

## **Agriculture Secretary Announces Support To Create Jobs and Boost Small Business Development**

WASHINGTON, D.C., September 14, 2011 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that funding is being provided to producers and development organizations in 40 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to promote job creation and business development.

“The Obama Administration and USDA are committed to helping rural small businesses grow, and to providing the technical support needed to spark sustainable job creation,” Vilsack said. “The funds being provided today will foster an environment to create jobs in every part of the country.”

An award will be made in Braxton County, West Virginia. Braxton County Development Authority has been selected for a \$50,000 Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) to assist an existing business with technical assistance with an economic feasibility study, a carrying capacity study and, if warranted, a conceptual site planning and cost analysis to determine the potential for the expansion of the business in Braxton County. State Director Bobby Lewis added, “This project is expected to assist one business and create 42 jobs.”

Seven awards will be made in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, which is recognized as a USDA “Great Region.” The funding will be part of a coordinated effort to support job creation and business expansion. For example, in Newport, Vt., USDA funding will expand a local food distribution system to provide local food to schools, hospitals and senior meal sites. The project is expected to support or create 56 jobs in Orleans County.

One of the recipients announced today is in Ravenna, Ohio. Neighborhood Development Services Inc. has been selected for a \$500,000 Intermediary Relending Program (IRP) loan to provide low-interest financing to public and non-profit groups for business and community development. The Holmes County Economic Development Council Inc., in Millersburg, Ohio, has been selected for an \$85,000 RBEG to establish a revolving loan fund. The RBEG and IRP programs are key components of USDA Rural Development activities to promote regional development across America.

Rural Development funds will be used in Sullivan County, N.Y., to purchase equipment local farmers will use to process dairy products, adding value to raw milk sales. Rural Development support will also be used in Nebraska and South Dakota to assist in funding market research and business development efforts through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Food Processing Center. Businesses in five counties will receive assistance.

The Intermediary Relending Program provides working capital and other support to local businesses through qualified intermediaries. For example, West River Foundation for Economic Development in Pennington County, S.D., will receive a \$750,000 loan to support business and community relending, which will create and save an estimated 100 jobs. The Northeast

Entrepreneur Fund in Duluth, Minn., will leverage a USDA loan with \$250,000 of matching funds to set up a revolving loan program to assist businesses in a 10-county area.

In all, 69 awards totaling more than \$14.7 million were announced today to promote economic development efforts. A portion of the RBEG funding is intended to support Rural Economic Area Partnership efforts. Grants and loans are subject to the conditions outlined in the agreement. For a complete listing of the awards, [click here](#):

On September 8, President Obama presented the [American Jobs Act](#) in an address to Congress. The purpose of the American Jobs Act is simple: put more people back to work and put more money in the pockets of working Americans. The American Jobs Act is specific, it will put people back to work right now and it won't add to the deficit. Through a combination of direct spending, such as infrastructure investments, and tax relief, such as an extension of the payroll tax cuts, it will lead to new American jobs.

Since taking office, President Obama's Administration has taken significant steps to improve the lives of rural Americans and has provided broad support for rural communities. The Obama Administration has set goals of modernizing infrastructure by providing broadband access to 10 million Americans, expanding educational opportunities for students in rural areas, and providing affordable health care. In the long term, these unparalleled rural investments will help ensure that America's rural communities are repopulating, self-sustaining and thriving economically

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of state and local offices. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of more than \$155 billion in loans and loan guarantees. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America.

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