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**AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK NAMES CHERYL COOK
AS DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

WASHINGTON, April 10, 2009 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced the appointment of Cheryl Cook as Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development.

USDA Rural Development is the lead federal entity for the nation's rural development needs. In 2008, the agency invested more than \$20 billion in rural America through its programs.

In this position, Cook will manage policies and programs in Rural Development's three main areas: Business and Cooperatives, Housing and Community Facilities, and Utilities.

"Cheryl Cook brings with her a distinguished record of service as well as a keen understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities facing rural Americans today," Vilsack said. "I am confident that she will help USDA achieve President Obama's goals for rebuilding and revitalizing the nation's rural communities. Cheryl Cook is a highly experienced leader committed to expanding broadband networks, increasing investment in rural infrastructure and developing renewable energy."

Before joining USDA, Cook served as Deputy Secretary for Marketing and Economic Development at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. In that role, she often worked with several other USDA agencies, including the Food and Nutrition Service, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and the Agricultural Marketing Service. Cook had previously worked for the Keystone Development Center, a non-profit organization in Pennsylvania that helps new and emerging cooperatives. She was also a member of the National Farmers Union's public policy staff.

Cook received her bachelor's degree from Lebanon Valley College in Annville, Pa., and a law degree from The Dickinson School of Law in Carlisle, Pa. .

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