

# "Ag Notes"

A SUMMARY OF NEWS, EVENTS AND FACTS FROM USDA



*Left to Right: Congressman Dennis Moore of Kansas, Senator Pat Roberts, Marcus (Mark) Ragland - Leader of Tomorrow and Senator Sam Brownback join Secretary Veneman in Bonner Springs, KS for the announcement regarding carbon sequestration measures. 6/6*

*[Click here to visit: USDA Targeted Incentives for Greenhouse Gas Sequestration](#)*

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USDA announced fiscal year 2003 allocations of \$110 million to 65 U.S. organizations to promote U.S. agricultural products overseas under the Market Access Program (MAP). 6/6



*Ministers of Agriculture from over 100 nations have been invited to the Agricultural Science and Technology Conference and Expo, which will convene June 23-25 in Sacramento, CA.*

## Veneman: USDA will reward conservation and forest practices that reduce greenhouse gases

Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman has announced that for the first time, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will give consideration to management practices that store carbon and reduce greenhouse gases in implementing forest and agriculture conservation programs.

"Farmers, ranchers and forestland owners can play a unique role in reducing the greenhouse gas intensity of the U.S. economy," Veneman said. "Last year, President Bush requested that the U.S. Department of Agriculture recommend ways to help reduce greenhouse gases and to increase carbon storage through targeted incentives for landowners. I am pleased to announce a series of actions we are taking to meet the President's challenge.

The Department will invest almost \$3.9 billion in agriculture and forest conservation on private land in 2004, an increase of \$1.7 billion over 2001 levels. Due to the increase in conservation investments and a focus that includes carbon sequestration efforts, USDA estimates these actions will reduce and sequester a total of more than 12 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions (measured in carbon equivalent terms) annually by 2012. This amount is 12 percent of the Bush Administration's national goal.

"The technologies and practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon sequestration also address other conservation objectives, such as improving water and air quality and enhancing wildlife habitat. This is good for the environment and good for agriculture," Veneman said.

USDA will consider greenhouse gas management practices when evaluating applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP). Department actions to reduce greenhouse gases and store carbon will include financial incentives, technical assistance, demonstrations, pilot programs, education and capacity building, along with measurements to assess the success of these efforts.

## President signs tax cuts into law

Farm families will see significant tax savings following the enactment of President Bush's Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003 on May 28, according to an analysis conducted by the USDA Office of the Chief Economist.

"By ensuring that millions of Americans keep more of their own money to invest and spend, this legislation will help spur the economic recovery," Veneman said. "The final provides over \$4 billion in tax relief to farm families in 2003."

Over 86 percent of all farm households will receive some tax relief under the 2003 Act. The average tax savings in 2003 for all farm households is estimated at about \$2,000 or a 16 percent savings. (continued on page 2.)

## Quotables--

"I applaud the U.S. Senate for passing an amendment to establish a national Renewable Fuels Standard designed to achieve average annual use of at least five billion gallons by the year 2012. This Amendment is positive news for America's farmers and rural residents. By raising the demand for farm products, this proposal would boost prices of corn and other crops, raise income for farmers and create more rural processing businesses." Secretary Veneman 6/5



Secretary Veneman and NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe signed a Memorandum of Understanding that will utilize earth science such as remote sensing technologies to protect the environment and enhance the competitiveness of American farmers and ranchers. 5/30

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"By widening the use of new high-yield bio-crops and unleashing the power of markets, we can dramatically increase agricultural productivity and feed more people across the continent [Africa]. Yet our partners in Europe are impeding this effort. They have blocked all new bio-crops because of unfounded unscientific fears. This has caused many African nations to avoid investing in biotechnologies, for fear their products will be shut out of European markets. European governments should join not hinder the great cause of ending hunger in Africa." – President Bush, 5/21

Tax cuts continued--

As the Secretary previously announced, the savings include \$2.3 billion from the acceleration of reductions in income-tax rates, marriage penalty relief and the increased child credit and \$1 billion from increasing the bonus first-year depreciation and the amount of capital investment that can be expensed from \$25,000 to \$100,000.

In addition, farmers will save \$700 million from the reduced tax rate on dividends and \$500 million from the reduced tax rate on capital gains. Additional savings also will come from the increase of the Alternative Minimum Tax exemption to \$9,000 for married taxpayers and to \$4,500 for single taxpayers. For a full description of the tax benefits to the agriculture sector go to: <http://www.usda.gov/news/releases/2003/06/0182.htm>

## President's HFI clears House of Representatives

Secretary Veneman applauded the bipartisan action on the House passage of the President's Healthy Forest Initiative.

"Professional resource managers in the field need the tools provided in this legislation to protect lives and communities, restore forest health, and maintain wildlife habitat. This bill offers a common sense approach to forest management for restoring healthy forests and safeguarding critical watersheds," Veneman said.

"The bipartisan legislation will further our on-going efforts with states, Indian tribes and local communities to address forest conditions that pose catastrophic fire risks from unnatural fuel buildup and serious insect and disease infestations. I commend the leadership in the House and urge the Senate to quickly act on this important legislation," she said.

## U.S.-cooperating countries file WTO case against EU

U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick and Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced May 13 that the U.S., Argentina and Canada would file a World Trade Organization case against the European Union (EU) over its illegal five-year moratorium on approving agricultural biotech products. Other countries expressing support for this case by joining it as third parties include: Australia, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru and Uruguay.

"With this case, we are fighting for the interests of American agriculture. This case is about playing by the rules negotiated in good faith. The European Union has failed to comply with its WTO obligations," Veneman said. "Biotechnology is helping farmers increase yields, lower pesticide use, improve soil conservation and water pollution and help reduce hunger and poverty around the world."

More than 145 million acres of biotech crops were grown in the world in 2002. Worldwide, about 45% of soy, 11% of corn, 20% of cotton and 11% of rapeseed are biotech crops. In the United States, 75% of soy, 34% of corn and 71% of cotton are biotech crops.

"Farmers here and elsewhere must be assured that their crops won't be unfairly rejected simply because they were produced using biotechnology," Veneman said.

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