

FEATURE – VILSACK TOUTS TRADE DEALS TO CONGRESS

INTRO: Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack talked trade and pending trade agreements with lawmakers. The USDA's Bob Ellison has more. (1:07)

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY TOM VILSACK TESTIFIED TO THE U-S HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE THAT TRADE NUMBERS LOOK GOOD FOR U-S FARMERS.

Tom Vilsack, Agriculture Secretary: We are anticipating an ag surplus this year of forty seven and a half billion dollars. To give you a sense of that, five years ago that number was five billion.

VILSACK SAID THAT PASSING FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS, OR F-T-A'S, WITH SOUTH KOREA, COLOMBIA AND PANAMA WOULD HELP U-S PRODUCERS SUSTAIN THAT RECORD GROWTH.

Vilsack: Completing these three trade agreements will level the playing field with some competitors and secure better markets for U-S agriculture ahead of others.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS MOSTLY SUPPORTED THE F-T-A'S TO HELP U-S PRODUCERS OVERCOME FOREIGN TRADE BARRIERS.

Chairman Frank Lucas, R-OK: The pending F-T-A's will dramatically reduce these barriers and open markets for agricultural goods.

Rep. Collin Peterson, D-MN: I think the pending free trade agreements are good for agriculture. These trade agreements also open our markets, arguably the most lucrative market in the world, to our trading partners.

Vilsack: Increased exports mean more opportunities for small business owners. It means better incomes for our nation's family farmers and more jobs across rural America.

CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS SAY THEY WANT THE TRADE DEALS PASSED BY LATE SUMMER. IN WASHINGTON D-C FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE I'M BOB ELLISON.