



THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
20250-0100

FEB 27 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Secretary of State  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

As you know, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is responsible for administering the Federal Government's BioPreferred<sup>SM</sup> program. This initiative aims to increase the purchase and use of renewable, environmentally friendly biobased products while providing "green" jobs and new markets for farmers, manufacturers, and vendors.

In support of this effort, I am writing to request your cooperation in implementing a provision of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) requiring Federal agencies to give procurement preference to designated biobased products. USDA is committed to the success of the program and will be pleased to support you in your efforts.

I am enclosing a factsheet on the BioPreferred<sup>SM</sup> program that you and your management team may find of interest. If you would also kindly share this information with your agency's chief acquisition officer or other senior procurement official, we would be most appreciative.

In addition, I encourage you to personally support the BioPreferred<sup>SM</sup> program and to ensure that your agency's procurement community is fully engaged in buying and using biobased products. Should you have any questions or if we may be of assistance, please let me know or have your senior procurement official contact USDA's Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration Russ Ashworth at (202) 720-3291 or [russ.ashworth@osec.usda.gov](mailto:russ.ashworth@osec.usda.gov). Technical questions may be addressed to Jeffrey Goodman at (202) 401-4747 or [Jeffrey.goodman@da.usda.gov](mailto:Jeffrey.goodman@da.usda.gov).

We look forward to working with you on this and other "green" initiatives of the Obama Administration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas J. Vilsack".

Thomas J. Vilsack

Enclosure

## **The BioPreferred<sup>SM</sup> Program: Supporting the Energy and Environmental Agenda**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the lead agency for the Federal Government's BioPreferred<sup>SM</sup> program, a biobased products initiative demonstrating environmental leadership and creating "green" jobs and new markets for farmers, manufacturers, and vendors.

A low-cost, high-return venture, the BioPreferred<sup>SM</sup> program offers three major benefits:

- *Climate change impact reduction.* The use of qualifying biobased products reduces the introduction of new fossil carbon into the atmosphere.
- *Energy/environmental security.* Biobased products replace petroleum products, helping to increase U.S. energy and environmental security and independence. Many biobased products are sustainable, renewable, and compostable.
- *Economic development.* Biobased products create jobs by increasing demand for agricultural and forestry materials and by increasing new product development, manufacturing, and ultimately sales.

Section 9002 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, otherwise known as the 2008 Farm Bill (Public Law 110-234), requires every Federal Agency to give procurement preference to designated items composed of biobased products unless those items (1) are not reasonably available, (2) do not perform adequately, or (3) are not reasonably priced.

Biobased products are defined as those the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be composed in whole or large part of renewable agricultural or forestry materials. Such products, often made from plant, animal, and marine substances, include items such as cleaners, lubricants, building materials, insulation, roof coatings, and fuel additives as well as a host of other sustainable industrial items that the Federal Government can use.

### **Designated BioPreferred<sup>SM</sup> Items**

USDA's goal is to increase Federal procurement of biobased products governmentwide and to develop Government and public markets through a voluntary labeling program. Accordingly, USDA tests and evaluates biobased products and designates items for preferred Federal procurement.

Through published regulations, USDA has designated a total of 33 biobased items or product categories representing nearly 3,000 individual products. Federal procurement requirements are already in place for six of the product categories, and requirements for the remaining 27 categories will become effective in June 2009. Approximately 2,100 companies, many of which are small businesses, currently offer more than 14,500 biobased products.

USDA conducts outreach on behalf of the BioPreferred<sup>SM</sup> program and has developed a series of BioPreferred<sup>SM</sup> tools, such as model contract language, to assist Federal Agencies and the business community in the implementation of the program. Most of these tools are available at the BioPreferred<sup>SM</sup> Web site (<http://www.biopreferred.gov>). For further information or technical assistance, please contact Jeffrey Goodman at (202) 401-4747 or [Jeffrey.goodman@da.usda.gov](mailto:Jeffrey.goodman@da.usda.gov).