

2008 Farm Bill Rural Development Title: Investing in Rural America

- **Makes critical investments in our rural communities**
 - Renews successful programs that provide vital infrastructure needs to underserved areas
 - Adds innovative projects to promote economic development in the technology-driven 21st Century
 - Provides \$120 million for critical water and wastewater projects in rural areas
- **Addresses health care, emergency, and first responder needs of rural areas**
 - Authorizes the Rural Firefighters and Emergency Medical Service Assistance Program to provide improved emergency medical services in rural areas
 - Expands 9-1-1 access in rural areas by making telephone loans to public entities for facilities and equipment
 - Provides grants for weather radio transmitters to increase coverage of rural areas by the emergency weather broadcast system
- **Connects rural America**
 - Improves access to broadband telecommunications services in rural areas with a greater focus on the rural communities of greatest need
 - Extends and makes major changes to the broadband program to focus loans on underserved rural areas
- **Expands opportunities for locally grown, organic and small producers**
 - Provides \$15 million for the Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grant program, which offers planning and working capital for marketing value-added products
 - Creates a 10% set-aside for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers
 - Creates a 10% set-aside for strategic marketing alliances between small to mid-sized farms and ranches and other supply chain partners
- **Attracting new businesses, improving access to technology, and capturing new markets**
 - Provides information and resources related to sustainable and organic farming practices to farmers through a technology transfer program
 - Includes \$15 million for a new Rural Entrepreneur and Microenterprise Assistance Program that will provide technical and financial assistance to micro-enterprises and small businesses in rural areas with fewer than 10 employees
 - Extends Rural Business Opportunity Grants for job training in rural areas
 - Extends Rural Cooperative Development Grants, a competitive program that establishes and operates centers for rural cooperative development
 - Extends the Agriculture Innovation Center Demonstration Program, which provides technical assistance, outreach, and business and marketing planning to increase the viability, growth, and sustainability of value-added agricultural businesses
 - Sets aside specific funds within the Business and Industry Program for loans and loan guarantees for rural food enterprise entrepreneurs that process and distribute food locally and regionally

Farm Bill Rural Development Facts:

- USDA administers the greatest number of rural development programs and has the highest average of program funds going directly to rural counties (50%).

- USDA's rural development mission is to enhance rural communities by targeting financial and technical resources to areas of greatest need.

- USDA supports rural development initiatives through guaranteed loans, direct loans, grants, and through intermediaries.

- The Rural Electrification Act of 1936, which brought electrical power and telephone service throughout rural America, is the first in a long line of rural development bills that help rural communities keep pace with the rest of America and the world.

- **Renews critical rural infrastructure**

- Renews Water and Waste Disposal Grants and Rural Water and Wastewater Circuit Rider Programs to help reduce water and waste disposal operating costs for rural areas and towns
- Renews the Emergency and Imminent Community Water Assistance Grant Program to provide technical assistance to communities that have had a significant decline in quantity or quality of drinking water
- Provides grants to qualified non-profit organizations for the construction of household water well systems in low-income areas

- **Strengthens successful regional partnerships**

- Extends the Delta Regional Authority, a federal-state partnership that has funded 334 projects in its first five years and led to the investment of more than \$750 million in the region
- Extends and enhances the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority by enhancing flexibility for the Authority as well as including renewable energy projects among the target funding areas
- Additional regional partnership authorities in the bill are included in Title XIV (Miscellaneous Title)