



NEWS RELEASE

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Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Announces Funding for Over 900 Projects to Boost Renewable Energy Production, Reduce Energy Costs for Producers and Small Businesses

WV Awarded Thirteen Throughout The Mountain State

ATKINSON, Ill., August 17, 2011 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced grants for more than 900 agricultural producers and rural small businesses across the country to implement renewable energy and energy efficiency measures in their operations. Secretary Vilsack made the announcement as part of President Obama's rural economic bus tour in the Midwest where today he highlighted efforts underway to reduce our country's dependence on foreign oil, which will increase the economic competitiveness of rural America and promote job creation.

"These investments enable our farmers, ranchers and rural small business owners to develop renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements that will save them thousands of dollars in energy costs each year," Vilsack said. "This funding is an important part of the Obama Administration's plan to conserve natural resources, create jobs and lead our country on the path to becoming more energy independent."

The grants are being provided through the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), a 2008 Farm Bill initiative. REAP offers funds for farmers, ranchers and rural small businesses to purchase and install renewable energy systems and make energy-efficiency improvements. These federal funds leverage other funding sources for small businesses. In all, USDA announced more than \$11.6 million in energy grants today.

The REAP program is helping many agricultural producers and rural small businesses reduce energy consumption. For example, Simpsons Brothers Greenhouses, LLC in Ovid, Mich., was selected to receive an \$18,000 grant to make energy-efficiency improvements to its greenhouse operations, including installing greenhouse energy curtains that are designed to reduce energy consumption. These improvements are expected to reduce the company's energy purchases by 42 percent and save more than \$12,000 in annual energy expenses.

A family farm in Scales Mound, Ill. will use an \$18,439 grant to install photovoltaic panels that will generate solar electricity for a dairy barn. The farm operates 234 certified organic acres in the rolling hills of Northwestern Illinois to raise corn, oats, hay and 45 milking cows. The solar system will power the lighting in the barn during milking, the vacuum pump, the milk cooler, and the fans. The system will offset about 49 percent of their annual farm energy consumption.

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Kraft Fertilizer, Inc. in Princeville, Ill., will use their \$13,250 grant to install a geothermal system in new warehouse. The new building is replacing a similarly sized warehouse that is currently heated by a propane furnace. The geothermal system will circulate a water-based solution through a buried loop system that takes advantage of the constant 55 degree ground temperature. The new system will use only about nine percent of the BTUs used by the current system.

In Jackson, Mich., Lindale Farms, LLC was selected to receive a \$6,000 grant to assist with the cost of installing a 4.3 kilowatt photovoltaic solar generating system to produce electricity that will be sold directly to the local utility. It is estimated that the new system will produce about 5,000 kilowatt hours annually. The owners expect to recoup the cost of this project in about 3 years.

Funding of each award is contingent upon the recipient meeting the conditions of the grant agreement. Grants can finance up to 25 percent of a project's cost, not to exceed \$500,000 for renewables, \$250,000 for efficiency. For a complete listing of Rural Energy for America Program grant recipients announced today, please [click here](#).

Today's announcement is an example of investments the Obama Administration is making to help create jobs and grow the rural economy. In June, President Obama signed an Executive Order establishing the first [White House Rural Council](#), chaired by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. The White House Rural Council will work throughout government to create policies to promote economic prosperity and a high quality of life in our rural communities.

Yesterday, President Obama hosted the White House Rural Economic Forum at Northeast Iowa Community College in Peosta, Iowa. The Forum brought together farmers, small business owners, private sector leaders, rural organizations, and government officials to discuss ideas and initiatives to promote economic growth, accelerate hiring, and spur innovation in rural communities nationwide. The President engaged directly with a variety of rural leaders from across the nation to discuss the importance of growing small businesses and strengthening the middle class in rural America.

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.