



United States Department  
of Agriculture

## Rural Development

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## News Release

For Immediate Release  
Contact: Kelly M. Barmann

### **USDA AWARDS FUNDING FOR FARM LABOR HOUSING IN PULASKI COUNTY**

*It's a first in Indiana*

Francesville (#04-10; 12-15-2003): USDA Rural Development announced today that a \$250,000 low interest Farm Labor Housing loan has been awarded to Fred Gutwein and Sons, Inc., Francesville. The USDA funding is to support the construction of farm labor housing located in Pulaski County south of Francesville. This is the first time that funding for farm labor housing has been made by USDA Rural Development in Indiana.

At a gathering today to celebrate the much needed housing, Robert White, State Director for USDA Rural Development, presented a check for the funding to Mike Powell, Corporate Treasurer. Also attending the celebration were representatives of local organizations interested in improving the living conditions of farm workers in Indiana including other farm corporations that use farm laborers for fruit and vegetable harvesting, county officials, Pulaski Economic Development, and others from Pulaski County and the surrounding counties.

Fred Gutwein and Sons, Inc. has over 60 years of seed growing experience. Powell said, "We are excited to get this project completed and to be able to provide quality housing for these workers. The Gutwein companies rely on these workers to make our business successful and without these workers the company would not be able to operate."

The farm labor housing, known as the Gollier City Migrant Housing Facility, consists of eight units providing housing for 48 workers. Along with the new housing come utilities, air conditioning and heating, and telephone service. According to Powell, the reaction of the workers to the new housing has been one of amazement and appreciation. The previous housing was old, modified portable school classrooms. The carpet was worn, the walls had holes, and there was no air conditioning and very little heat.

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The utilization of Hispanic farm labor started in the early 1980's when it became difficult to find young laborers for the fields. The laborers at Gutwein help with sorting out defective ears of corn during harvest, shelling the ears at the plant, detasseling, rouging, and removing volunteer plants from the fields during the growing season. Most of the workers being housed arrive from the orange groves in Florida during slow times for that harvest. The workers usually move here around the first of June and leave by the first of November.

White added, "USDA is proud to be a partner in the development of this farm labor housing project. We salute the Gutwein company and congratulate all those individuals who have worked so hard to make this project happen. This project not only benefits these hard-working farm laborers and the company but also Pulaski County."

The Farm Labor Housing Loan and Grant program provides financing for the development of housing for farm laborers. Funds can be used to purchase a site or a leasehold interest in a site; to construct housing, day care facilities, or community rooms; to pay fees to purchase durable household furnishings; and to pay construction loan interest.

Powell learned about USDA's Farm Labor Housing Program through a service provided by Rural Opportunities, Inc. Additional information on farm labor housing in Indiana can be obtained by contacting Annette Phillips, Rural Opportunities, Inc., 2817 N. Oakwood, Muncie, IN 47304, phone (765) 286-2162.

Since 1994, USDA Rural Development has invested over \$6 million in Pulaski County to assist limited income residents buy homes, rehabilitate rental properties, improve infrastructure, build community facilities, and assist rural businesses get started or expand. Questions concerning USDA Rural Development services in this area can be directed to USDA Rural Development, 2903 Gary Drive, Plymouth, IN 46563-1825; phone 574-936-9872, extension 4.