



News Release

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Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Announces Funding to Produce Renewable Energy for Rural Communities and Reduce Energy Costs for Small Businesses and Farms in Eight States

MERRILL, Wis., October 26, 2011 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that USDA is funding anaerobic digester projects in eight states to encourage renewable energy production, reduce energy costs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and farm-based pollution. The announcement was made on the Secretary's behalf by Under Secretary for Rural Development Dallas Tonsager during a trip to Wisconsin.

"Through the efforts of the Obama Administration, the Rural Energy for America Program has helped rural small businesses, farmers and ranchers across the nation," Vilsack said. "Since its creation this program has assisted almost 9,600 small businesses, farmers and ranchers and created or saved an estimated 15,000 jobs. It also provides producers with new opportunities to diversify revenue and make American agriculture and rural small business more competitive."

Funding for the biodigesters is provided through the USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) and has created or saved an estimated 13.4 billion kWh of electricity and reduced almost 14.5 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions.

One of the biodigesters announced today will be constructed on Heller Farms near Alma Center in Jackson County, Wis. It is expected to produce 3.3 million kW hours of renewable energy each year, enough to power 400 average Wisconsin homes per year. Digesters will also be constructed in Pennsylvania, Idaho, Iowa, Florida, Oregon, Ohio, and Vermont.

Today's announcement is in concert with an agreement signed by Secretary Vilsack in December, 2009. During climate change talks in Copenhagen, Denmark, the Secretary signed a historic agreement to help U.S. dairy producers cut greenhouse gas emissions. The agreement between USDA and the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy calls for the parties to work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from dairy farms by 25 percent by 2020.

In Fiscal Year 2011, USDA, through the REAP program, provided nearly \$21 million in assistance for biodigesters, and leveraged over \$110 million in project development. Through its Value-Added Producer Grant program, USDA provides planning grants of up to \$100,000 and working capital grants of up to \$300,000 to be used for establishment of a biodigester. Additionally, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers financial and technical assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives (EQIP) program.

REAP anaerobic digester funds announced today included grants and loans to the following:

Organic Matters, Inc. Bartow, Fla. \$201,498 grant
AgPower Jerome, LLC Lincoln Co., Idaho \$500,000 grant
New Energy Two, LLC Middleton, Idaho \$500,000 grant
New Energy Three LLC Middleton, Idaho \$500,000 grant
Sioux Pharm Inc. Sioux Center, Iowa \$263,250 loan, \$263,250 grant
Mill Creek Digester, LLC West Unity, Ohio \$600,000 loan, \$499,924 grant

Belmont County Bioenergy, LLC Independence, Ohio \$750,000 loan, \$500,000 grant
Lime Lakes Energy, LLC Norton, Ohio \$1.5 million loan, \$500,000 grant
Wooster Renewable Energy, LLC Wooster, Ohio \$750,000 loan, \$500,000 grant
Ringler Energy, LLC Cardington, Ohio \$3,238,750 loan, \$500,000 grant
Haviland Energy, LLC Paulding Co, Ohio \$600,000 loan, \$500,000 grant
Farm Power Misty Meadow, LLC Tillamook, Ore. \$1 million loan, \$500,000 grant
Farm Power Tillamook, LLC Tillamook, Ore. \$2.65 million loan, \$100,000 grant
Hard Earned Acres, Inc. Shippensburg, Pa. \$331,709 grant
Reinford-Frymoyer Farm, LLC Mifflintown, Pa \$337,224 grant
Arlen Benner Mount Joy, Pa. \$500,000 grant
Jay Clifford Sensenig Lancaster Co., Pa. \$309,733 grant
Riverview Farm Franklin, Vt. \$429,703 loan, \$214,851 grant
Heller Farms (Cow Poo, LLC) Alma Center, Wis. \$1,321,187 loan, \$500,000 grant

Funding of each award is contingent upon the recipient meeting the conditions of the grant or loan agreement. Grants can finance up to 25 percent of a project's cost, not to exceed \$500,000 for renewable energy systems, \$250,000 for energy efficiency.

Since taking office, President Obama's Administration has taken historic steps to improve the lives of rural Americans, put people back to work and build thriving economies in rural communities. From proposing the American Jobs Act to establishing the first-ever White House Rural Council – chaired by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack – the President wants the federal government to be the best possible partner for rural businesses and entrepreneurs creating job opportunities and for people who want to live, work, and raise their families in rural communities.

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of state and local offices. Rural Development has an active portfolio of more than \$155 billion in affordable loans and loan guarantees. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America.

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