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NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Holly L. Martien, (318) 473-7917
holly.martien@la.usda.gov

**FARMERS AND SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS:
START PREPARING PROJECT PROPOSALS FOR
RENEWABLE ENERGY/ENERGY EFFICIENCY/VALUE-ADDED PROJECTS
April 3 Workshop in Lafayette Will Help You Prepare**

ALEXANDRIA, March 19, 2007 – USDA Rural Development State Director Clyde Holloway encouraged producers and small business owners today to start preparing project proposals for USDA Rural Development’s Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Program. Holloway also invited farmers and small business owners to attend a “Grow Your Profits” workshop USDA Rural Development is hosting in Lafayette.

“In the coming weeks, notices will be published in the Federal Register inviting farmers and small business owners to submit funding applications through the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Program and the Value-Added Producer Grants Program,” said Holloway. “There will be national competition for these funds, and I want to make sure Louisiana’s producers and business owners are aware of the programs and have an opportunity to compete successfully for the funds.”

USDA Rural Development is hosting a “Grow Your Profits” workshop Tuesday, April 3, 2007, at the Estuarine Habitats and Coastal Fisheries Center, 646 Cajundome Boulevard, Room 119, in Lafayette, Louisiana, to discuss the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Program and the Value-Added Producer Grants Program. The workshop will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude at noon.

To register by e-mail for the “Grow Your Profits” workshop, forward your name, company name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address to: dena.causey@la.usda.gov. To register by telephone, call (318) 473-7960. There is no cost to attend this workshop.

The Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Program can help farmers and small businesses finance renewable energy systems or make energy improvements. Eligible renewable energy projects include systems that generate energy from wind, solar, biomass or geothermal sources. Renewable energy projects can include the generation of electricity, heat, fuels or hydrogen. However, the program is not just for energy-producing projects—such as biofuel plants, anaerobic digesters and geothermal systems—but can also be used for energy-efficiency improvements to existing energy systems or to update systems such as grain dryers, electric motors, heating, and cooling. A grant can be awarded for up to 25 percent of the cost of the project and loan guarantees for up to 50 percent of the project costs.

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“Applicants must use the 2007 rules to prepare proposals; however looking at previous-year rules may be helpful in beginning development of a project proposal,” said Holloway.

Interested applicants may review previous year’s Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Program procedures by visiting <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/farmbill/index.html>. If you would like USDA Rural Development to notify you when the 2007 rules are published, send your e-mail address to dena.causey@la.usda.gov or call (318) 473-7960.

The Value-Added Producer Grants Program can help independent producers and producer groups fund planning activities, and it can help provide working capital for marketing value-added agricultural products. In addition, farm-based renewable energy projects may be eligible for value-added funding. In recent years, two value-added grants have been awarded to producers in Louisiana. More information on the Value-Added Producer Grants Program can be found at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm>.

USDA Rural Development provides a full range of rural development credit services in rural Louisiana. The USDA Rural Development State Office is located at 3727 Government Street, Alexandria, Louisiana 71302, telephone (318) 473-7921. For more information on USDA Rural Development’s loan and grant programs, visit <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>. USDA Rural Development is an equal opportunity lender, provider, and employer. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, DC 20250-9140.

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