

News Release

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USDA ANNOUNCES SUGAR STAKEHOLDERS' MEETING

WASHINGTON, March 6, 2003 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture will hold a public meeting on March 12 to discuss and hear comments from sugar industry stakeholders on a number of relevant issues. The meeting will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time in room 104-A of the USDA Whitten Building, in Washington, D.C.

This is the first year of operation of the domestic sugar allotment program in the new farm bill. USDA is striving to make program administration as efficient and transparent as possible. Building on the experience of the first several months of operation, USDA is committed to establishing a dialogue and soliciting input and suggestions from the sweetener industry and other stakeholders on program operations. Potential items to be discussed include determinations of the Overall Allotment Quantity, recent sales of Commodity Credit Corporation's raw and refined sugar inventories, Tariff Rate Quota administration and other trade related issues.

Anyone wishing to suggest other agenda topics or who is seeking more information about the meeting should contact Barbara Fecso at (202) 720-4146, barbara.fecso@usda.gov. The final agenda for the meeting will be posted by March 11 on USDA's Farm Service Agency Web site at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ao/epas/dsa.htm>. Please call (202) 720-6733 before 5:00 p.m. Tuesday, March 11, to pre-arrange entry into the building.

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NOTE: Farm Service Agency (FSA) news releases and media advisories are available on the Web at FSA's Home Page: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.