



NEWS RELEASE

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VENEMAN ANNOUNCES \$22.8 MILLION TO SUPPORT RENEWABLE ENERGY INITIATIVES IN 26 STATES

Knox Farm Receives Funding through Federal and State Partnership

SPENCER, Iowa, Sept. 15, 2004—Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced the selection of 167 recipients from 26 states to receive \$22.8 million in competitive grants to support President Bush's renewable energy efforts. The funds will be used by rural small businesses, farmers and ranchers to develop renewable energy systems and promote energy efficiency improvements.

Locally, Gold Top Farms, located in Knox, Maine, has received assistance from federal agency USDA Rural Development, and the state of Maine's Efficiency Maine Business Program, administered by the Maine Public Utilities Commission. The Rural Development Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Grant in the amount of \$4,462, and the cash incentive from the Efficiency Maine Business Program in the amount of \$4,133, will assist the farm in cutting energy costs by \$8,087 a year.

The funds will be used to replace 39 four-foot fans with 3 twenty-four-foot high volume, low speed Big Ass Fans® in the barn that houses approximately 375 Holstein dairy cattle. This will greatly improve air ventilation in the barn which directly affects the health and productivity of the cattle. After installation, Gold Top Farms will realize a kilowatt hour savings of 89,856 annually, greatly cutting energy costs.

Rural Development State Director Michael W. Aube commented on the funding, "The installation of these fans will have an immediate positive impact on the Gold Top Farms, leading to increased energy efficiency, healthier livestock, and higher productivity. This is a terrific example of the accomplishments that can be made when state and federal agencies work together."

"Efficiency Maine was pleased to bring knowledge of these federal funds to our Maine farming community," stated Program Manager Linda Viens. "We encourage farmers and business owners alike to learn more about various ways to install energy efficient electric equipment."

The Efficiency Maine Business Program promotes the installation of energy efficient electric equipment to Maine businesses, farms, nonprofits, public and private schools K – 12, water and wastewater facilities and local and county governments. A total amount of \$627,913 in cash incentives has been awarded from the Efficiency Maine Business Program since April of 2003.

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“The Bush Administration is committed to advancing renewable energy ventures in rural America,” said Veneman. “We have the natural resources and the ingenuity to create new forms of energy and to use it more efficiently.”

Veneman said the Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements program was created as part of the 2002 Farm Bill to assist farmers, ranchers, and rural small businesses develop renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements to their operations. In 2003, the Bush Administration invested under this program \$21.7 million to develop or improve wind power, anaerobic digester, solar, ethanol and other bioenergy related systems or energy efficiency improvements in 24 states.

A large percent of the 94 renewable energy applications selected this year will support anaerobic digesters and small and large wind power type ventures. A predominate number of the 73 energy efficiency grants will go to agricultural producers who will use the funds for buildings. A complete list of the selected grant recipients and projects can be found at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/newsroom/news.htm>. Funding of selected applicants will be contingent upon meeting the conditions of the grant agreements.

The design and implementation of the grant program was accomplished through consultation with several federal departments and agencies, most notably the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency. “The sharing of technical and human resources has greatly enhanced the submission of qualified applications and selection of this year’s recipients,” said Acting Under Secretary for Rural Development Gilbert Gonzalez. “By combining resources, we are improving the delivery of government services to the American taxpayer and implementing a more effective energy program.”

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.



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