



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**USDA MAKES \$33 MILLION IN GRANTS AVAILABLE TO PROMOTE ENERGY,  
VALUE-ADDED VENTURES**

AMHERST, MA – Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman announced today that \$33 million in grants is available to producer-owned processing businesses for value-added agricultural development. Flame resistant clothing and cups made from corn-based fibers. Dairy bottles made from corn-based plastics. New energy sources through agriculture. These are just a few of the many examples of value-added products that Veneman says are bringing new opportunities to U.S. farmers and producers.

“Agriculture is one of the most technically-advanced industries in America and these grants will promote more innovation and opportunities for producers,” said Veneman. “In addition to opening new markets for agricultural products, these grant funds will encourage investment and further exploration and development of alternative energy sources as outlined in the President’s energy plan.”

Ventures in which agricultural producers add value to their products through processing, segregation, or other means are eligible to apply for grants. Grants can be awarded for such activities as conducting feasibility analyses, developing business and marketing plans, or for use as working capital while the venture develops cash flow.

Grant funds cannot be used for the development or acquisition of buildings or other facilities, or to purchase, rent, or install fixed equipment. The maximum allowable grant amount is \$500,000, and grant recipients must provide 1-to-1 matching funds.

Applications must be completed and submitted to USDA Rural Development, 451 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002 by 4:00 pm (EST) on Thursday, August 8, 2002. This office services a three state area that includes Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. For further information please call: (413) 253-4302 or 1-800-532-8015 or visit the USDA Rural Development website at: [www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm). Local USDA offices are located throughout the three-state area in Holden, MA, West Wareham, MA, Hadley, MA, Windsor, CT, Norwich, CT and Warwick, RI.

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