

## **USDA Accomplishments Under the Bush Administration 2001-2008**

### **Strengthened the Agricultural Economy and Competitiveness**

Over the last eight years, American farmers and ranchers have turned in a remarkable performance on behalf of agriculture in the United States. Net cash farm income will remain at the third-highest level over the past 33 years. Agricultural exports have also shown remarkable growth this year, to reach an all time record of \$115 billion—more than double their 2001 level of \$52.7 billion.

#### **Investment in America's Rural Communities**

- ☑ USDA has built stronger, more vibrant rural communities across the Nation. USDA's rural development programs have brought clear focus with a proactive vision for rural America, resulting in increased economic opportunities and improved the quality of life in rural America—while creating or saving over 2 million jobs.
- ☑ USDA has invested over \$111 billion in rural America during the past eight years through 569,000 loans and grants—at an overall loan default rate of less than one percent.
- ☑ USDA has invested more than \$8.3 billion for rural business development in the form of loans, grants and technical assistance. Rural infrastructure, such as education, healthcare, telecommunications, water treatment and community facilities, has been supported by more than \$50 billion in grants and loans.
- ☑ Nearly 1 million rural families and residents have received assistance through USDA's Single Family and Multi-Family Housing Programs, a total investment nearing \$50 billion. USDA has increased homeownership in rural areas through the direct loan and loan guarantee programs. In 2007, 32,481 homeownership loans were guaranteed, a growth of more than 11 percent since 2002.

#### **Provided Risk Management and Financial Tools to Farmers and Ranchers**

- ☑ Agricultural producers are subject to a wide array of natural, financial and market risks. Agricultural producers use a variety of tools to manage these risks, including crop insurance, non-insured crop disaster assistance, credit and direct payments.
- ☑ Over the last eight years, USDA has made more than 225,000 operating, farm ownership and emergency loans to America's farmers and ranchers, totaling over \$26 billion.
- ☑ More than \$58.5 billion has been provided through farm program payments, conservation payments and natural disaster assistance.
- ☑ Federal crop insurance now covers \$89.7 billion in liabilities to insure production and revenue risk—up from \$36.7 billion in 2001. Crop insurance reforms attracted a record level of U.S. crops—almost 80 percent of eligible acreage – providing \$3.5 billion in payments for 2007 production losses.
- ☑ New risk management products have increased available coverage to sheep producers, dairy producers, bee/honey producers and producers who use biotechnology products that reduce crop risk.

### **Opportunities for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers**

- Market access for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers is enhanced through certification training programs. Specifically, USDA agencies trained farmers and ranchers in how to obtain USDA marketing certifications in Good Handling Practices and Good Agricultural Practices to better compete in mainstream agribusiness. In March 2004, the Department launched a partnership with Marriott International, Inc. in an effort to open up new markets to small and minority producers for the sale of produce to the hospitality industry.
  
- USDA has established annual performance goals to increase service delivery, reduce farm loan application processing times, and increase lending to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

### **Improved Competitiveness and Quality of Agricultural Products**

- USDA has expanded domestic agricultural markets via sound science and technology. USDA rice researchers developed superior new rice varieties that are used in new food products that combine the beneficial health properties of brown rice with the advantage of 10-minute preparation time.
  
- USDA has worked to create a demand for biobased products through the “BioPreferred” program. BioPreferred has significantly increased the use of biobased products within the Federal Government which supports the farm and rural sectors by expanding and stabilizing the demand for agricultural commodities.
  
- USDA is implementing Country of Origin Labeling (COOL), required by Congress, for certain retailers to inform consumers about the specific country of origin for certain foods. This law requires the package containing these foods to be labeled verifying the source country or countries specific food products.