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# "Ag Notes"

## Upcoming Events with Secretary Veneman...

January 14: Travels with President Bush for events in Illinois and Missouri.

January 16: Addresses 2002 Wheat Industry Conference in Orlando, Florida. Also joins Rep. Ric Keller for meeting with local farmers.

January 17: Celebrates 4-H Centennial in Washington, DC event.

January 24-26: Participates in Quint meetings in Kyoto, Japan.

February 7: Speaks to National Cattlemen's Beef Assoc. Annual Convention. Denver, CO.

February 11: Address National Cotton Council Annual Convention. Dallas, TX.

February 17: Speak to United Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Association Annual Produce Conference. Orlando, FL.

February 21: Keynote Address at USDA's Ag Outlook Conference. Washington, DC

February 22: Remarks to American Soybean Assoc. and National Corn Growers Assoc. Commodity Classic. Nashville, TN

## A SUMMARY OF NEWS, EVENTS AND FACTS FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Homeland Security Funds Increased

Funds that will more than double USDA biosecurity efforts are included in the Defense Department Appropriations bill signed by President Bush on Jan. 10. More than \$300 million will go towards existing food safety, research and pest and animal disease protections programs. In addition, the money will be used to upgrade key USDA research facilities. USDA's internal Homeland Security council will coordinate these efforts with the President's Office of Homeland Security and other agencies, including Health and Human Services.

"These appropriations will provide important resources to help strengthen our biosecurity efforts in the wake of Sept. 11," said Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman.

Key funding includes:

- \$105 million for APHIS for pest and disease exclusion, detection and monitoring.
- \$80 million for upgrading USDA facilities and security;
- \$50 million for construction of an animal bio-containment facility at the National Animal Disease Laboratory and \$14 million for increased security measures at the National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa. *(continued on next page)*

### WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING --

"Reducing the soybean loan rate would have sent the wrong signals to America's farmers."

-- *Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Tom Harkin praising Secretary Veneman for waiting to announce soybean loan rates until Congress' intent becomes more clear.*

"Your decision not only gives Congress an opportunity to address the issues of loan rates in the broad context of a farm bill in order to achieve a strong farm safety net, but also urges the Senate to keep a tight timetable on completion of a new farm bill."

-- *Rep. Mark Kennedy applauding Secretary Veneman's administrative decision on the soybean loan rate.*

"This is great news for our cattle producers...This is important for Nebraska's beef producers and Nebraska's economy."

-- *Senator Chuck Hagel responding to USDA's announcement of a \$30 million beef purchase for nutrition programs.*

"I am extremely pleased that Secretary Veneman has approved the exemplary [Empowerment Zone] application..."

-- *Senator Susan Collins responding to USDA's designation of a new rural development empowerment zone.*

Quotables in The Press...

"President Bush proposes to make food stamps available once again to many legal immigrants who are living in poverty. Enactment of his plan would be a long-overdue correction..." Washington Post, 1/11/02

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"Veneman had the courage to write the report, "Food and Agricultural Policy: Taking Stock for a New Century." It recommends Farm policy that could have been used by the Senate and also takes a hard look at the structure of agriculture in America today. USDA hasn't looked at it in depth since Bob Bergland was ag Secretary." Successful Farming January 2002 Issue

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Hear daily soundbites from key USDA officials on the farm bill and other important food and agriculture issues.

Call 202-488-8358 or visit USDA's Radio Newslines at: www.usda.gov.

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The latest information and updates on the farm bill can be found at:

New Homeland Security Funds continued—

- \$40 million for the Agricultural Research Service and;
-- \$23 million for security upgrades at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center;
-- \$15 million for security upgrades and bioterrorism protection for the Food Safety Inspection Service.

Before the new funds were made available, USDA spent over \$330 million in emergency funding in FY 2001 and FY 2002.

"We continue to make our protection systems a top priority," said Veneman. "These resources are important investments that will help strengthen our protection programs."

For the latest on Homeland Security, visit: www.usda.gov/biosecurity.

Farm Income to Improve in 2002 According to USDA

USDA released its first forecasts of 2002 farm finances that indicate the sector remains relatively strong. The value of crop output will continue its 3-year pattern of growth and livestock output value will also continue rising. Commodity prices will rise, but will remain below the 10-year average. Net cash farm income, excluding government payments, is forecast at \$40.2 billion in 2002, an 18% increase since 1999. The overall financial well being of the U.S. agricultural sector is sound, as evidenced by continuing increases in asset and equity values. Farm sector equity is expected to increase in 2002. Manufactured input costs should decline, and the U.S. farm sector balance sheet is expected to improve slightly in 2002.

In a question and answer session with farm broadcasters, USDA's Chief Economist Keith Collins says of the forecast, "the story for 2002 is stronger agricultural exports, stronger cash receipts, production expenses in line, higher returns from the marketplace."

Regarding supplemental payments for agriculture Collins added, "Let's look at the reality of the situation. We've had four successive supplemental assistance bills enacted by Congress. We have a farm bill that's in play before the Congress now and we certainly expect a farm bill. And also, in the concurrent budget resolution, there was an earmark of \$7.35 billion made available for supplemental assistance in 2002...it is pretty apparent we will have supplemental assistance in one form or another for farmers in 2002."

Collins also said, "I want to point out to lenders to farmers, equipment suppliers to farmers, people who are the input suppliers to farmers, that they too should expect that there will be the assistance provided to farmers. Congress is going to make it happen. USDA is going to make it happen."

A complete transcript of the interview with Mr. Collins is available at: www.usda.gov.

[www.usda.gov/farmpolicy](http://www.usda.gov/farmpolicy)

