes while they're here in the local community. The reality is that every time we create a billion dollars of ag exports we create somewhere between seven and eight thousand jobs.

FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M BOB ELLISON.