

Outreach Notes



April 2005

Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)
Office of Outreach and Exporter Assistance (OOEA)

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[USDA Secretary Mike Johanns \(center\) Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultures Services J. B. Penn \(left\) and Chief Agriculture Negotiator Allen Johnson at a Tele-Conference on CAFTA.](#)

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NEWS RELEASE

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Release No. 0113.05

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Canada, Mexico And United States Release Harmonized North American BSE Strategy

WASHINGTON, April 1, 2005-The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced that Canada, Mexico and the United States have established a harmonized approach to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) risk mitigation to more effectively address any BSE risk in North America.

This science-based framework of risk management measures for BSE has been developed with the objective to help normalize trade in ruminants and ruminant products within North America and to promote an international BSE strategy consistent with World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) guidelines. The strategy also represents the integrated North American approach that will be presented to the OIE as part of any further discussions to promote international harmonization of BSE risk mitigation measures through the OIE.

The minimum standards defined in the report have not been codified throughout North America. Rather, they will be considered by the appropriate animal health and public health officials in each country through their respective regulatory processes. These recommendations do not change the requirements in place for products currently being traded. The report is available on the APHIS Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>.

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Release No. 0097.05

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JOHANNIS ANNOUNCES EXPANSION OF BSE RESEARCH PROGRAM AND RESEARCH INITIATIVE TO IMPROVE FOOD SAFETY

WASHINGTON, March 18, 2005- Agriculture Secretary Mike Johannis today announced that almost \$2 million in funding has been redirected to enhance research on bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and that \$5 million has been awarded to 17 colleges and universities to establish a Food Safety Research and Response Network.

"In a rapidly changing world marketplace, science is the universal language that must guide our rules and policies, rather than subjectivity or politics," said Johannis. "Expanding our research efforts to improve the understanding of BSE and other food-related illness pathogens will strengthen the security of our nation's food supply. These projects will help improve food safety by enhancing our research partnerships with the academic community and establish another tool to aid our response to food-related disease outbreaks."

Johannis made the announcement during keynote remarks at the National Restaurant Association's and National Food Processors Association Food Safety Summit. The BSE research funds, redirected by USDA's Agricultural Research Service, will be used for new BSE projects and facilities and build upon President Bush's fiscal year 2006 budget proposal, which would increase BSE research by \$7.3 million or 155 percent over 2005 funding levels. The newly funded projects include international collaborations with the Veterinary Laboratory Agency in Great Britain to study the biology of the BSE agent, the Italian BSE Reference Laboratory to evaluate present diagnostic tools for detecting atypical BSE cases and the University of Santiago de Compostela in Spain to compare North American and European BSE strains.

About \$750,000 will go toward a biocontainment facility now under construction at the ARS National Animal Disease Center in Ames, Iowa. These facilities will eventually allow the long-term study of BSE infection in cattle and other large animals, which can take a decade or more.

USDA's Agricultural Research Service has been a leader in research on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) such as scrapie, which affects sheep, and chronic wasting disease in deer. ARS developed the immunohistochemistry test that is currently used as the gold standard in the United States to confirm a diagnosis of BSE. ARS has an annual budget of nearly \$10 million for TSE research and 15 scientists involved in the research, primarily in

Ames; Pullman, Wash., and Albany, Calif.

The Food Safety Research and Response Network, spearheaded by North Carolina State University, will include a team of more than 50 food safety experts from 18 colleges and universities who will investigate several of the most prevalent food-related illness pathogens. Pathogens like E.coli, Salmonella and Campylobactor will be studied to determine where they are found in the environment, how they are sustained and how they infect herds. This team of researchers brings a broad range of expertise to tackle these persistent research challenges.

The group also will serve as a response team that can be mobilized to conduct focused research to control major episodes of food-related illnesses. Episodes could include investigation of health problems associated with agricultural bioterrorism and the deliberate contamination of agricultural commodities. USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) provided funding for the award.

The 17 other institutions in the project are: Cornell University, Iowa State University, McMasters University, Mississippi State University, North Dakota State University, The Ohio State University, Tuskegee University, University of Arizona, University of California at Davis, University of California at Berkeley, University of Florida, University of Illinois, University of Kentucky, University of Minnesota, University of Montreal, Washington State University, and West Texas A&M University.

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STATEMENT

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Release No. 0112.05

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Statement By Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns Regarding Cairns Ministerial And Colombia Bilateral

March 31, 2005

"I just met with Colombian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Arias and Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism Botero and am pleased to be able to announce a very satisfying conclusion to a day of meetings with the countries of the Cairns Group.

"Today has brought the opportunity for me, Under Secretary Penn and Ambassador Johnson to explore ways to work together with the Cairns Group in making progress in the Doha Development Agenda of the World Trade Organization. The United States has shared many objectives on the road to trade liberalization with this coalition of 17 nations.

"Today's meetings have provided an excellent opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to free trade and to discuss with ministers and other country representatives our common goal to advance the agricultural negotiations of the Doha Development Agenda.

"Additionally, in our meeting with our Colombian hosts, we also had the opportunity to discuss the Andean Free Trade Agreement. Two-way agricultural trade between the

three Andean countries and the United States currently tops \$3 billion a year. Our Andean friends rightly view a cutting edge FTA with the United States as a key component in their economic growth and reform plans. We see the FTA as a great way to open markets and opportunities in support of our broader goals in our hemisphere."

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To view the USDA transcript, open your Web browser and click on the following link:

http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?contentidonly=true&contentid=2005/03/0111.xml

or click on www.usda.gov and review the transcript.

The Office of the United States Trade Representative

Home / Document Library / Press Releases / 2005 / March / 03/30/2005 | Administration Requests Extension of Trade Promotion Authority

Administration Requests Extension of Trade Promotion Authority

For more information regarding press releases, please contact the USTR Press Office at 202 395 3230

03/30/2005

WASHINGTON – To continue leveling the playing field and expanding trade opportunities for American farmers, workers, businesses and consumers, the Administration today requested an extension of Trade Promotion Authority (TPA). TPA, enacted as part of the Trade Act of 2002, provides a framework for Executive – Congressional cooperation in trade negotiations, including a streamlined mechanism for Congressional consideration of trade agreements.

The Administration's report accompanying the extension request details the progress achieved to date under TPA and prospects for completing current negotiations.

"We must continue to pursue bilateral and regional agreements to open new markets, and we must complete negotiations in the World Trade Organization to reduce global barriers to trade. We will continue to enforce vigorously the trade laws so that American businesses and workers are competing on a level playing field," wrote President Bush in his transmittal letter. "Free and fair trade creates jobs, raises living standards, and lowers prices for families here at home. Trade agreements also deepen our partnerships with countries that want to trade in freedom. I look forward to the continued close cooperation with the Congress in pursuing these objectives."

TPA currently applies to trade agreements signed before July 1, 2005. The Administration's request will extend that deadline to July 1, 2007 unless either House disapproves by July 1, 2005.

Passage of TPA legislation in August 2002 was a major achievement of President Bush's first term. Earlier efforts to renew "fast track" legislation after it lapsed in 1994 were unsuccessful, and America fell behind as the European Union, Mexico, and many other nations negotiated dozens of trade agreements that set new rules and opened growing markets for their exports, putting the United States at a competitive disadvantage. To restore America's leadership in negotiating agreements and enforcing agreements it concludes, the Bush Administration worked closely with the Congress to forge a new consensus on TPA.

Taken together, the countries with which the Administration has completed or is negotiating free trade agreements constitute America's third largest export market, drawing \$78 billion in U.S. exports in 2004 and comprising the world's sixth largest economy. Continued cooperation between Congress and the President through TPA will be critical in bringing current bilateral, regional and global negotiations to successful

conclusions.

Background on TPA:

TPA provides for close collaboration between the President and Congress in opening foreign markets for U.S. goods and services. First, it gives the Executive branch specific Congressional guidance on objectives to seek in trade negotiations. TPA also sets detailed notice and consultation requirements for the Administration to follow to ensure it has the benefit of advice from the Congress, private sector, and the public before and during negotiations. TPA establishes a special Congressional Oversight Group through which Members of Congress provide timely advice to the Administration on trade negotiations and receive regular briefings from the United States Trade Representative on proposed U.S. negotiating positions. In addition, the Administration's trade negotiators brief and seek advice from Congressional committees before each negotiating round. This process ensures close coordination and regular exchange of information between the two branches.

Second, if the Administration follows TPA notice and consultation procedures, TPA provides for Congress to vote "yea" or "nay" on resulting trade agreements and implementing legislation as a whole within a set period.

Background on Administration use of TPA to level the playing field and open markets:

In close consultation with Congress, the President has used TPA to initiate a new trade strategy: simultaneously pursuing mutually reinforcing trade initiatives globally, regionally and bilaterally. This strategy has created strong incentives for trading partners to move forward, while also establishing models for state-of-the-art rules. Since August 2002, the Congress has, under TPA, approved groundbreaking FTAs with Chile, Singapore, Australia and Morocco, with strong bipartisan support in both chambers. And, in close consultation with the Congress, the President has concluded two additional FTAs – one with five Central American countries and the Dominican Republic (CAFTA-DR) and another with the Persian Gulf country of Bahrain.

These trade agreements:

Level the Playing Field, Expand Opportunities: Under the U.S.-Australia FTA, more than 99 percent of U.S. manufactured goods exports to Australia became duty-free immediately. The agreement will provide an estimated \$2 billion per year increase in U.S. exports to Australia once the agreement is fully implemented. The U.S.-Chile and U.S.-Singapore FTAs are also delivering promising results. In 2004, U.S. exports to Chile grew by nearly one billion dollars compared to 2003, up nearly 34 percent. This is nearly double the rate of growth in U.S. exports to other countries in Latin America. U.S. exports to Singapore – the United States' 11th largest export market – rose by more than 18 percent, with exports of U.S.-built information technology equipment alone growing by \$1.7 billion.

Expand U.S. prosperity: Today, the United States is the world's greatest trading nation, exporting \$1.15 trillion in goods and services in 2004. In the last two decades, U.S. trade (exports plus imports of goods and services) increased significantly, growing from 18 percent of GDP in 1984 to 25 percent of GDP in 2004. At the same time, the U.S. economy grew by 86 percent, and the real per capita income of Americans rose by 50 percent. U.S. jobs supported by goods exports are estimated to pay wages 13 percent to 18 percent above the U.S. national average, and U.S. exports of goods and services support an estimated 12 million American jobs. In the agricultural sector today, one in three acres planted in the United States produces crops for export. Open markets also help increase productivity, raise real wages, and

lower prices for the goods that American businesses and families purchase. Prices for consumer goods and services and industrial inputs tend to drop as trade barriers fall. These inputs in turn help make domestic producers more efficient and internationally competitive, which in turn drives export and job growth. Consumers find more choices, at lower prices.

Set fair rules: The high-quality trade agreements concluded and implemented under the TPA Act include strong dispute settlement procedures and establish an infrastructure for enforcing those agreements.

Promote Economic Freedom and Reform: U.S. FTAs provide the means to trigger and then lock-in broader economic reforms abroad. FTAs require effective environmental and labor law enforcement, government transparency, and anti-corruption efforts and promote market-based reforms and the rule of law.

U.S. global economic leadership: Under TPA, the Administration is leading the way in the ongoing Doha Development Agenda trade negotiations under the WTO that promise substantial economic gains for the United States and for the world. A successful conclusion of these negotiations could mean an annual benefit of \$2,500 for the average American family of four. Up to 500 million people could be lifted out of poverty with the removal of all measurable tariff and non-tariff barriers (World Bank and the Center for Global Development).

In consultation with Congress, the Administration has launched and is seeking to conclude free trade negotiations with partners in Latin America (Panama and the Andean nations of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, with Bolivia participating as an observer), Asia (Thailand), Africa (the five nations of the Southern African Customs Union: Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland), and the Middle East (Oman and the United Arab Emirates). In addition, the Administration is working to conclude the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), encompassing all the democracies of the Western Hemisphere. The Administration considers that the progress that has been made in each of these negotiations in achieving TPA objectives justifies continuing – and completing – the negotiations.



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Release No. 0102.05

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Egypt Lifts Ban On U.S. Beef Products

WASHINGTON, March 21, 2005 -U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns announced today that Egypt is immediately resuming imports of U.S. beef and beef products from animals less than 30 months of age.

"We are extremely pleased at the reopening of another important market for U.S. beef exports and anticipate that exports will quickly return to pre-BSE trade levels," said Johanns. "USDA will continue to focus on our efforts on opening additional markets by promoting the use of science-based regulations in the global trade in beef."

The agreement requires age and origin requirements under a USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Beef Export Verification (BEV) program. In 2003, Egyptian purchases of U.S. beef and beef products amounted to \$30 million, with liver accounting for nearly 65 percent or \$19 million of total sales.

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Release No. 0082.05

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Statement By Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns Regarding Guatemala's Passage Of The United States-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement

March 10, 2005

"I am very pleased that Guatemala today passed the United States-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement, which follows the recent approval of this agreement by El Salvador and Honduras.

"This action now brings the United States one step closer to an agreement that will significantly benefit American agriculture. Farmers, ranchers and food processors will benefit from the opening of markets to 44 million consumers and an anticipated increase of \$1.5 billion in U.S. agricultural exports.

"While the U.S. market is already open to imports from Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, this agreement will level the playing field for U.S. suppliers by eliminating tariffs on trade between our countries and create preferences for U.S. agriculture over our competitors.

"I look forward to working this year with the U.S. Congress to secure ratification of this vital trade agreement that will expand economic opportunities for all of American agriculture "

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United States-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement



Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns on the Importance of CAFTA-DR

"Free trade is necessary to the success of America's corn and soybean growers and to the entire American economy. Huge new markets are out there waiting to be tapped. CAFTA is an example of this."

"This sometimes gets lost in the debate, but CAFTA nations already have access to the U.S. market, already have access, and 99 percent of their products enter the United States duty-free under other agreements. But under CAFTA we are likely to double U.S. exports to these countries." "Who's the winner here? . . . They are America's producers. Current import duties on U.S. corn are as high as 35 percent in CAFTA nations. And the WTO permits duties as high as 75 percent. Under CAFTA, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic will eliminate their duty on yellow corn immediately. The other countries will provide preferential access for imports totaling 1.1 million metric tons initially and growing every year. All currently applied duties on corn products will be phased out over 15 years.

"For soybeans, duties range from zero to 20 percent. And . . . under WTO--it permits duties as high as 90 percent. Under CAFTA these countries will provide immediate duty-free access for soybeans. Duties on soybean meal and flour will be eliminated immediately in most CAFTA-DR countries. Most CAFTA-DR countries will also eliminate duties on crude soybean oil and duties on refined soybean oil will be phased out over 12 to 15 years.

" Can there be any doubt that we need to pass CAFTA for the benefit of the [U.S.] producers?"

For more information, open your web browser and click on the following link:

<http://www.fas.usda.gov/itp/CAFTA/cafta.html>

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President Nominates Rob Portman as United States Trade Representative

The Roosevelt Room

9:36 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. I'm pleased to announce my nomination of Congressman Rob Portman to be our next United States Trade Representative. For more than a decade, Rob Portman has been a superb representative of the 2nd District of Ohio. He's earned the trust of his constituents and the admiration of his colleagues. He brings a record of achievement to this new assignment.

As a member of the House leadership, Rob has shown he can bring together people of differing views to get things done. He's been a tireless advocate for America's manufacturers and entrepreneurs. He's a former international trade lawyer who has shown a deep dedication to free and fair trade. And now he will bring that commitment to his new role as U.S. Trade Representative.



As an Ohioan, Rob knows firsthand that millions of American jobs depend on exports, including one in every five factory jobs. Our country is home to about 5 percent of the world's population, and that means 95 percent of our potential customers are abroad. To keep our economy growing and creating jobs, we need to continue opening foreign markets to American products. And Rob knows that America's farmers and workers can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere in the world, so long as the rules are fair.

Under the outstanding leadership of Ambassador Bob Zoellick, the U.S. Trade Representative's office helped bring China and Taiwan into the World Trade Organization, and worked with Congress to secure Trade Promotion Authority. Bob and his team have completed free trade agreements with 12 nations on five continents, that will open a combined market of 124 million consumers for America's farmers and manufacturers and small

business owners. I appreciate his fine service, and I will continue to count on his wisdom and good judgment in his new post as Deputy Secretary of State.

When he is confirmed by the Senate, Rob Portman will build on Ambassador Zoellick's achievements. I've asked him to take on a bold agenda. We need to continue to open markets abroad by pursuing bilateral free trade agreements with partners around the world. We need to finish our work to establish a free trade area of the Americas, which will become the largest free trade zone in the world. We need to complete the Doha round negotiations within the World Trade Organization to reduce global barriers to trade. We must continue to vigorously enforce the trade laws on the books so that American businesses and workers are competing on a level playing field.

Rob is the right man to carry out this agenda. I've known him for many years. He is a good friend, a decent man, and a skilled negotiator. He understands that trade creates jobs, raises living standards, and lowers prices for families here at home. Rob also understands that as the world trades more freely, it becomes more free and prosperity abounds.

Rob Portman will be a fine leader for the dedicated men and women who work in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. I'm grateful he's agreed to serve. I'm grateful to his wife, Jane, and their three children, Jed, Will and Sally. I urge the Senate to promptly confirm this outstanding nominee as America's Trade Representative, and I look forward to welcoming Rob into my Cabinet. Congratulations.



MR. PORTMAN: Mr. President, thank you very much. I am very proud to stand at your side, and I am grateful for you giving me this opportunity to join your Cabinet and promote the bold international trade agenda you just described.

As you and I have discussed, open markets and better trade relations are key components to a more peaceful, a more stable and a more prosperous world. Through expanded trade, the roots of democracy and freedom are deepened. And here at home, trade policy opens markets to create jobs, a higher standard of living and greater economic growth.

For the past four years, Mr. President, you have been passionate about your vision for free and fair trade. And through your personal commitment to it and the tireless work of my good friend Bob Zoellick, former Trade Representative, and his superb team, you have made a lot of progress. I look forward to being able to try to build on that progress.

I would not be here today without the strong support of my family, who have joined us here. I'm fortunate to have a great partner, my wife Jane, who is both the love of my life and the best mother I can possibly imagine. And I couldn't be prouder of my three children, Jed, Will and Sally. They've all given this new responsibility their blessing.

Sally, who is a fourth grader, had to admit that she had never heard of the U.S. Trade Representative. (Laughter.) However, Mr. President, she said, "Dad, it sounds like a really neat job." (Laughter.) And it is, and a very important responsibility during historic times.

It's very tough to imagine leaving Congress and my many friends there, including Speaker Hastert. Dennis Hastert took me under his wing and gave me a seat at the leadership table, and I'll be forever grateful for that. However, if confirmed, I look forward to continuing to work very closely with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and in both houses of Congress.

I want to thank my superb staff. They have been fantastic for me and for the 2nd District of Ohio. And finally, I owe so much to the constituents of Ohio's 2nd District. I've had the honor to represent them for almost 12 years now, and I'm very proud of what we've been able to accomplish. The people of Southern Ohio, and my hometown of Cincinnati, have given me opportunities to serve that I never dreamed possible. For their friendship and their support, Jane and I will be forever grateful.

Thank you again, Mr. President. I look forward to serving on your team.

END 9:44 A.M. EST



USDA GRANTS TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE TO CONCORD JUICE GRAPE PRODUCERS IN NEW YORK, PENNSYLVANIA AND OHIO

WASHINGTON, March 28, 2005 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service approved a petition filed by Concord juice grape producers in New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio for benefits under the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for farmers program. The producers may apply for TAA benefits between March 28, 2005, and June 27, 2005.

Under the TAA program, USDA provides technical assistance and cash benefits to farmers and certain fishermen if imports of a like or directly competitive commodity contributed importantly to a decline in producer prices and a loss of net farm or fishing income.

After an investigation, FAS determined that imports of grape juice contributed importantly to a decline in producer prices of Concord juice grapes in New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio during 2003 when compared to the applicable 1998-2002 base-period.

To apply for benefits, you may obtain an application (form FSA-229) from <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eforms/mainervlet> or from your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) service center. Check local phone listings for the closest service center or go to <http://fsa.usda.gov> and click on "your local office" for contact information. General information about the TAA program is on the Web at <http://www.fas.usda.gov/itp/taa/taa.asp>.

TAA benefits will include technical instruction to enhance farming income. Financial payments will be made to applicants who complete their technical training by September 26, 2005, and satisfy certain income criteria. Producers receiving TAA payments may also apply to the Department of Labor for job retaining.

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FAS-PR-0046-05

USDA GRANTS TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE TO POTATO PRODUCERS IN IDAHO

WASHINGTON, March 22, 2005 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service approved a petition filed by potato producers in Idaho for benefits under the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for farmers program. The producers may apply for TAA benefits between March 28, 2005, and June 27, 2005.

Under the TAA program, USDA provides technical assistance and cash benefits to farmers and certain fishermen if imports of a like or directly competitive commodity contributed importantly to a decline in producer prices and a loss of net farm or fishing income.

After an investigation, FAS determined that imports of French fries contributed importantly to a decline in producer prices of fresh market potatoes in Idaho during 2003 when compared to the applicable 1998-2002 base-period.

To apply for benefits, you may obtain an application (form FSA-229) from <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eforms/mainervlet> or from your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) service center. Check local phone listings for the closest service center or go to <http://fsa.usda.gov> and click on "your local office" for contact information. General information about the TAA program is on the Web at <http://www.fas.usda.gov/itp/taa/taaindex.htm>.

TAA benefits will include technical instruction to enhance farming income. Financial payments will be made to applicants who complete their technical training by September 26, 2005, and satisfy certain income criteria. Producers receiving TAA payments may also apply to the Department of Labor for job retraining.

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Release No. 0085.05

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JOHANNIS ANNOUNCES SIGN-UP FOR LIVESTOCK ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND AMERICAN INDIAN LIVESTOCK FEED PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, March 11, 2005- Agriculture Secretary Mike Johannis today announced that eligible producers may sign up at their local USDA Service Center beginning March 14 for USDA's Livestock Assistance Program (LAP) and American Indian Livestock Feed Program (AILFP).

"We are pleased to be able to provide these benefits to producers as quickly as possible," Johannis said. "Natural disasters are unpredictable weather events that put farmers and ranchers at risk, as they work to produce a dependable and affordable national food supply."

These programs will provide relief to livestock producers who have suffered grazing losses in 2003 and 2004 due to drought, severe weather and related causes, and have limited safety net and risk management tools available.

To speed up the process, producers may sign up for these programs online from their home or business beginning in April or at any USDA Service Center across the nation. To sign up online, producers must first establish an e-authentication identity in their local USDA Service Center. Currently, producers also may sign up online for USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) Loan Deficiency Payment Program and the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program.

The LAP and the AILFP programs were authorized by The Military Construction and Appropriations and Emergency Hurricane Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2005 (2005 Act), to provide disaster assistance for producers who suffered losses in 2003 or 2004.

LAP and AILFP share many of the same eligibility characteristics, such as:

- A producer's grazing land (LAP) or the tribal governed land (AILFP) must be located in a county designated as a primary disaster county under a Presidential or Secretarial disaster declaration. The county must have been approved as a primary disaster county on or after Jan. 1, 2003, for a disaster occurring through Dec. 31, 2004. Assistance will not be available in contiguous counties.
- A county may meet eligibility requirements for both 2003 and 2004; however, a producer in that county may receive benefits for only one of those calendar years. Producers may receive benefits under both LAP and AILFP for the same year.

- The 2005 Act provides that producers who reduced the number of livestock because of a natural disaster shall not be penalized for those reductions. If, because of a natural disaster, a producer sold eligible livestock that were placed on grazing land (LAP) or tribal governed land (AILFP) on or after Jan. 31, 2003, the producers will receive compensation for the entire disaster payment period. Benefits will be based on the number of livestock the producer would have owned if the disaster had not occurred. For livestock that were sold in the course of routine business, producers will receive benefits for those animals only up to the date of sale.
- Producers of dairy and beef cattle; bison and beefalo; goats; swine; sheep; and certain equine, elk and reindeer are now eligible to participate in both programs.

Provisions of specific eligibility for each program are as follows:

Livestock Assistance Program

The LAP is a grazing loss program that will pay eligible livestock producers for grazing losses on a per head basis of eligible livestock. A producer must have control of adequate grazing land to support the eligible livestock and the producer must possess beneficial interest in eligible livestock that have been owned or leased for at least three months. During 2003 or 2004, a livestock producer must have suffered a 40 percent or greater loss of grazing production for three or more consecutive months due to natural disasters.

The 2005 Act also imposes a requirement that limits assistance to persons with a gross revenue limit of \$2.5 million, which is a change from the previous LAP. A \$40,000 per person payment limitation also applies to LAP assistance.

American Indian Livestock Assistance Program

AILFP will provide reimbursement of expenses for purchases of livestock feed for producers whose livestock were on tribal-governed land at the time of a natural disaster. Payments are made directly to the livestock owners and based on the smaller of either 30 percent of basic feed needs, stated as the Animal Unit Day (AUD) for eligible livestock, or the actual dollar amount of livestock feed purchases recorded on receipts.

As in the past, tribal governments will request to enter into a government-to-government contract for areas meeting the loss criteria. In addition to meeting other loss criteria, the tribal governed land must have had a loss of grazing production in excess of 35 percent. Livestock owners will receive benefits for the actual number of livestock that were present on tribal-governed land during the disaster payment period in which supplemental feed was provided.

USDA's Web site, <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov/> provides producers with one convenient location for details on new and existing disaster assistance.

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NEWS RELEASE

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USDA ANNOUNCES \$6 MILLION FOR NEW SMALL-SCALE/LIMITED RESOURCE FARMERS INITIATIVE

New Initiative Available in 11 States and the Caribbean Area

WASHINGTON, March 15, 2005-Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns today announced that the Natural Resources Conservation Service will provide up to \$6 million for a new Small-Scale/Limited Resource Farmers Initiative to help small farmers implement good conservation practices on their land.

"Small farms and ranches are part of the fabric of American life," said Johanns. "This initiative will help us to better serve small farmers who play an important role in ensuring a safe, abundant and affordable food supply, while conserving our land."

NRCS offices in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and the Caribbean Area will each dedicate up to \$500,000 in program funds for the initiative, which will help increase participation in USDA voluntary conservation programs through improved outreach efforts to limited resource farmers.

The funds will help farmers with 100 acres or less of cropland implement conservation practices. To be eligible, at least 10 percent of the cropland acres must be planted to alternative crops. Cost-share rates will be up to 90 percent for all practices and contracts will be limited to \$10,000.

The Small-Scale/Limited Resource Farmers Initiative emphasizes cost-effective, economical conservation practices for erosion control, water management and grazing land management and includes livestock watering facilities, fencing and irrigation systems.

Additional information for small farmers and ranchers is on the Web at

<http://www.usda.gov/oc/smallfarm> and

http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFSIC_pubs/altlist.htm. Farmers interested in the Small-

Scale/Limited Resource Farmers Initiative should contact their local USDA Service Center or NRCS office, located at <http://offices.usda.gov> or in the telephone book under Federal

Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Director's Column

From Washington State to Washington, D.C. the talk in the Ag community is about the Central America Free Trade Agreement or "CAFTA." The Foreign Agricultural Service has created a section on its Web Site (www.fas.usda.gov) entitled "Learn about CAFTA-DR," or the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and the Dominican Republic (DR) Free Trade Agreement.

The site addresses the case for CAFTA and outlines opportunities for American agriculture. Readers will learn that "...removing trade barriers between the United States and Central America and the Dominican Republic will create important new export opportunities for U.S. farmers, ranchers and processors". In short, opportunities for American agriculture under CAFTA include:

- 1) Leveling the playing field. The U.S. market is already largely open to agricultural imports from these countries, and access to markets such as these is critical for the growth of American agriculture. It now makes trade truly a "two-way street".
- 2) Central America and the Dominican Republic are already good markets for U.S. products with exports to the region totaling \$1.8 billion in 2004. CAFTA will provide access to a large number of consumers (44 million). With the agreement implemented, estimates are that U.S. exports will double.
- 3) Over 99 percent of regional agricultural exports enter the United States duty-free already under Most Favored Nation (MFN) tariffs and Caribbean Basin Initiative or CBI preferences.

The vast majority of the imports are crops such as coffee and tropical fruits and are not competitive with domestically grown commodities. The Free Trade Agreement will make tariff cuts permanent, but it is American Agriculture that will gain improved market access.

- 3) CAFTA eliminates barriers to U.S. exports improving U.S. competitiveness against Central American and third country suppliers. Absent a Free Trade Agreement, tariff rates could rise above the current WTO levels of, on average, 42 percent in Costa Rica, 41 percent in El Salvador, 40 percent in the Dominican Republic, 49 percent in Guatemala, 35 percent in Honduras and 60 percent in Nicaragua.
- 4) Nearly every major U.S agricultural sector will benefit from expanded market access under CAFTA-DR with gains in such sectors as feed grains, wheat, rice, soybeans, poultry, pork, beef, dairy, fruits, vegetables and processed food products.

The “S” in FAS stands for “Service” and we would like a chance to prove that to you. Please take a look at our Web Site (www.fas.usda.gov) and/or call our Trade Assistance & Promotion Office for exporter assistance at (202) 720-7420. We look forward to hearing from you on how we can better serve you. Thanks for reading!

Sincerely,

Dale Miller

Director
FAS Office of Outreach & Exporter Assistance

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 **TRANSCRIPT**

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Release No. 0108.05

Contact:
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**Transcript of Tele-News Conference with Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns,
Ambassador Allen Johnson and Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural
Services J.B. Penn Regarding the Dominican Republic/Central American Free Trade
Agreement, Washington D.C.**

March 28, 2005

MODERATOR: Now it is my pleasure to introduce Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns. Good morning, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY JOHANNNS: "Good morning to you.

"I've talked in my first weeks and months as Secretary about the importance of ensuring a more competitive and successful future for America's farmers and ranchers. So I am pleased today to offer some thoughts on that topic.

"I have put additional trade opportunities for agriculture right at the center of my radar screen as Secretary, and of course value-added agriculture and alternative uses are keys to continued success.

"For instance, farmers are becoming bigger producers of energy, and they're also working hard to be more efficient in the use of their energy. That's why I'm pleased to announce that USDA is making \$22.8 million available to support renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements by America's agriculture producers and rural small businesses.

"Of that money, \$11.4 million will be available immediately under a competitive grant process. The other half will be used later this year for guaranteed loans.

"Promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy benefits producers and small business owners by helping them use new, efficient and environmentally friendly technologies. It also benefits local communities whose economies are supported by new projects and other ag producers whose products and byproducts are often used to produce these kinds of energies.

"And it benefits our economy by promoting greater energy independence. Now anyone who wants to learn more about the grants can visit the USDA Rural Development website at <http://WWW.RURDEV.USDA.GOV>.

"Earlier I spoke of the vital role trade continues to play in the success of U.S. agriculture. Here with me in the studio are two people who are working day and night to open up new markets for American commodities and products and to keep those markets open. J.B. Penn is the USDA's Under Secretary

for Farm and Foreign Ag Services. And Ambassador Allen Johnson is the U.S. Trade Representative's chief ag negotiator.

"I've asked Ambassador Johnson to join me to talk about trade in a changing world and the great opportunities that we can either seize or watch as they pass us by. Later this week I will travel to Colombia to attend the 27th Ministerial Meeting of the current group of exporting nations. This meeting will give me an excellent opportunity to meet with my counterparts from around the world and also to discuss major trade issues such as bringing the Doha Development Agenda Negotiations in the WTO to a successful conclusion, and also the importance of the Dominican Republic/Central America Free Trade Agreement or CAFTA.

"Our farm economy has been experiencing some really historic times including records in farm income, farmers equity, ag exports and production of key commodities. Trade is one of the central reasons for that success. In fact, export sales last year represented 27 percent of total gross receipts.

"With 96 percent of the world's consumers living outside the United States, it's clear that continued trade opportunities for our farmers isn't a luxury; it's a necessity. Right now the playing field between the United States and the CAFTA nations isn't level. CAFTA nations already have access to the U.S. market. In fact, 99 percent of their products can now enter the United States duty-free under other agreements.

"But our farmers and ranchers don't have the same access to CAFTA markets. Currently Central American countries and the Dominican Republic are allowed to charge very high tariffs, limited only by WTO commitments, which would allow the tariffs to even go higher. The current WTO levels are on average 42 percent in Costa Rica, 41 percent in El Salvador, 40 percent in the Dominican Republic, 49 percent in Guatemala, 35 percent in the Honduras, and 60 percent in Nicaragua.

"The numbers are equally as concerning for specific commodities. For soybeans duties are as high as 20 percent, while the WTO permits duties as high as 90. Import duties on U.S. beef range up to 30 percent; the WTO permits duties as high as 79 percent. Cotton tariffs could rise to 60 percent depending upon the country.

"Now CAFTA will change all of that. It will help to level the playing field in our favor. Under the terms of the agreement tariffs will be phased out based on country and specific commodity. Some of the phase-outs will actually be immediate.

For example, American beef producers, duties on prime and choice cuts will be eliminated immediately in Central American countries. U.S. cotton farmers will benefit from zero tariffs that the FTA locks in immediately for markets worth more than \$55 million. Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic will eliminate their duty on yellow corn immediately.

"The fact is that these trade barriers are a part of an older, out-of-date world of agriculture-- not one in which orders can be made instantaneously on the Internet or in which products can be transported around the world overnight. That's the new world of agriculture and commerce. It's one of open markets and access where the playing field is level and the opportunities are enormous.

"CAFTA/DR nations have a total population of 44 million with expanding economies. U.S. ag exports to those nations totaled \$1.8 billion in 2004. But when CAFTA is passed and those markets are open on a fair and equitable basis, we could well double U.S. exports to those countries.

"American farmers and ranchers know this. Virtually all of the major ag industry and trade groups, more than 50 of them, support CAFTA. That support is broad because nearly every major U.S. ag sector will benefit.

"On the simplest terms when we pass CAFTA the winner will be America's farmers and ranchers, and

we want Congress to pass it quickly. Now what I'd like to do is ask Ambassador Johnson to offer his thoughts and then we'll take some questions.

"Mr. Ambassador."

AMBASSADOR ALLEN JOHNSON: "Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I appreciate the opportunity to stop by today and share this conversation with you about the importance of the Central American Free Trade Agreement and the Dominican Republic. I'm not going to repeat all the important facts that you just shared except to reiterate that what this agreement is about is about leveling the playing field. What I've heard over the last four years since I've been in this position has been continuously, we need to do things in our trade agenda that puts agriculture first and creates a more level playing field for our exporters.

"And that's exactly what this agreement does, which is the reason it has such broad support in the agricultural community, covering virtually every sector in the agriculture community. And it also deals with the sensitive issues that I know are out there, particularly as it relates to import-sensitive products such as sugar that we've dealt with those concerns effectively so that they're not a threat to our programs or our viability.

"And I'd like to just reiterate that what the implications are of this agreement is not just as it relates to the CAFTA/Dominican Republic. It also relates to where the United States is as a global leader in trade. In the last four years we've regained our role as the leaders in trade around the world. Agriculture has been the centerpiece of that as a priority. And in this region it's important to recognize that these are partners, not just in trade and economic policy, which is important, but also national security, immigration, narcotics and other policies that are important to our future and our viability.

"Needless to say, the world has not been kind to those that have put up walls, and this country is not about putting up walls. It's about reaching out. And those competitors that currently enjoy advantageous positions in this region, whether they're Canada or Mexico or the European Union, those countries are going to have to realize that we're now in this region to compete at our advantage rather than at a disadvantageous position.

"So again, I look forward to hearing what the questions are. And recognize that we have an important opportunity here to send a message around the world that the United States is going to continue to expand our trade agenda and reach out and open new markets."

MODERATOR: "We'll begin our questions now from reporters with a reminder that if you wish to ask a question, please press "1" on your telephone touch pad. That signals us of your question request. And our first question today will come from Matt Kaye of the Burns Bureau. Go ahead, Matt."

REPORTER: "Hello. I thought I lost you for a second. If I could address this question to the Secretary I'd appreciate it. Thanks for having us this morning. On the question of CAFTA, what is your impression of why some Republican lawmakers in Congress are a bit hesitant about this agreement? Particularly, we learned recently that Chairman Chambliss is not inclined to support it.

"Is it because of experiences, let's say, with NAFTA? Is it because of sugar? Is it because of the small size of the benefits in a relative sense-- \$900 million in new ag exports for the U.S the estimated figure?"

"And secondly, if we can't pass this agreement through Congress, what implications does that have for our leadership role in the Doha Round?"

SECRETARY JOHANNIS: "Really excellent questions. I have not talked to Chairman Chambliss, so I really, really would hesitate to try to explain his reason.

"What I would offer however is this. As I pointed out in my comments, 50 major ag industry and trade

groups have already very publicly come on board to support CAFTA. As you point out, there's one group that works hard on these trade agreements to defeat them. And that's the sugar industry.

"I came from a state where we had sugar beets and processing in our state. When I was the governor of Nebraska I worked with that industry. And one of the things that I've said to them is, 'Look, my door is open', because every which-way I look at this agreement I don't see that it has a negative impact on the sugar program. That's a very, very regulated program in our country, and I don't see the amount of sugar coming in as having a downside impact on that industry.

"So possibly what we need to do here is redouble our efforts to get the information out there. For example, I can say without hesitation that agriculture in Chairman Chambliss' state is going to benefit from CAFTA. And we can go down through the specific groups, we can show the areas where the playing field is not level today that with passage of CAFTA there will be better access -- in fact, excellent access in many areas for ag products that are grown in his state.

"So I look at it as an opportunity to get information out to him and to the other members in the Senate and House.

"In terms of the broader picture, there would be downside impact if this were not approved in terms of our ability to negotiate agreements. Now, I'm going to turn to the Ambassador here because he spends his day working on these agreements and trying to do everything he can to enhance the position of agriculture.

"So Mr. Ambassador, offer some thoughts on that."

AMBASSADOR. JOHNSON: "Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

"First of all, let me just make a couple of observations. One is, I believe the number that you cited in terms of exports was not including the Dominican Republic, so it's closer, at least according to the Farm Bureau analysis, to \$1.5 billion in additional agricultural exports.

"That's possibly enough to turn this from a net importing agriculture relationship with these countries to a net exporter trade relationship in agriculture, which is exactly what a lot of folks have been telling me as I've done workdays around the country.

"Secondly, as the Secretary said, when it comes to sugar the provisions that are in this agreement are clearly manageable. I know there's a perceived threat or problem in the countryside, but I am 100 percent confident that the issues that were raised and concerns that have been raised have been addressed.

"But let me get to what I think is a very good point which is, what is the implication to U.S. leadership if an agreement that we sign with six of our neighbors, friends, allies both in economic and trade policy as well as security and terrorism and narco trafficking and immigration policy-- what's the implications to our leadership around the world? I think it's very serious.

"I'm the one that deals with the WTO negotiations on a day-to-day basis, have been in all the meetings, and I can tell you that the WTO process, which is where's the biggest bang for the buck for agriculture around the world, would not occur if it was not for U.S. leadership. And U.S. leadership will be seriously questioned if an agreement that is so clearly good for the United States and good for U.S. agriculture, somewhere in the neighborhood of an 8 to 1 ratio of increased agricultural exports over imports under this agreement, if such an agreement can't get through our Congress--

"And I should point out it's already gotten through three of the Central American countries. So they've already stepped up to the plate on their side.

"But even beyond that, it also has implications to what we do in bilateral relationships. I often have people in the agriculture community that come to me and talk about wanting to have a trade relationship, improved trade relationship with Colombia, which is one of our big agricultural exports in South America-- or Thailand or Korea or other countries.

"And of course these countries aren't going to step up to give us their bottom line if we don't honor the agreements that we've already signed.

"And one final thought on this. You have to recognize what the role is of U.S. leadership, the perception of U.S. leadership when it comes to resolving the whole list of issues that agriculture brings to us here, or us at USTR as well as the Department of Agriculture, whether sanitary, phytosanitary issues or disputes.

"If there's a perception that the U.S. is not of one mind in trying to open these markets and address these concerns it's going to encourage those around the world who want to inhibit our access to their markets. Certainly in this region that we're talking about, CAFTA-DR which by the way is the second largest agricultural export relationship that we have in Latin America just after Mexico -- so there's no one that would be happier to see this agreement fail than the people that we're competing against in those markets, whether they're Canada or Mexico or the EU. Or that we're going to work with these countries to compete against countries like China when it comes to textiles.

"This is an important opportunity for us, and if we miss it there will be serious implications."

MODERATOR: "Our next question will come from Uta Henning of Inside U.S. Trade. And standing by should be Philip Brasher from Des Moines Register.

"Uta, go ahead, please."

REPORTER: "This is Uta Henning. Can you hear me? I have two quick follow-ons, one to the Secretary and one to Ambassador Johnson.

"To the Secretary, you said you have not spoken to the chairman. When do you plan to speak to him to find out what the nature of his concern is and it's very clear that he is looking to have some of these concerns addressed whether they be in peanuts or sugar.

"And the other question to Ambassador Johnson is, your statement if the Doha Round would not occur if the CAFTA fails to go through, we have approved agreements with Australia, Morocco, Singapore, Chile and [inaudible] the Doha Round is in a serious, serious lag there. So I'm a bit at a loss on why the CAFTA would contribute to the difficulties because it looks like the Doha Round in agriculture has enough difficulties. It doesn't need any help from the CAFTA. It strikes me as a bit of a disingenuous argument."

SECRETARY JOHANNIS: "Well, in reference to my intention to visit with the chairman, I am confident that will happen soon. We visit on a regular basis. I have not talked to him since he announced his position on this very, very important trade issue. But like I said, I'm confident that we will talk soon.

"The other thing I would mention, and the Ambassador did an excellent job of pointing this out-- this is so in favor of American agriculture that I really believe that whether it's the chairman or any other part of the country we can literally sit down with commodities produced in a given state and illustrate how this agreement, how CAFTA, improves and levels the playing field for those producers.

"And again, the sugar issue, we hear about that; but I looked at it with a very, very close view of what the impact was on sugar because again I represented sugar producers and processing in the state that I came from. And I can tell you, the issues with sugar are very manageable as the Ambassador points

out."

AMBASSADOR JOHNSON: "Uta, I appreciate your question, and you'll find it strange but the way you worded it I actually think I agree with you in that the DDA, Doha Development Agenda, doesn't need any more weight on its shoulders right now. And it clearly -- which I think you and I would agree on -- the success that we had in Doha in launching this round after the failure in Seattle, the success we had in passing trade promotion authority would send the message around the world that the U.S. was ready to lead in trade, the success that we had last summer in Geneva in getting a historical framework agreement in place-- none of that would have happened without U.S. leadership.

"And you're right, that leadership was largely due to the various successes that we had both in the WTO with trade promotion authority and getting these bilateral agreements through our Congress. We don't need now with what is clearly the best agricultural agreement of the lot-- from a U.S. ag point of view this is a clear winner. For this agreement to fail in our Congress, the message around the world would be that we are driven more by defensive interests than offensive interests because overwhelmingly roughly 1 percent of the producers in this country produce sugar and the rest produce something else. And the vast majority of the others are supporting this agreement.

"The message around the world for the Doha Development Agenda where agriculture is clearly the center would be that the United States is not able to lead in agricultural trade.

"We've got a lot of challenges in this WTO negotiations, and all of those challenges can only be met through U.S. leadership, and that message can only be sent with the success of the CAFTA-Dominican Republic passing our Congress."

MODERATOR: "Our next question comes from Philip Brasher of Des Moines Register. And Bill Tomson from Dow Jones shall be standing by.

"Philip, go ahead."

REPORTER: "Yeah. Just to follow up, there definitely seems to be a feeling out in the country that these trade agreements in the past haven't paid off the way farmers had hoped. One of the things that keeps coming up is the recent decline in the agricultural trade surplus. If there's not a deficit now, that surplus has declined. What's inside the numbers that gets cited often is to back up this feeling that exports haven't really helped U.S. agriculture all that much. Can you all address that?"

SECRETARY JOHANNIS: "You studied these numbers as closely as we do, and you see what we see, and that is that we're setting records for exports. We actually are. It's been a remarkable time in terms of our ability to export our ag products into the foreign marketplace. And I think this year we're projecting the third highest year ever. If you look at NAFTA for example, we've had a significant increase in the amount of exports that we have made.

"But part of it is that our society also looks to imports to meet some of its dietary requests if you will. You know, I remember a time where you got a certain amount of fruit during a certain time of the year. Well, the American consumer now is very anxious to have good fruit year around. And so you see increases in that area.

"And you know, you can go on down through the list. As our society becomes more diversified there's a diet out there that is being met by imports from other countries. But believe me, in terms of our ability to export, these agreements have opened up markets; we've increased the amount of ag products we're exporting into the international marketplace. We are setting records, and it's been a rather remarkable time in terms of our ability to sell our ag products worldwide."

AMBASSADOR JOHNSON: "Just a couple of quick thoughts. First of all, when you dissect the numbers as the Secretary says you have to sort of pay attention to what we're importing. What we're

importing oftentimes is counter-seasonal products. So things that are grown in our winter somewhere else. Often they're ethnic foods that we maybe don't produce here; we've got a growing ethnic appetite in this country.

"And they're things like coffee and tropical fruits, bananas for example, that we don't produce here but we certainly like to eat. So in that sense I think that I'm not one that purely grades something on the net import or exports. But if you do grade it on that, you should be even more enthusiastic about CAFTA because what this does is increase our exports somewhere in the neighborhood of about an 8 to 1 ratio over what our imports would be under this agreement.

"And coming from Iowa as you're calling from, I know there's that perception out there-- which is why I did some workdays last summer and this fall in Iowa and Minnesota and around that region of the country. But the number I keep reminding people of from the soybean industry, for example, we export about 197 tons to every one-ton we import. In corn we export about 146 tons to every ton we import. And I could go down the list.

"So this is clearly the place that we need to look for expanding our market opportunities. And there's no better place to start than right here in our own neighborhood in building the demand in these countries for our products as well as building their economies so that they can be stable friends and neighbors in what is a very unstable world right now."

MODERATOR: "Our next question will be from Bill Tomson of Dow Jones. And standing by should be Chad Wolf of KXXX Colby, Kansas. Bill, go ahead, please."

REPORTER: "Hello. Is Dr. Penn still there?"

SECRETARY. JOHANNIS: "Yes, he is."

REPORTER: "Good. You might be getting bored, so I have a couple questions for you. First question, has a deal been reached with Taiwan? And is that April 16 date that some cow groups were talking about, is that valid? And I'm talking about BSE here of course.

"The second question is, we're getting news out of Tokyo that there was a panel there, reached a position decision for U.S. beef trade. How positive is that, and what do you see the situation is now?"

SECRETARY. J. B. PENN: "Well, thanks for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to clarify the situation in these two important markets.

"First with respect to Taiwan, we are very close to an agreement with Taiwan to resume importation of our beef. But we're not quite there yet. We still have a detail or two that we have to work out, and there was a premature announcement by some that the market was open and that April 16 would be the date. But we've not worked out all the details yet, and our people are discussing this with the Taiwanese at this very moment.

"Now with respect to Japan, you're correct in that the Prion Subcommittee of the Food Safety Commission did agree to recommend a change in their regulation so that they would only test animals 21 months old and older. This recommendation now goes to the full Food Safety Commission, which will meet, we hope sometime this week. And then following that there is a 30-day public notice period before the final decision would be rendered.

"This is a step in the right direction. It's a very small step. But we still think the Japanese process is going far too slow, and it's unnecessarily cumbersome. We would like to see it accelerated, and we hope that the Japanese will do that."

MODERATOR: "Our next question comes from Chad Wolf of KXXX in Colby, Kansas. And Jackie

Fatka from Farm Progress should be standing by.

"Chad, go ahead, please."

REPORTER: "Gentlemen, if you could please address beef imports into the United States under CAFTA?"

SECRETARY JOHANNIS: "I'll turn to the Ambassador, and he'll give you some information on that."

AMBASSADOR JOHNSON: "Well, the primary import that would be increased under this agreement is sugar. The rest of it is basically increasing our exports. So let me just sort of focus on that because again as we said -- by the way, the numbers I cited were the American Farm Bureau Federation analysis, not ours, that showed that we'd increase our exports by about \$1.5 to \$1.6 billion and increase our imports I think the number is around \$175 million or something like that.

"Most of that is focused on sugar. Now let me put a couple of observations on the sugar program implications. First of all, when we were talking with the sugar industry prior to the negotiation at CAFTA what their primary concern was was that the over-quota duty on sugar remained where it is. And we achieved that-- where the over-quota tariff on sugar is roughly about 100 percent, that's going to continue.

"The secondary concern was they wanted to make sure that the amount of sugar that was let in under this agreement was manageable. Well, we were able to achieve that as well. Basically the amount of sugar that would be allowed in is equal to about one day's production or about a little bit over 1 percent of U.S. consumption of sugar, well below what we had in the mid-'90s in sugar imports for example. Or another way to look at it is about 1 to 1.5 teaspoons of sugar a week per capita.

"The other thing they were concerned about was, they didn't want to see sugar coming through, let's say, from Brazil to one of these countries and then having these countries send us their sugar. So we put in a provision called the Substitution Provision that prevents that from occurring. Again, that's unprecedented. We did that in the agreements that this administration negotiated, but it didn't exist in previous agreements.

"And then finally there was a general observation among all of us-- well if there was any reason that any of this increase in sugar which as I just said is very, very minor -- did have an impact on our programs or our industry we have a provision in there called Stocks Management Program that allows us to compensate these countries with something other than sugar and not allow them to send us sugar.

"So the reason I'm giving you such a long answer to a short question is simply because if that sugar that's being allowed in -- roughly 1 percent of U.S. consumption, one day's production in the U.S. -- does end up having an implication of disrupting our market, we have a provision in there that actually can stop that from coming in as well.

"So from the U.S. agricultural perspective, it's a win/win situation in terms of our exports, and it's clearly manageable in terms of our imports. And there is no such provision, by the way, for our exports to these countries. So our corn producers, our wheat producers, our rice producers, our pork and poultry and beef and dairy producers, fruits and vegetables and all the rest are going to be able to export to those markets eventually with duty-free treatment."

MODERATOR: "Our next question comes from Jackie Fatka of Farm Progress Publications. Jerry Hagstrom should be standing by.

Jackie, go ahead, please."

REPORTER: "As to the sugar groups, who are some other opponents that stand in the way of approving

this? Also, can you compare CAFTA with NAFTA and some of the similarities in passing NAFTA and also some things in the negotiations that you may have addressed to protect U.S. agriculture?"

AMBASSADOR JOHNSON: "In terms of, besides the Sugar groups, really in agriculture they're the primary ones. I know that there's a couple of other farm groups, [National] Farmers Union I think and R-CALF I think have some concerns as well. But as I point out, we have big support from the National Corn Growers Association, American Soybean Association, USA Rice Federation, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Pork Producers, the Cattlemen, the Farm Bureau, the National Milk Producers Federation, and I could frankly go on and on. As the Secretary said, there's some 60 groups that are there.

"When it comes to the comparison between NAFTA and CAFTA, I suppose the main thing I'd like to stress is the similarities in the sense that we're leveling the playing field. Unlike Mexico, these countries already have duty-free access into our market for 99 percent of their agricultural products that they export to us -- and 80 percent by the way of all their products they export to us.

"So there's a big difference there in that it's all win and very little give on the offensive side because they've already got access to our market.

"On the defensive side, when it comes to sugar basically every provision I just mentioned is unique to this agreement or it's certainly unique to this administration when it comes to managing the sugar issue. And so in that sense if you're from the sugar industry you should consider this to be a major improvement in terms of managing any sort of threat to our programs or the industry's viability."

MODERATOR: "Jerry Hagstrom will have the next question from Congress Daily. And Toro Ushida (sp) should be standing by.

"Jerry?"

REPORTER: "Yes. Thank you. My first question is, are the countries that would come under the CAFTA agreement accepting U.S. beef at the present time, or are they keeping it out due to the BSE question?"

"And my second question is about cotton. Last week the cotton subcommittee met in Geneva, and I'm wondering what your views are on how that meeting went and what it means for the development of the cotton issue.

"And also, I understand that Secretary Johanns and other people and USDA and Ambassador Johnson have recently met with the U.S. cotton industry. And what is your time-table or your plan for dealing with a resolution of the cotton case?"

SECRETARY JOHANNNS: "Let me have the Ambassador talk about the issues you raised in the first part of your question, and then I'll jump in and talk to you a little bit about the cotton."

AMBSSADOR. JOHNSON: "First of all, some of these countries are, I believe most of these countries are opening their markets for our beef into those markets. So I'd have to confirm that. We have, one of the things I think is worth mentioning when it comes to one of the values of having this improved relationship -- and JB can talk about this better than I can -- having a good trade relationship with these countries improves our ability to resolve these sorts of issues.

"For example, the first market -- we have a free trade agreement with Mexico. The first major market that we saw improved access for our beef after the BSE scare was Mexico. And so we set up in these agreements a means for resolving these sorts of issues in a very efficient and effective way because the trade relationship is already there. And I would expect that not only when it comes to our beef and BSE but I would expect that on a whole series of sanitary and phytosanitary issues that our industries raise as

concerns.

"A number of these countries already recognize, and we're working on the rest, already recognize U.S. certificates as the basis for accepting our beef into their market, as well as pork and other products.

"So at any rate, that's just one observation. When it comes to the cotton issue, the main point is, is that we're continuing to work in trying to make a successful Doha Development Agenda Round. That's the best way for addressing the cotton issue if you have concerns in other parts of the world about the cotton support. What we said all along is that we're willing to reform our programs to the extent that we see others reforming theirs and of providing access into their markets.

"And there's some substantial changes taking place in the world when it comes to cotton because of the doing away with the quotas as of January 1 of this year. And our cotton industry recognizes that frankly again another reason that we need CAFTA is because it creates regional competitiveness for our cotton producers, for our textile industry to compete against China around the world.

"Finally, on the case issue, I'll let the Secretary and JB talk about it, but obviously on the case we're continuing to consult with the industry, consult with Congress, consult with each other here in this room as to what are the implications, what changes if any there are needed in various programs.

"But as we talk in Geneva we're stressing very much that folks shouldn't look just at litigation as a way of solving their problems. The best way to resolve these outstanding issues is for all of us to succeed in the Doha Round in the negotiations."

SECRETARY JOHANNIS: "What I'd like to add to that is that, yes-- in fact I've met with cotton industry and the whole purpose of that meeting was to make sure that they understood that I wanted them to be a part of the process. I encouraged them to meet with their membership as quickly as possible, to bring their ideas to us in terms of not only the case but of course we always welcome their comments and their thoughts relative to the negotiations on the Doha Round.

"So we want to make sure they understand that we're throwing the doors open, and we want them to be a part of the process.

"JB?"

SECRETARY PENN: "I think that about sums it up. We're having further meetings with not only the cotton industry but with the exporters that would be affected by the Export Credit Programs. And we're taking into account all of the considerations as Ambassador Johnson said, that we have the negotiations to be concerned about; we have of course the Congress, the congressional committees to keep involved in the process, and we have the stakeholders in our own industry to keep involved.

"And so we're working very diligently to try to address all of those concerns."

MODERATOR: "And our final question today will come from Toro Ushida (sp). Toro, go ahead, please."

REPORTER: "Hello. My question is about of course U.S. beef exports to Japan. I have a question to Secretary Johannis. There is a very strong frustration in the Congress on this issue. And some congressmen are talking about possible trade sanction to Japanese products. So could you tell me the position of the U.S. government on this issue, on the sanction? And the possibility of fighting it to the WTO on this issue, please?"

SECRETARY JOHANNIS: "As I've said many times in the past, we have had a remarkable trading relationship with Japan in many areas over the years. Japan is a major trading partner. And in fact until

this issue arose it was the major market for our beef products.

"My thought is always to work through the issues through a negotiation and discussion. I find that to be a far superior way than retaliation. I find that to be a far superior way than litigation. And so my hope is that we can do everything possible to move this process along and it's one of the reasons why I've asked for a date certain for beef to start entering the Japanese marketplace.

"I do agree with Under Secretary Penn's assessment. This is a positive step, the decision that was made by the Prion Subcommittee. Japan has consistently made steps in the right direction, but it's been slow. In fact, it's been enormously slow. And so my hope is that we will arrive at a date, we will work to achieve an open marketplace with Japan. But I would also make the same case for our other trading partners. Trade disruption is not a good situation for anyone.

"So my goal is to continue to work with the Japanese government, continue to do everything we can to get those markets reopened.

"I'll offer the opportunity for the ambassador to offer a thought if he would like."

AMBASSADOR. JOHNSON: "Well, I don't have anything really to add to that discussion. I believe this was our last question.

"I'd just like to point out on the CAFTA point, and I started with this in terms of the world has not been kind to those that have built walls-- which is one of the reasons why you see others in the world reaching out. During the decade before we came to office there was literally hundreds of free trade agreements and customs unions between our competitors and our customers that the United States was left out of.

"And one of the reasons I'm so familiar with them is, when I'm negotiating these free trade agreements whether they're with Chile or Central America or Morocco, I can look at the agreements these countries already have with the European Union or with Mexico or with Canada. And you see even as we speak that the European Union just expanded into ten new member states. They've learned the lesson of history that you need to reach out and expand your reach through trade.

"And they're beginning negotiations with Central America in terms of having a free trade agreement with those countries.

"So again, we look at this as an opportunity for the United States to not just expand our interests economically but to send a message globally that we do reach out to our friends and neighbors in trying to improve our relationships and strongly encourage folks to take the time to take a look at the websites. The USDA has an excellent website talking about the benefits of CAFTA to our agriculture community. And raise their concerns so we get a chance to answer them.

"I think the Secretary's comment earlier about some members of Congress who maybe aren't as familiar with the benefits of this agreement not being sure which way they're going to vote -- well, this is an opportunity for us to welcome that discussion because I think it clearly ends up on the positive side for all of us."

MODERATOR: "Thank you, Ambassador Allen Johnson.

"And Mr. Secretary?"

SECRETARY JOHANNIS: "The questions were excellent today. What it really boils down to for me is this. As I talk to producers around the country, the farmer and rancher, about trade, one of the things that they say to me over and over again is, you know, Mike, it just isn't fair that countries out there can

sell their products into our marketplace and we can't do likewise.

"And you know, they could not be more right about that assessment. That's a really straightforward assessment on trade policy.

"But that's the situation now with the CAFTA nations; 99 percent of their products now enter the United States duty-free under other agreements. CAFTA levels that playing field as I specified.

"That's why as Secretary of Agriculture it's a real straightforward issue for me. If I want to level the playing field and grow that CAFTA marketplace and send our products into that marketplace, we need to do everything we can to get CAFTA to the finish line for the benefit of our farmers and ranchers across this country."

MODERATOR: "Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns.

"I'm Larry Quinn bidding you a good day from Washington."

#

Chronic Wasting Disease

FOR RELEASE:

CONTACTS: Jessica Chittenden, Ag & Mkts

Immediately, Saturday, April 2, 2005

W:518-457-3136, C:518-527-3949

Michael Fraser, DEC

W:518-402-8000, C:518-461-1541

SECOND CASE OF CWD FOUND IN ONEIDA COUNTY DEER State's Trace Back Finds Second Positive CWD in Herd Directly Linked to Index Herd

A second positive case of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in New York State has been confirmed in a white-tailed deer from a captive herd in Oneida County that is directly linked to the herd where a white-tailed doe was found positive for CWD earlier this week.

CWD is a transmissible disease that affects the brain and central nervous system of deer and elk. There is no evidence that CWD is linked to disease in humans or domestic livestock other than deer and elk.

During the investigation of the State's first case of CWD this week, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets found that one of the herds associated with the index animal had recently sent a sample to the State's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory to be tested for CWD. The sample was collected and sent for testing as part of the State's mandatory CWD surveillance and testing protocols.

The positive sample was from a two and a half year old white-tailed deer that died from aspiration pneumonia, which is often but not exclusively associated with CWD. Due to the direct association with the index herd, the Department expedited the testing procedure by re-routing the sample to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa, which late yesterday found the sample to be positive for CWD.

Two days ago, the New York State Departments of Agriculture and Markets, and Environmental Conservation announced the State's first case of CWD, found in a six-year old white-tailed doe from a captive herd in Oneida County. The deer was sampled as part of the State's Enhanced CWD Surveillance and Monitoring Program.

Currently, the index herd and the six other associated herds including the second positive herd are under quarantine. All animals remaining in the index herd and the herd with the second confirmed positive herd will be depopulated and tested for CWD. The investigation to determine the source of the infection is ongoing.

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets will continue to seek any susceptible deer that came into contact with either herd and to assess the health and environmental risks associated with such establishments.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation will continue to conduct intensive monitoring of the wild deer population surrounding the two positive herds to determine if CWD has spread to wild deer.

CWD is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) of deer and elk. Scientific and epidemiological research into CWD is ongoing. To date, research shows that the disease is typified by chronic weight loss, is always fatal, and is transmissible between susceptible species. CWD has only been found in members of the deer family in North America, which include white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk and moose.

More information and the transcript of Thursday's press conference regarding the first positive case of CWD in New York State can be found at the Department of Agriculture and Markets' website at www.agmkt.state.ny.us or at the Department of Environmental Conservation's website at www.dec.state.ny.us.

###

Jessica A. Chittenden

Director of Communications

NYS Dept. of Agriculture & Markets

10B Airline Drive, Albany, NY 12235

☎ 518-457-3136

**NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & MARKETS
NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

CONTACTS:

FOR RELEASE:

Jessica Chittenden, Ag & Mkts
Immediately, Saturday April 2, 2005

W:518-457-3136, C:518-527-3949
Michael Fraser, DEC
W:518-402-8000, C:518-461-1541

*****CORRECTION*****

SECOND CASE OF CWD FOUND IN ONEIDA COUNTY DEER

Please note the change in the age of the second confirmed positive CWD deer.

New information gathered this morning from the owner of the second positive CWD deer, indicated that the second positive CWD deer was a four to five year old white-tailed deer, not a two and a half year old white-tailed deer as reported in this morning's press release.

###



News Release

[Return to WSDA Home](#) | [Return to 2005 News Release Page](#)

For immediate release: March 15, 2005

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

Contact: Dr. Leonard Eldridge (360) 902-
1881

P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington
98504-2560

Kate Sandboe (360) 902-1815

WSDA issues emergency order requiring TB tests for cattle

OLYMPIA - In an effort to keep Washington state free of cattle tuberculosis (TB), all dairy cows and bulls six months of age or older are now required to test negative for the disease within 60 days prior to entering the state.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) put the restriction in effect today (March 15) through an emergency order. The action is necessary, according to Dr. Leonard Eldridge, the state veterinarian, because of several cases of cattle tuberculosis that have occurred in the last two years in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Michigan. As a result, he said, at least three of those states have lost their TB-free status.

"Introduction of TB into Washington would have severe economic consequences," Eldridge said. "Because there is no effective treatment for TB in livestock, infected herds must either be destroyed under government supervision, or the herd is placed under quarantine and tested repeatedly, destroying any animals that test positive.

"Even after being released from quarantine, the herd must be tested every year for five years to make sure it remains disease-free. Often depopulating the whole herd is the only practical alternative," Eldridge said.

Cattle TB is a contagious bacterial infection. Animals are contagious in the early stages of the disease. The disease is most commonly spread by inhalation among confined animals, such as in dairy operations. Since dairy animals are often long lived, infected animals can develop lesions in the lungs, lymph nodes and other organs. The disease is also contagious to humans.

"We support the department of agriculture's decision as a prudent precaution," said Jay Gordon, executive director of the Washington State Dairy Federation. "A disease of this nature would have serious consequences for our industry and would affect consumer confidence in our products."

Also under the new rule, dairy heifers and bull calves younger than six months of age being brought into Washington will have to be officially identified with an ear tag and will be restricted at a designated facility until they test negative for TB at six months. Younger calves may be exposed, but cannot be tested accurately until six months of age.

The only exception from the testing order will be dairy cattle from herds tested yearly under a TB-accreditation program, neutered dairy cattle being fed for slaughter, and dairy cattle headed directly to slaughter.

Washington has the highest production of milk per cow in the nation and milk is the second highest-ranked commodity in the state. Washington has not had a case of cattle tuberculosis since 1982.

###

Locate State Departments of Agriculture

Locate your State Department of Agriculture office by clicking on the National Association of the State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) website at the following address:

<http://www2.nasda.org/NR/exeres/FAF683C2-6CFA-432C-B416-465EF9BE1267.htm>

or by clicking on <http://www2.nasda.org>

Links to State Regional Trade Groups

The State Regional Trade Groups (STRG) are four regionally located, non-profit trade development organizations that help U.S. food producers and processors sell their products overseas. The STRGs receive funds from USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), the State Departments of Agriculture and private industry.

They carry out promotional activities that increase exports of U.S. high-value food and agricultural products. Activities of the organizations are directed by the State Departments of Agriculture, state agricultural promotion agencies, and coordinated with FAS' Washington and country offices overseas including international trade exhibitions, overseas trade missions, reverse trade missions, export education, in-country research, and point-of-sale promotions in foreign food chains and restaurants in markets around the world. The STRGs also administer a cost-share funding program called the Brand Program that supports promotion of brand name food and agricultural products in overseas markets. The STRGs include:



The Western U.S. Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA) is located in Vancouver, Washington. <http://www.wusata.org>

Calendar of events: http://www.wusata.org/events_calendar/default.asp



The Mid-America International Agri-Trade Council (MIATCO) is based in Chicago, Illinois. <http://www.miatco.org>

Calendar of events: http://www.miatco.org/us_food/events_calendar/index.htm



The Southern U.S. Trade Association (SUSTA) is located in New Orleans, Louisiana. <http://www.susta.org>.

For the calendar of events click onto: <http://www.susta.org/events/index.html>

(MORE)



The Food Export USA-NE is located in the Northeast at:

<http://www.foodexportusa.org>

Calendar of events: <http://www.foodexportusa.org/calendar/index.cfm>

For more information on the State Regional Trade Groups click:

<http://www.fas.usda.gov/agexport/psinfo.html>



For export assistance click on USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service

at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/agexport/exporter.html>



The U.S. Commercial Service Export Assistance link:

<http://www.export.gov>.



NEWS RELEASE

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Release No. 0083.05

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USDA ANNOUNCES SIGN-UP FOR CROP DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, March 11, 2005-- Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns today announced that eligible producers may sign-up for the Crop Disaster Program (CDP) beginning March 14 at their local USDA Service Center. The CDP authorizes crop loss assistance for producers who suffered 2003 or 2004 and certain 2005 crop losses from damaging weather.

"We are pleased to be able to provide these benefits to producers as quickly as possible," Johanns said. "Drought, floods and hurricanes are unpredictable weather events that put farmers and ranchers at risk in producing a dependable and affordable national food supply."

Eligibility for CDP is similar to that of the 2001-2002 crop disaster program. Producers suffering a greater than 35-percent production loss and/or more than a 20-percent quality loss are eligible. The payment rate for CDP has been increased to 65 percent of the established commodity price for insured crops and noninsured crops, and 60 percent of the price for uninsured commodities. Previous disaster assistance provided payments of 50 percent of the established commodity price for insured and non-insurable crops and 45 percent for uninsured crops.

Producers may apply for CDP for any crops that are eligible for coverage under the Federal Crop Insurance or the Noninsured Assistance Program. This program results from Congressional passage last October of the Military Construction Appropriations and Emergency Hurricane Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2005 (the Act).

Under the Act, \$50 million is available for 2003 crop losses in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Eligible losses are those resulting from hurricanes, tropical storms and other weather-related disasters that occurred during calendar year 2003. There is an additional \$3 million for fruit and vegetable losses occurring in North Carolina during the 2003 calendar year as a result of tropical storms and other disasters. North Carolina fruit and vegetable and Virginia CDP participants are also eligible to apply for CDP payment on 2004 or 2005 crop losses.

The payment limit is \$80,000 per person for all 2003/2004/2005 CDP payments, as well as for North Carolina and Virginia CDP payments for 2003 losses. The closing date for this sign-up will be announced later.

As part of the CDP implementation process, USDA has prepared a fact sheet that contains

information about the disaster assistance programs. For more information on these issues, visit USDA's website at <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov/>

#

South American Trade Mission

Trade Mission Scheduled for South America

Food Ingredients Trade Mission to South America: August 22-26, 2005

The Nevada Commission on Economic Development and the Washington Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Western United States Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA), will be conducting a Food Ingredients Trade Mission to South America, August 22-26, 2005. The mission will visit Colombia (Medellin and Bogota), Ecuador (Guayaquil) and Peru (Lima). It will include one-on-one meetings with buyers from food manufacturers and processors in these countries. This is an excellent opportunity for companies to meet with foreign buyers and investigate the rapidly growing markets for food ingredients in each of these countries.

Product Focus: Food Ingredients. Includes, but is not limited to: Soy & Protein isolates, non-caloric sweeteners, whey proteins; tomato paste/powder, raisins, fruit pulp, frozen vegetables, dried fruit, starches (modified and potato), cherries, sauce bases, granola mixes, sugar alcohols.

For more information contact:

Alan Di Stefano
Nevada Commission on Economic Development
Phone: (775) 687-4325
FAX: (775) 687-4450
E-mail: ccintl@bizopp.state.nv.us

Or

Jon Sonen
Washington Department of Agriculture
Phone: (509) 457-7137
FAX: (509) 453-4880
E-mail: jsonen@agr.wa.gov

Or, open your web browser and click on the WUSATA web site for more information at:
http://www.wusata.org/events/event_details.asp?eventID=473



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Release No. 0106.05

Contact:

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Tim McNeilly (202) 690-0498

JOHANNIS ANNOUNCES INVESTMENT OF \$9.2 MILLION IN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FUNDS FOR RURAL AMERICA

Funding to Create or Save Over 1,800 Rural Jobs

WASHINGTON, March 24, 2005 - Agriculture Secretary Mike Johannis today announced the selection of 26 loan and grant recipients in 14 states that will receive \$9.2 million in rural business development funds.

"I applaud the local community leadership for their efforts to secure these investments, which are needed to create economic opportunities and improve the quality of life available in their community," said Johannis. "These funds are part of the Bush Administration's ongoing efforts to spur economic development in rural areas and will help save or create more than 1,800 jobs."

The grants and loans are awarded through USDA Rural Development to electric and telecommunications cooperative organizations, which in turn provide loans or grants to support local economic or community development efforts. These funds are also part of an important leveraging effort. The \$9.2 million in USDA investments will be matched with \$59.7 million in additional investments to support a variety of businesses and community ventures, including community facilities and infrastructure, improving access to local medical care and other projects that encourage a favorable climate for jobs and growth.

Funding of selected applicants will be contingent upon meeting the conditions of the loan and/or grant agreement. A list of the awards can be found at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/newsroom/news.htm>

Alabama	\$450,000	Arkansas	\$450,000
Georgia	\$450,000	Iowa	\$1,585,000
Kansas	\$1,840,000	Minnesota	\$1,350,000
Mississippi	\$450,000	Missouri	\$450,000
Nebraska	\$200,000	North Dakota	\$450,000
Oklahoma	\$212,000	South Dakota	\$450,000
Tennessee	\$510,000	Wisconsin	\$450,000

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development has invested over \$50 billion since the beginning of the Bush Administration to provide equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. As a result, over 800,000 jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

#

Congress Considers Deputy Secretary

Nomination of Charles F. Conner as Deputy
USDA Secretary

Full Committee
Presidential
Nomination

Date & Time

Wednesday, April 6
2005
10:00 AM

Location

Russell 328-A

The Committee will consider the president's nomination of Charles F. Conner, of Indiana, to be Deputy Secretary of Agriculture. Mr. Conner currently serves as Special Assistant to the President for Agriculture, Trade, and Food Assistance at the National Economic Council.

Prior to this position, he served as President of the Corn Refiners Association in Washington, DC. Mr. Conner previously served on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry for twelve years. He earned his bachelor's degree from Purdue University.

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Release No. 0117.05

Contact:

Tim McNeilly, USDA (202) 690-0498
Bridget Gonzales, MBDA, (202) 482-3774

Expanding Minority Business Investments Will Be Focus Of Listening Forums

WASHINGTON, April 5, 2005 - Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns and Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez today announced that they will hold a series of three listening forums across the country as part of the Bush Administration effort to increase minority business ventures.

"Enhancing the economic opportunities available to minority businesses benefits the U.S. economy by increasing economic prosperity and job creation," said Johanns. "These listening forums will bring new insight into ways USDA can better serve entrepreneurs access the capital they need to start or expand rural minority businesses."

"The growth rate for minority owned businesses over the past several years has exceeded that of all U.S. firms. With this growth, we see wealth and job creation, civic participation, increased tax revenues and overall community sustainability," added Gutierrez. Our goal is to unleash the entrepreneurial spirit that exists in minority communities in rural America so our nation is stronger and more competitive."

The forums are designed to elicit recommendations from local leaders and business owners on ways to improve the delivery of USDA's business programs to minority entrepreneurs. Johanns and Gutierrez made the announcement during a meeting today with key business, community and financial leaders.

USDA and Commerce officials said that the listening forums are components of a partnership developed in June of 2004 to educate minority business owners about funds available for rural economic development. USDA Rural Development and the Minority Business Development Agency at the Department of Commerce are leading this effort. The focus of the forums is to hear from rural minority residents and community leaders on ways to improve minority access to USDA Rural Development's lending and other business programs. Also participating in the forums will be representatives from other Federal agencies dedicated to increasing capital access to support new and existing business ventures.

Johanns noted that, in addition to the joint effort with Commerce, USDA Rural Development has implemented over the last year a comprehensive outreach effort to increase the awareness of the more than 40 USDA housing, business and community infrastructure investment programs that are available to help rural individuals and communities increase their economic opportunities and improve their quality of life.

One of the programs to be discussed will be The Business and Industry (B&I) Guaranteed Loan Program, which helps to create jobs and stimulates rural economies by providing financial backing for rural businesses. This program provides guarantees up to 80 percent of a loan made by a commercial lender. Another program to be discussed will be the Intermediary Relending

Program (IRP) that is used to finance business facilities and community development projects in rural areas. A special emphasis has been placed on increasing awareness amongst qualified underserved residents and communities who currently are unaware of the investment funds available.

The Regional forums will be held in three locations: Clarksdale Miss. on May 25, 2005, cosponsored by the Delta Regional Authority; Albuquerque, N.M. on June 21, 2005; and Fresno, Calif. on July 21, 2005. Further information on specific locations and times will be posted on USDA and Commerce's websites: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov> and www.mbda.gov.

USDA Rural Development has invested over \$50 billion since the beginning of the Bush Administration to provide equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. As a result, over 800,000 jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

MBDA is the only federal agency created specifically to foster the establishment and growth of minority-owned businesses in America. Through its nationwide network of business development centers, MBDA provides business counseling and program services to assist minority-owned companies to grow and expand. MBDA actively coordinates and leverages public and private sector resources and alliances to support its mission. More information on MBDA's services and the locations of business development centers can be found at www.mbda.gov.

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STATEMENT

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Release No. 0089.05

Contact:
USDA Press Office (202) 720-4623

Statement By The Secretary Of Agriculture

March 14, 2005

"Mary Kirtley Waters informed me today that she is resigning as Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, and at my request, she has agreed to continue serving into early April.

"I started working with Mary on the day the President announced my nomination. Her leadership was instrumental in making my confirmation process run very smoothly. It was evident that she has a strong passion for agriculture, and her good working relationships with Members of Congress have been valuable to the department. She has a great respect and enthusiasm for the programs and people of the Department of Agriculture, and we will greatly miss working with her in this capacity. I wish Mary and her family the very best as she pursues new endeavors."

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STATEMENT

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Release No. 0100.05

Contact:
USDA Press Office (202) 720-4623

**Statement by Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns Regarding the Resignation of USDA
General Counsel Nancy Bryson - March 21, 2005**

"Nancy Bryson has submitted her resignation from USDA effective April 15. It is with sincere sadness and reluctance that I accept this resignation on behalf of the President, as Nancy has done a superb job as USDA's General Counsel for over three years.

"Through some of USDA's most difficult issues, the General Counsel's office has been a critical partner providing solid leadership and legal advice under Nancy's guidance. We will miss her and I wish her well as she continues an accomplished career."

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NEWS RELEASE

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USDA Launches Informative One-Stop Soybean Rust Web Site

WASHINGTON, March 15, 2005—U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns today unveiled USDA's interactive soybean rust Web site as part of a national soybean rust plant disease surveillance and monitoring network, during remarks to the Kansas, Iowa, Missouri and Nebraska Farm Bureau Federations meeting here.

"USDA is launching this Web site to help ensure farmers and producers have easy access to all the best information and guidance on soybean rust," said Johanns. "This web page will serve as a one-stop shop for anyone who depends on the soy industry to help understand these issues and make informed decisions."

The one-stop federal resource, <http://www.usda.gov/soybeanrust>, provides timely information on the extent and severity of soybean rust outbreaks in the United States, Caribbean basin and Central America. It will give users up-to-date forecasts on where soybean rust is likely to appear in the United States, reports where the disease exists by county, refers growers to county extension agents nationwide, lists the National Plant Diagnostic Networks laboratories and links to other Web sites to give producers effective disease management options.

USDA agencies, including the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service; the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service; the Risk Management Agency; and the Agricultural Research Service, partnered with soybean industry organizations, state departments of agriculture and many in the research and scientific communities to launch this comprehensive Web site. This effort is part of the strategic plan that USDA implemented in 2002 in anticipation of a potential soybean rust find in the U.S., which established priorities of protection, detection, response and recovery.

Soybean rust is caused by either of two fungal species, *Phakopsora pachyrhizi*, also known as the Asian species, and *Phakopsora meibomia*, the New World species. The Asian species, first found in Louisiana last year, is the more aggressive of the two species, causing more damage to soybean plants. The fungus has been found in eight other states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and South Carolina.

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FAS Trade Show Calendar

USDA-FAS Trade Show Calendar

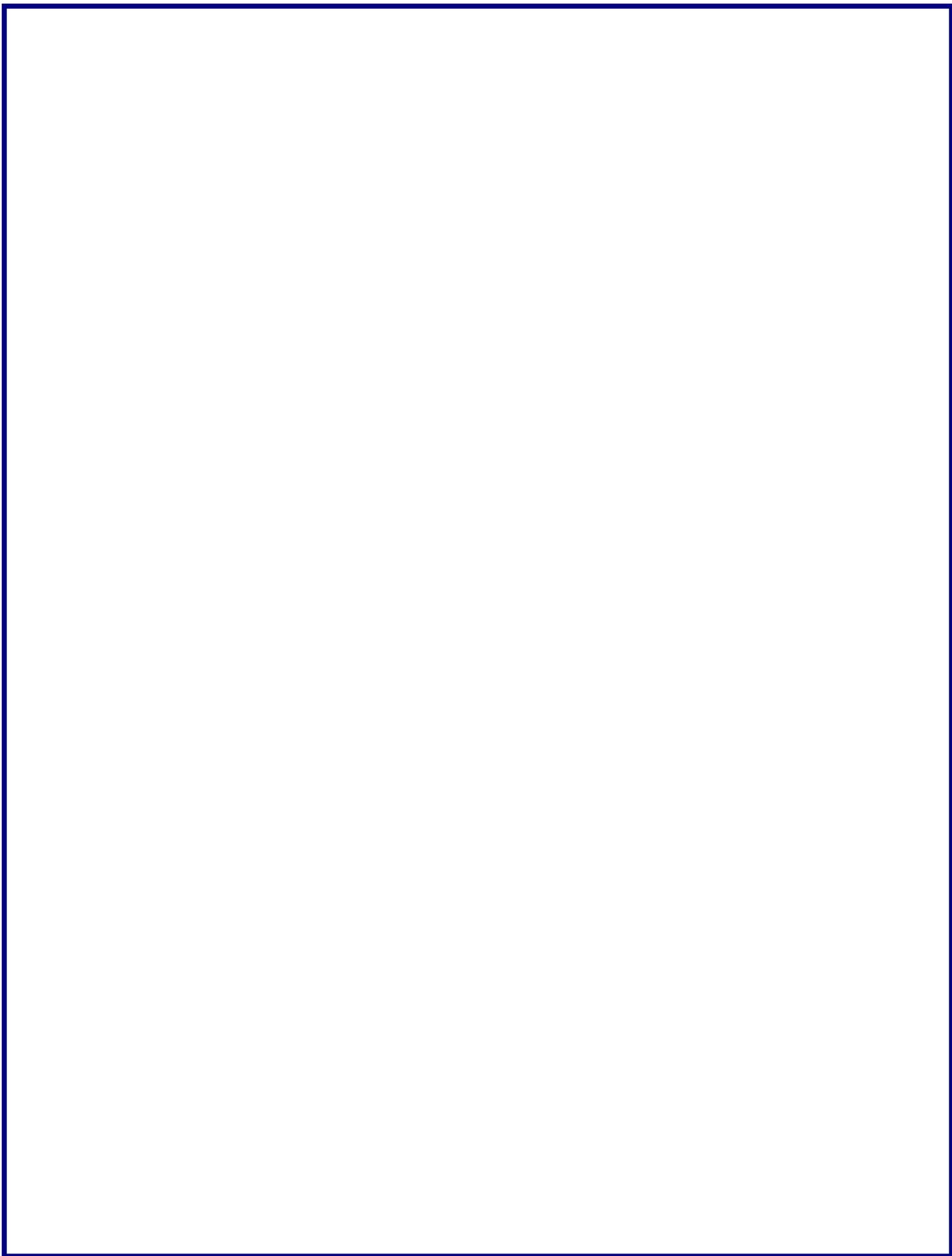
Locate a variety of trade show opportunities through the USDA-FAS website by opening your Web browser and clicking on the FAS “Upcoming Events” listed on the FAS Web Page:

<http://www.fas.usda.gov>

USDA Ag Calendar of Events

**For information on the latest calendar of events through USDA's
Agricultural Library, open your web browser and click on the
following:**

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/calendar/>



World Trade Centers Association:

Find out about upcoming events at World Trade Centers around the globe! The World Trade Center Association has a Calendar of Events that is loaded with seminars, conferences, trade fairs, exhibitions and other events for the international business community. For more information, click on the following link:

<http://world.wtca.org/portal/index.jsp>

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April TAPO Question

“*I want to IMPORT*” is a familiar question TAPO hears from callers on a regular basis. TAPO operates to facilitate the export of U.S. agricultural products and it’s an excellent source of information on USDA export programs and services. However, TAPO has three suggestions regarding importation of agricultural products into the United States.

First, go to <http://www.embassy.org/embassies/> and located the Embassy from the country of the origin of the product you are interested in importing. Contact the Agricultural Attachés and ask them about importing procedures. Their jobs are designed to help facilitate imports from their countries into the United States. They should be familiar with import regulations into the United States and any services offered by their countries such as trade leads, foreign supplier lists, trade shows, etc.

If the foreign Agricultural Attaché has no information, ask for the contact information of the foreign department in the embassy or the Ministry of Agriculture and contact them for assistance.

TAPO also suggests that you visit the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Website, by clicking on www.fda.gov The Food and Drug Administration oversees all food imports and related regulations are listed on its Website.

Finally, we suggest that you begin your research by conducting an Internet search by subject to become familiar with import procedures and to acquire other contacts and Websites.

For additional information, contact TAPO at tapo@fas.usda.gov or 202-720-7420.

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