

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack Announces Progress On 2014 Farm Bill Implementation

By Administrator

Monday, 07 April 2014 12:03 - Last Updated Monday, 07 April 2014 12:03

RALEIGH, (SGRToday.com) - Two months after President Barack Obama signed the 2014 Farm Bill into law, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack says substantial progress is already being made in the implementation of its 12 titles and 450 provisions.

“This law is critically important to America’s farmers and ranchers and to our nation’s economy,” Vilsack said in a statement. “Every USDA agency is working diligently to implement the Farm Bill’s new provisions quickly and effectively.” A new team is working on coordination. Details on progress can be found at www.usda.gov/farmbill.

Accomplishments to date, as provided by Vilsack's office.

TITLE I – Commodity Programs

Supplemental Agriculture Disaster Assistance: USDA will publish a final rule to implement the disaster assistance provisions and begin sign-up by April 15, 2014.

County and Regional Loan Rates: USDA issued a press release on March 28, 2014 announcing county and regional loan rates.

Extension of Programs: On March 28, 2014, FSA published on the Federal Register notices for the extension of the following programs: (1) Marketing Assistance Loans; (2) Milk Income Loss Contract; (3) Dairy Indemnity Payment Program; (4) Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program; and (5) Sugar.

Dairy Forward Pricing Program: Final rule published on March 21, 2014, that re-established the Dairy Forward Pricing Program.

TITLE II – Conservation

Conservation Programs: Applications are currently being accepted for the Conservation Stewardship Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

TITLE III – Trade

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Market Access Program (MAP): During the week of April 7, 2014, the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) will announce 2014 MAP funding.

Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program (FMD): During the week of April 7, 2014, FAS will announce 2014 FMD funding.

TITLE IV – Nutrition Programs

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Payments: On March 5, 2014, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) released an Implementation Memorandum to States on the elimination of standard utility allowances in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for LIHEAP payments less than \$20.

SNAP-related Provisions: On March 21, 2014, FNS released an Implementation Memorandum to States communicating major SNAP related provisions of the Act.

Community Food Projects: On February 27, 2014, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) released a Notice of Funding Availability for the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program, with \$5 million available.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP): On March 10, 2014, FNS released an Implementation Memorandum to States on phasing out the eligibility of women, infants and children.

Multiagency Taskforce on Commodity Programs: On March 14, 2014, the Under Secretary of Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services issued a memorandum to solicit names for a multiagency task force to provide coordination and direction for commodity programs.

TITLE V – Credit

Farm Loan Programs/Direct Farm Ownership: On February 7, 2014, FSA implemented changes in the interest rate on Direct Farm Ownership loans that are made in conjunction with other lenders.

Modifications to Farm Loan Programs: On March 24, 2014, FSA issued a news release in announcing changes to Farm Loan Programs as part of the Farm Bill.

Microloans: On March 26, 2014, FSA issued an agency directive implementing non-discretionary microloan provisions.

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TITLE VI – Rural Development

Value Added Producer Grants (VAPG): On March 25, 2014, Rural Development published a notice in the Federal Register extending the application period for Fiscal Year 2013 and 2014 funding for VAPG, with up to \$25.5 million available for these grants.

Definition of Rural Housing: On March 13, 2014, Rural Development issued guidance to State Directors, field staff and stakeholders on implementing new eligibility requirements regarding the definition of rural housing.

TITLE VII – Research and Related Matters

Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative: On March 17, 2014, NIFA released a Notice of Funding Availability for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative, with \$20 million available in FY 2014.

Specialty Crop Research Initiative: On March 17, 2014, NIFA released a Notice of Funding Availability for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, with \$76.8 million available in FY 2014.

Citrus Disease Subcommittee: A subcommittee has been formally established within the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board, under the Specialty Crop Committee, and solicitation letters for nominations were issued March 17, 2014.

Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR): Letters soliciting nominations to the FFAR Board were mailed to interested parties and a Federal Register notice was submitted for publication on March 31, 2014.

Budget Submission and Funding: On March 10, 2014, REE submitted its first Budget Submission and Funding report to Congress.

TITLE VIII – Forestry

Insect and Disease Infestation: On March 19, 2014, Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell sent a letter to all state governors notifying them of the opportunity to submit requests for designating their priority insect and disease areas for treatment.

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TITLE X – Horticulture

Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention: On April 3, 2014, USDA announced \$48.1 million in funding for 383 projects to help prevent the introduction or spread of plant pests and diseases.

National Clean Plant Network: The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service announced a Request for Applications (RFA) on March 24, 2014 for the National Clean Plant Network, with \$5 million available.

Bulk Shipments of Apples to Canada: On April 3, 2014, AMS will publish a final rule in the Federal Register amending regulations under the Export Apple Act to allow bulk containers to be shipped to Canada without U.S. inspection.

TITLE XI – Crop Insurance

Premium Amounts for Catastrophic Risk Protection (CAT): During the first week of April, the Risk Management Agency (RMA) will issue documents to revise the premium rates charged for CAT coverage to be based on the average historical “loss ratio” plus a reasonable reserve.

TITLE XII – Miscellaneous

Catfish Inspection: On March 14, 2014, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) submitted the first status report to Congress on the development of the final rule establishing a catfish inspection program.