



Committed to the future of rural communities.

NEWS RELEASE

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK BRINGS OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S 'RURAL TOUR' TO MISSOURI

Agriculture Secretary Discusses Revitalizing and Rebuilding Rural America at State fair Community College

SEDALIA, Mo. August 21, 2009 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today visited the State Fair Community College and held a 'Rural Tour' community forum to discuss efforts by the Obama Administration to rebuild and revitalize rural America, listen to local residents talk about how the federal government can assist them, and discuss solutions to challenges facing their communities. This event follows the launch of the Obama Administration's 'Rural Tour' in June.



"To overcome challenges and be successful in a new, 21st century economy, President Obama has asked that we reach out to people in rural communities across the country to listen, learn and facilitate problem-solving," said Agriculture Secretary Vilsack. "It is critically important to hear the thoughts, concerns and stories about Missouri's vision for its future and to collect ideas about how USDA can better serve these communities."

At today's rural community forum, Vilsack discussed how the USDA is working to promote a sustainable, safe, sufficient and nutritious food supply, ensure that America leads the global fight against climate change, and revitalize rural communities by expanding economic opportunities.?

Secretary Vilsack also highlighted the USDA's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act efforts that are underway in Missouri and across the country, including the following:

- USDA's Rural Development has helped guarantee 2071 loans worth over \$210 million in the state of Missouri through the Single Family Housing Loan program. These loans help residents and producers to have access to the capital they need to keep rural communities strong.

- USDA's Farm Service Agency is providing \$4 million through 74 Direct Operating Farm Loans. These loans help farms purchase items such as livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance, and other operating expenses.
- USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service announced approximately \$4.8 million for 10 floodplain easement projects and more than \$5.3 million in funding for watershed operations.
- USDA's Forest Service is providing \$3.73 million for 4 projects through the Forest Service Capital Improvement and Maintenance program. This work will reduce sedimentation in streams, restore water quality and fish habitat and provide safe public transportation.
- USDA's Forest Service is providing \$6 million for a project through the Forest Service Wildland Fire Management program. This work will aid wildfire mitigation through fuel reduction and forest maintenance.
- Through USDA's Rural Development, \$3.58 million will be made available for 54 community facilities projects. Community Facility Grants will allow towns across Missouri to purchase critical emergency service vehicles and equipment, build Emergency Operations Centers and community centers.
- Through USDA, the Recovery Act provided for an estimated increase of over \$453 million in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in Missouri. Most four-person households will receive an \$80 increase in their monthly SNAP benefit. Eligibility limits on jobless adults will be suspended in most areas. The State of Missouri also received \$3.24 million in State Administrative Funds.
- USDA is also helping low-income Missouri residents to receive healthy, nutritious meals through \$1.5 million in funding from The Emergency Food Assistance Program. Kids in Missouri also will benefit from over \$1.8 through the National School Lunch Program.
- USDA's Rural Development is providing approximately \$59 million to help make improvements at 22 water and waste treatment projects.
- USDA's Rural Development has issued 3 Rural Business and Enterprise Grants to the City of Doniphan, the City of Piedmont and Missouri State University, Mountain Grove Campus for more than \$331,000 to start or expand businesses in rural communities.

In June, President Obama announced that Secretary Vilsack will lead the Administration's Rural Tour to visit rural communities in states throughout the country. Secretary Vilsack is scheduled to lead Rural Tour events with a variety of other top administration officials over the coming weeks and months in Nebraska, New Mexico, and Ohio. This is the sixteenth similar forum Secretary Vilsack has led since being sworn, and this event follows rural listening sessions held in Des Moines, Iowa, Hamlet, N.C., Bethel, Alaska, St. John Parish, La., Blairs, Va., West Salem, Wis., Charlotte, Mich., Concord, N.H., Wattsburg, Pa., Danville, Ind., Geneseo, Ill., Harrodsburg, Ky., Ludowici, Ga., Portageville, Mo., and Brush, Colo.

USDA recently launched a new website and social media tools designed to enhance discussions and facilitate innovation for challenges facing rural America. All Americans can follow the Rural Tour's progress online at www.RuralTour.gov, on Twitter at www.twitter.com/RuralTour, or on USDA's Facebook fan page available at www.facebook.com/usda.

**"Committed to the future of rural communities."
"USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender."**

To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).