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USDA Extends Dairy Margin Protection Program Deadlines *Enrollment Continues Through Dec. 5; Comments Accepted Until Dec. 15*

GRAPEVINE, Texas, Oct. 29, 2014 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, speaking at the National Milk Producers Federation annual meeting, today announced extended deadlines for the dairy Margin Protection Program. Farmers now have until Dec. 5, 2014, to enroll in the voluntary program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill. The program provides financial assistance to participating farmers when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the farmer.

“We want dairy producers to have enough time to make thoughtful and well-studied choices,” said Vilsack. “Markets change and the Margin Protection Program can help protect dairy producers from those changes.”

Vilsack encouraged producers to use the online Web resource at www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool to calculate the best levels of coverage for their dairy operation. “Historical scenarios also can be explored to see how the Margin Protection Program would function should poor market conditions occur again in the future,” said Vilsack. The secure website can be accessed via computer, smartphone or tablet.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) also extended the opportunity for public comments on both the Margin Protection Program and the Dairy Product Donation Program until Dec. 15, 2014.

“USDA is committed to creating strong opportunities for the next generation of farmers and ranchers. When dairy producers bring new family members into the business, these changes could affect safety net coverage,” said Vilsack. “If our current rules hinder intergenerational changes or if improvements are needed in these programs, then we want to hear from dairy producers.”

Comments can be submitted to USDA via the regulations.gov website at <http://go.usa.gov/GJSA>.

Today's announcement was made possible through the 2014 Farm Bill, which builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past five years, while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for the taxpayer. Since enactment, USDA has made significant progress to implement each provision of this critical legislation, including providing disaster relief to farmers and ranchers; strengthening risk management tools; expanding access to rural credit; funding critical research; establishing innovative public-private conservation partnerships; developing new markets for rural-made products; and investing in infrastructure, housing and community facilities to help improve quality of life in rural America. For more information, visit www.usda.gov/farmbill.

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