

FEDERAL NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY



AGRICULTURE

ROMINGER ANNOUNCES USDA'S SUPPORT OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

■(PELZER, SC) Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Richard Rominger last Friday announced a policy directive expressing USDA's commitment to sustainable development which includes sustainable agriculture, forestry, and rural communities.

"USDA is committed to working toward the economic, environmental, and social sustainability of diverse food, fiber, agriculture, forest, and range systems," Rominger said. "In a Secretary's Memorandum on Sustainable Development issued recently, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman articulated the need to balance the goals of production and profitability, stewardship of the natural resource base and ecological systems, and viability of rural communities."

The goal of sustainable agriculture is to increase economic profitability, enhance environmental stewardship, and improve the quality of life on farms and in rural areas. The policy directive is in response to the President's Council on Sustainable Development and a USDA working group's recommendations on ways the Department could better incorporate sustainability into its missions and programs.

Through this Memorandum, Glickman will establish a USDA Council on Sustainable Development for the coordination and integration of policies, programs, activities, and education on this issue throughout the Department. Adela Backiel, director of Sus-

tainable Development, will chair the Council, consisting of representatives from various USDA agencies.

—US DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
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NEW VOLUNTARY PROGRAM TO PROTECT SOIL AND WATER ANNOUNCED

■(WASHINGTON) Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman last Friday announced proposed rules for a new conservation program to both assist farmers and ranchers and to streamline USDA's conservation services.

"The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offers technical, financial, and educational assistance to protect and improve soil, water, and related natural resources. USDA is seeking public comment on these rules before finalizing the program. A series of public meetings will be held October 11-21 in all 50 states and Guam to discuss the EQIP program, changes to the Conservation Reserve Program and other conservation programs. EQIP is available for public comment through November 25.

"From the outset, USDA has sought public input to ensure we craft the most flexible and successful conservation program to meet the needs of communities across the country," said Glickman. "I want to encourage farmers and ranchers, conservation districts, interested groups and anyone concerned about the protection of natural resources to take this opportunity to comment on the proposed rules. We want to ensure we begin with the best program possible that benefits everyone."

In accordance with the 1996 Farm Bill, USDA may provide cost share assistance for up to 75 percent of the costs of certain conservation practices on family-sized farms and ranches, such as grassed waterways, filter strips, manure management facilities, capping abandoned wells and wildlife habitat enhancement. Large confined livestock operations are not eligible for cost-share assistance to build animal waste management facilities. Incentive payments can be up to 100 percent of the producer's cost, for up to three years, for such land management practices as nutrient, manure, irrigation water, wildlife and integrated pest management. Total cost-share and incentive payments are limited to \$10,000 per person per year and \$50,000 for the length of a contract.

Eligibility for EQIP is limited to persons who are engaged in livestock or agricultural

production. Under the proposed rule, EQIP offers five- to 10-year contracts that provide incentive payments and cost-sharing for conservation practices important to improving and maintaining the health of natural resources.

—US DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
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OKLAHOMAN REAPPOINTED TO THE MUSHROOM COUNCIL

■(WASHINGTON) Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman appointed three mushroom producers to the Mushroom Council, which administers the national mushroom promotion and research program.

Virgil H. Jurgensmeyer of Miami, OK, Region 4, was reappointed. Newly appointed are Edward A. Leo, Kennett Square, PA, Region 2; and William K. Street, Tacoma, WA, Region 4.

The regions reflect the four U.S. production areas. The three appointees will serve 3-year terms beginning Jan. 1, 1997.

Authorized under the Mushroom Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Act of 1990, the council administers a national promotion, research, and consumer information program to maintain and expand markets for fresh mushrooms.

—US DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
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AWARDS

QUALITY BRINGS RESULTS

■(WASHINGTON) Sixteen Department of Energy (DOE) organizations and teams from throughout the diverse Energy Department complex are the 1996 recipients of the Energy Quality Awards, and 22 additional teams were selected by Vice President Al Gore to receive the coveted Hammer Award. These awards recognize recipients for improving government performance through enhanced customer service, streamlining operations and cutting costs.

"Almost 25% of the DOE work force was represented in applications for this year's awards," said Nancy K. Weidenfeller, Director of DOE's Office of Quality Management. "Each of the participants has significantly improved DOE's business processes to deliver better services to the American taxpayers—our primary customers."

—US DEPT. OF ENERGY
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"To make one's fortune is so fine a phrase, and of such charming import, that it is universally used; ;it is to be met with in all languages, is pleasing to strangers and to barbarians, is to be found at court and in the city, has made its way into cloisters and scaled the walls of monasteries and convents; there is no place so sacred where it has not penetrated, no desert or solitude where it is unknown."

La Bruyere
Of the Gifts of Fortune
Characters
1688