

NEWSROOM

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AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK ANNOUNCES FOOD PURCHASES FOR DOMESTIC NUTRITION PROGRAMS, ASSISTS PORK, CHERRY, PLUM AND APPLE FARMERS

KANSAS CITY, Mo., Nov. 11, 2009 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced USDA's intention to purchase \$82.6 million worth of pork, cherry, plum and apple products for federal food nutrition assistance programs. Vilsack made this announcement today at the National Association of Farm Broadcasting annual convention.

"These purchases will assist pork, cherry, plum and apple producers, who are currently struggling due to depressed market conditions," said Vilsack. "Today's actions will help stabilize prices and markets, stimulate the economy, and provide high quality food to Americans in need of USDA's nutrition assistance programs."

USDA intends to purchase \$50 million of pork, \$12.2 million of tart cherries, \$1.8 million of dried plums and \$18.6 million of apples. The Department will seek the lowest overall costs by surveying potential suppliers and publicly inviting bids to assure contracts are awarded to responsible bidders.

The pork purchase will help farmers greatly reduce their sow herd in a market where production costs continue to exceed market value. The tart cherry, dried plum and apple purchase will help alleviate the stress caused by higher inventories and low prices that farmers are receiving for their commodities.

Each year, USDA purchases a variety of high-quality food products to support the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Summer Food Service Program, the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program. USDA also makes emergency food purchases for distribution to victims of natural disasters.

Government food experts focus on ensuring all purchased food is healthy and nutritious. Food items normally are required to be low in fat, sugar and sodium. The commodities must meet specified grade requirements and be USDA-certified to ensure they meet government standards of quality. USDA purchases only commodities produced in America.

For more information on purchase details, interested suppliers should contact the appropriate Contracting Officer for each commodity program, which can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/cp.

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