



NEWS RELEASE

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VENEMAN ANNOUNCES \$6.3 MILLION IN RURAL COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS TO FOSTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN 24 STATES INCLUDING MASSACHUSETTS

WASHINGTON, Sept. 10, 2004 – Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced today \$6.3 million in economic development grants in 24 states. The grant investment in rural cooperative development is part of the ongoing effort by the Bush Administration to increase economic opportunities in rural areas.

“Viable cooperative ventures are important to increasing economic development in rural areas,” said Veneman. “These funds are important to ensuring farmers and ranchers have added opportunity to fully utilize their natural resources to create value-added ventures.”

The cooperative development grant program is administered through USDA Rural Development. The grants are awarded on a competitive basis and are intended to foster rural cooperative development through projects that provide rural residents with education and technical assistance in areas of cooperative startup, marketing and managing, and other self-help tools. **The Massachusetts based Cooperative Development Institute, Inc. (CDI) will be receiving \$294,930 of the \$6.3 million in Rural Cooperative Development Grant funds to support their “Group-based Business Anchoring Rural Economics” initiative.** With the USDA Rural Development’s financial assistance, CDI will work with low-income and underserved rural communities in the Northeast to improve rural economic conditions. CDI plans to help farmers increase profitability through joint marketing, cost reduction and value-added processing. CDI also intends to assist consumers, workers and small businesses to reduce costs, improve access to essential services and increase profitability through their technical assistance programs.

“USDA Rural Development’s long relationship with CDI has led to many successes for area cooperatives and Southern New England’s cooperative economy,” said David Tuttle, Rural Development State Director for Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. “I am confident that CDI will use these funds as effectively as they have utilized past funding.” A complete list of selected recipients can be viewed at USDA Rural Development’s website at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>. Funding of selected applicants will be contingent upon meeting the conditions of the grant agreements.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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