

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **USDA Invests to Help Small and Underserved Producers in 48 States Manage Risk, Remain Productive**

WASHINGTON, Nov. 30, 2012—Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Risk Management Agency (RMA) will support crop insurance education and outreach in 48 states to ensure that small and underserved producers get the information they need to effectively manage risk and ensure their businesses are productive and competitive. Cooperative Agreements totaling approximately \$12.6 million from two RMA programs—Crop Insurance Education in Targeted States and the Education and Outreach Cooperative Agreements—will support thousands of American farmers, ranchers and producers during a successful yet challenging period for American agriculture.

Undergoing a period of historic performance, U.S. agriculture continues to be an area of growing strength in the American economy thanks to producers’ ability to manage risk, reduce their debt and capitalize on expanding market opportunities. Currently, agriculture supports 1 in 12 jobs here in the United States, from transportation to processing in businesses large and small.

“Despite the challenges and setbacks due to extreme weather felt in many parts of the country this year, American agriculture is experiencing its strongest period in history thanks to the dedication and resilience of our farmers and ranchers,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “Our responsibility at USDA is to sustain and nurture these hard-won gains for all producers. For small and beginning farmers, in particular, risk management often means understanding direct marketing, or food safety standards, or designing tools to meet the scale of their operation and the markets that they serve. Overall, these agreements will provide tools and knowledge for underserved, small, and limited-resource producers to succeed.”

Many of the agreements that RMA is offering can help farmers diversify production and marketing practices, or to provide planning tools to help farmers get the insurance and credit that are often critical to their ability to stay in business or to diversify their existing business. RMA administers these projects as well as the Federal crop insurance program, with funding and authority from the Federal Crop Insurance Act.

The new cooperative agreements announced today include:

**Crop Insurance Education in Targeted States:** \$4.9 million is being awarded to deliver crop insurance education and information to agricultural producers in 16 states designated as historically underserved in crop insurance coverage. These targeted states are Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

**Education and Outreach Cooperative Agreements:** \$7.7 million is being awarded to fund 94 Education and Outreach Cooperative Agreements across the country, delivering training to U.S. farmers and ranchers in managing production, marketing, and financial risk, such as the award to the National Center for Appropriate Technology. The program will train and educate new and beginning farmers, including military veteran producers, emphasizing on specialty crop and livestock enterprises.

Together, the agreements announced today are designed to help ensure that farmers and ranchers effectively manage their risk through difficult periods, helping to maintain America's robust food supply and the sustainability of small, limited resource, socially disadvantaged and other traditionally underserved farmers.

RMA helps producers manage their business risks through effective, market-based risk solutions. RMA's mission is to promote, support, and regulate sound risk management solutions to preserve and strengthen the economic stability of America's agricultural producers. Federal crop insurance provides support to American producers as part of the farm safety net. A strong farm safety net is important to the vitality of American agriculture.

The Obama Administration, with Agriculture Secretary Vilsack's leadership, has worked tirelessly to strengthen rural America, maintain a strong farm safety net, and create opportunities for America's farmers and ranchers. U.S. agriculture is currently experiencing one of its most productive periods in American history thanks to the productivity, resiliency, and resourcefulness of our producers. A strong farm safety net is important to sustain the success of American agriculture. USDA's crop insurance program currently insures 282 million acres, 1.17 million policies, and \$117 billion worth of liability on about 500,000 farms.

Complete listings of the agreements can be found on the RMA website at <http://www.rma.usda.gov/aboutrma/agreements/>.

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