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Celebrating Earth Day

As we celebrate Earth Day today, let's take a moment to commemorate the contributions of Indiana farmers to providing the food, fiber and fuel security of the United States.

Agriculture has come a long way over the past 150 years when President Abraham Lincoln first created the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In those days, 90% of Americans lived in the countryside. Now just 16% of us live in rural areas, with less than 1% as farmers, and one-tenth of that growing 80% of the food, fiber and feed that we consume and export. Yet we still grow plenty for our country, with enough left over to sell overseas.

Lincoln said that the best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time. Similarly, each day, the work of an individual farmer combines into the achievements of generations and the strength of this nation. That spirit of cooperation finds its roots in the ethics of our immigrant ancestors, the earliest pioneers whose teamwork was the very essence of survival in the vast stretches of the American landscape.

Agriculture still depends on cooperation and consensus. At USDA, we work with thousands of farmers and rural communities every day, knowing that there is no limit to the economic potential of rural America. Over the past seven years, USDA has invested more than \$26.6 billion in Indiana, including \$6.5 billion in programs that provide

farmers with access to credit, a strong farm safety net, and promote new markets for farm products, and carry out record soil and water conservation efforts.

In fact, since 2009, USDA has invested more than \$29 billion nationwide to help agricultural producers make conservation improvements. This has reduced net greenhouse gas emissions by about 60 million metric tons per year, the equivalent of taking 12.6 million cars off the road, or 6.7 million gallons of gasoline. In Indiana alone, USDA has invested more than \$777 million in efforts to conserve and protect land, water and air resources.

In 2016, we will continue to build on that investment to support our producers who serve as the engine of our rural economy and who provide a safe, affordable and nutritious food supply for Hoosier families.

So this is USDA's promise to you – you can count on us to work each day to engineer the strongest agriculture policies possible for your generation, policies rooted in common sense principles commonplace in rural America, so that when your grandchildren celebrate Earth Day years from now, they'll look back and remember that their strong rural economy began with you.

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