WASHINGTON, June 28, 2013 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that USDA is accepting applications for grants to provide access to education, training and healthcare resources in rural areas. Funding is authorized through the Department's Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant Program. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) remains focused on carrying out its mission, despite a time of significant budget uncertainty. Today's announcement is one part of the Department's efforts to strengthen the rural economy.

"With access to the latest technology, America's rural citizens can compete in today's global economy," Vilsack said. "These Distance Learning and Telemedicine grants will modernize equipment and improve healthcare services and educational opportunities for residents in remote areas. They will help generate jobs in small towns and revitalize rural economies."

Under this notice, USDA may provide up to $17.5 million in grants. Funds can be used to buy equipment and provide technical assistance. To be eligible, applicants must serve a rural area, demonstrate economic need and provide at least 15 percent in matching funds. Awards range up to $500,000. In 2012, USDA Rural Development provided 58 DLT grants for projects in 36 states. Since the program began, 1,400 projects have been funded.

For example, in 2011, USDA Rural Development awarded the Kennett School District in extreme southeast Missouri funds for a results-oriented distance learning project. Using the connectivity that interactive video affords, their distance learning initiative offers community college programs during after school hours. Also, in 2010, the St. Alexius Medical Center in Bismarck, North Dakota, received a grant to expand access to state-of-the-art EKG (electrocardiogram) and ECG (echocardiogram) services. More than 24,000 rural residents in 25 communities have benefited by not having to drive great distances for their heart care services. The medical center used the USDA grant to purchase medical equipment and software that immediately transmits patients' test results and other information to cardiac specialists in Bismarck.

Completed applications must be received by August 12, 2013. For further details about eligibility rules and application procedures, see the notice published on page 38915 of the June 28, 2013 Federal Register:

President Obama's plan for rural America has brought about historic investment and resulted in stronger rural communities. Under the President's leadership, these investments in housing, community facilities, businesses and infrastructure have empowered rural America to continue leading the way – strengthening America's economy, small towns and rural communities. USDA's investments in rural communities support the rural way of life that stands as the backbone of our American values. President Obama and Agriculture Secretary Vilsack are committed to a smarter use of Federal resources to foster sustainable economic prosperity and ensure the government is a strong partner for businesses, entrepreneurs and working families in rural communities.

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, has a portfolio of programs designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America.

USDA has made a concerted effort to deliver results for the American people, even as USDA implements sequestration – the across-the-board budget reductions mandated under terms of the Budget Control Act. USDA has already undertaken historic efforts since 2009 to save more than $828 million in taxpayer funds through targeted, common-sense budget reductions. These reductions have put USDA in a better position to carry out its mission, while implementing sequester budget reductions in a fair manner that causes as little disruption as possible.

USDA News Release No. 0136.13
NRCS– Do you know what they offer?

The National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) offers voluntary programs to eligible landowners and agricultural producers to provide financial and technical assistance to help manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. Through these programs the agency approves contracts to provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns or opportunities to help save energy, improve soil, water, plant, air, animal and related resources on agricultural lands and non-industrial private forest land.

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<th>The Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations.</th>
<th>Wellington Herbs and Spices uses AMA to install microirrigation in a high tunnel in New York.</th>
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<td>The Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) is a voluntary conservation initiative that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to implement agricultural water enhancement activities on agricultural land to conserve surface and ground water and improve water quality.</td>
<td>Zac Thaggard uses AWEP to install irrigation retrofits during a drought in Georgia.</td>
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<td>Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) is a voluntary program intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production.</td>
<td>The Ho family uses a CIG grant to manage insect pests in Oahu, Hawaii.</td>
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<td>The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers through contracts up to a maximum term of ten years in length.</td>
<td>The Whitings use EQIP to meet water supply and plant condition concerns in South Dakota.</td>
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<td>The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program for conservation-minded landowners who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat on agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, and Indian land.</td>
<td>Dartmouth College uses WHIP to remove obstructions to fish passage in New Hampshire.</td>
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**Did you know?**

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services - Division of Marketing and Development promotes Florida products and facilitates agricultural commerce through a variety of programs and initiatives. They license and bond dealers in agricultural products to help protect producers against buyers who fail to pay. They operate 13 State Farmers' Markets that provide Florida producers with marketing facilities necessary to move farm products from farm to consumer. They also administer the Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign (FAPC), also known as "Fresh From Florida," which includes promotional and advertising programs to help Florida producers market their products. The department gathers agricultural data and compile current statistics that assist producers in making production and marketing decisions, providing an online advertising forum, the Florida Market Bulletin, for placement of ads to buy or sell agriculture-related items and working to increase public awareness of agriculture's central role in Florida history as well as its continued importance today.

For more information, please log onto to their website:  [http://www.florida-agriculture.com/](http://www.florida-agriculture.com/)

**FARM BILL 2013 - Farm Bill Passes House Without a Dollar for SNAP Food**

**July 12, 2013**- The farm bill passed by the House yesterday is but the latest symbol of the political polarization in Congress right now. GOP leaders successfully separated SNAP “food stamp” funding from the bill for the first time in decades against Democrats’ loudest protests and tears. The bill includes $195 billion in subsidies exclusively for farmers over the next 10 years. Not a single Dem voted for the bill, which passed 216-208. A month ago, the House attempted to pass a farm bill that included SNAP subsidies, but cut it by $20 billion, from $763 billion to $743 billion. During debate for that bill Louisiana Sen. David Vitter infamously attempted a permanent ban for anyone ever convicted of a violent crime from accepting SNAP benefits — a deal Democrats at the time accepted. That bill did not pass.

The decision to strip away SNAP benefits — which will be considered in their own separate bill, according to Republican majority leaders — was urged by the conservative Club for Growth, whose founder Stephen Moore is a scholar at the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and Heritage Action, the lobbying arm of the Heritage Foundation. The SNAP subtraction reported moved Rep. Corrine Brown, an African-American Congresswoman from Florida, to tears. Meanwhile, Minority Whip Steny H. Hoyer said he had no confidence that Republicans will pass a SNAP bill later.

The bill is now supposed to go to conference to negotiate with Senate leaders over the bill it passed last month, which includes $760.5 billion for food stamps and nutrition. But some are doubtful that any agreement can be made between the chambers without the SNAP assistance in the House bill — nor would a SNAP-less bill likely have the votes to override a veto from President Obama if it did.

The current SNAP program ends September 30, so either way new legislation would need to happen before then. Last year close to 47 million people received food assistance, a consequence of the recession, a 13 percent increase on average since 2008. Robert Greenstein of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities said that if House Republicans decide to take up a separate SNAP bill later, it is “very likely” that they would pass one with more “severe” cuts. “Splitting the farm bill and paving the way for the House to pass a more draconian SNAP-only bill in coming weeks would be the latest demonstration of how dysfunctional the House is becoming,” said Greenstein in his blog yesterday.

*Article written by Brentin Mock, Colorlines.com*
Upcoming Events

The purpose of the annual Florida Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference is to provide farmers with up-to-date, research-based, in-depth educational information. The conference aims to facilitate solutions-based collaboration by encouraging networking and an open dialog among members of Florida’s small farms community. Additionally, the conference is an excellent vehicle for increasing awareness of Florida’s small farms industry, which organizers accomplish by including participation from decision makers and supporting institutions, and partners from the public sector.

Through concurrent educational sessions led by industry experts and noted researchers, the annual Florida Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference provides opportunities for attendees to learn about groundbreaking research and access educational support about topics such as operating sustainable and profitable enterprises, integrating cost-effective methods to meet state regulations, and applying the latest research to real-world problems. Attendees also participate in workshops, hands-on demonstrations, and organized networking activities, enabling them to share their knowledge while interacting with peers from all over the state.

Who Should Attend:

☐ Small family farms
☐ Transitional farmers
☐ Beginning farmers
☐ Allied-industry representatives
☐ Educators and researchers Agricultural associations
☐ Policy-makers
☐ Foundations

Anyone interested in becoming a part of, and strengthening, the small farm community in Florida.

Time is winding down….Online registration is NOW available!

Log onto to the website: http://www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/smallfarms/registration.html

Sponsors
FAMU will host its Annual Grape Harvest Festival Saturday, August 24, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The 13th Annual FAMU Grape Harvest Festival is a community event being sponsored by FAMU and coordinated through its Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research in the FAMU College of Agriculture and Food Sciences.

This year’s festival will have an assortment of fun-filled amusements, educational displays and informative demonstrations for both young and old. For more information, call (850) 599-3996.
NATIONAL GOAT CONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 15-18 2013

HOSTED BY: North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
The School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences

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• University Farm Tour
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FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: www.ag.ncat.edu, click on goat conference
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Amelia Davis, MBA
SDA Newsletter Editor

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