



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development

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Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Announces Economic Development Funding To Create Jobs in Rural Communities in 26 States

TEMPLE, Texas, October 26, 2011 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced the selection of 36 organizations in 26 states and the District of Columbia for grants to help rural cooperatives and small businesses expand, create jobs and strengthen their capacity to serve rural citizens and communities.

“These grants help cooperatives support local projects and initiatives that create jobs and improve rural economic conditions,” Vilsack said. “As we celebrate National Cooperative Month, USDA is proud to continue its support of local and regional efforts to bolster these cooperatives and help them bring increased value and economic opportunity to rural residents.”

“One of USDA Rural Development’s missions is to provide assistance that will increase the economic conditions of rural communities,” said Paco Valentin, USDA Rural Development Texas State Director. “By providing this grant to the University of Texas Pan-American, we benefit technical and educational assistance available to rural business owners through cooperative development centers and in turn, promote job creation and improve rural business operations.”

The grants are being provided through USDA Rural Development’s Rural Cooperative Development Grant program. Under this program, grants of up to \$225,000 may be awarded to colleges, universities and non-profit groups to create and operate centers that help individuals or groups establish, expand or operate rural businesses, especially cooperatives and mutually-owned businesses. Grants may be used to conduct feasibility studies, create and implement business plans, and help businesses develop new markets for their products and services. Rural Housing Service Administrator Tammye Treviño announced the recipients on behalf of Secretary Vilsack.

In Texas, the University of Texas Pan-American, will receive a \$225,000 grant to provide assistance and activities to improve the economic condition of rural areas of Southwest Texas and New Mexico, through the development of new and existing cooperatives. The Center is located in South Texas in the city of Edinburg and has been operating continuously by the University since initial funding of a Rural Cooperative Development Grant in January 2002.

Vilsack announced more than \$7.9 million in economic development loans and grants today. A complete list of projects that were selected for funding is below. Funding for each project is contingent upon the recipient meeting the terms of the grant agreement.



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USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of state and local offices. Rural Development has an active portfolio of more than \$155 billion in affordable loans and loan guarantees. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America.