

# USDA Agrees To Help America's Pork Producers

## Agency Will Purchase Additional Pork Products For Federal Food Programs

**COLUMBIA, MO.**

The Missouri Pork Association praised U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack for his decision to lend assistance to the U.S. pork industry to help it weather a nearly 2-year-old economic crisis that has put some producers out of business.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture agreed to purchase up to \$30 million of pork products, which will be used for various federal food programs. Secretary Vilsack, who heard from hundreds of hurting pork producers, announced the pork buy.

"The pork purchase being made by USDA will be a big help to the pork producers in Missouri," said Bill Kessler, MPA Board Chairman and pork producer from Mexico. "We're pleased that Secretary Vilsack has taken this important first step to help Missouri's pork industry, which contributes \$1.1 billion to the state economy and over 32,000 direct and support jobs."

In an Aug. 17 letter to the secretary, NPPC and the Missouri Pork Association urged USDA to take immediate action to address a crisis that since September 2007 has seen producers losing an average of more than \$21 on each hog marketed. The pork industry has lost more than \$4.6 billion in equity over the past two years. The organizations asked the agency to:

- Purchase immediately an additional \$50 mil-

lion of pork for various federal food programs, using fiscal 2009 funds. Fiscal 2009 ends Sept. 30. (USDA annually buys pork for food programs; it bought \$62.6 million worth in 2008, for example.)

- Urge Congress to lift a spending cap on Section 32 funds, and use \$50 million of \$350 million available to purchase pork for the program, which uses customs receipts to buy non-price-supported commodities for food programs.

- Buy on Oct. 1 a minimum of \$50 million of pork, using fiscal 2010 funds. Fiscal 2010 begins Oct. 1. The purchase would be in addition to USDA's annual buy.

- Use \$100 million of the \$1 billion appropriated for addressing the H1N1 virus for the swine industry, including \$70 million for swine disease surveillance, \$10 million for diagnostics and H1N1 vaccine development and \$20 million for industry support.

- Work with the U.S. Trade Representative to open export markets to U.S. pork. Several countries, including China, continue to impose unwarranted bans on U.S. pork, citing the H1N1 flu.

- Study the economic impact on the livestock industry of an expansion of corn-ethanol production and usage. EPA has proposed raising the cap on blending ethanol into gasoline to 15 percent from its current 10 percent.     Δ



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