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KEEPSEAGLE SETTLEMENT CLAIMS FILING PERIOD ENDS SOON FOR NATIVE AMERICAN FARMERS AND RANCHERS
Those Eligible Must File Claims No Later than December 27, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Springfield, IL – December 16, 2011-- USDA Janie Hipp, Senior Adviser to Secretary Vilsack for Tribal Relations today reminded Native American farmers and ranchers that the period to file a claim in the Keepseagle class action settlement will end on December 27th, 2011.

“Native American farmers and ranchers who believe they are entitled to funds under the Keepseagle settlement must file a claim before the December 27th deadline in order to have a chance to receive a cash payment or loan forgiveness,” said Ms. Hipp. “Tribal leaders may want to consider advising Tribal members of the requirement to obtain and submit a completed claims package if they wish to participate in the Keepseagle claims process. The time to do so is now.”

Keepseagle v. Vilsack was a lawsuit alleging that USDA discriminated against Native American farmers and ranchers in the way it operated its farm loan program. The lawsuit was settled late last year and the settlement has been approved by the court.

The filing period opened June 29, 2011 and continues for 180 days, until December 27, 2011.

Up to \$760 million will be made available in monetary relief, debt relief, and tax relief to successful claimants. There are two tracks for claims: Successful Track A claimants may receive up to \$50,000; successful Track B claimants may receive up to \$250,000. The standard of proof for Track B claims is a higher standard than what will be applied to Track A claims.

Keepseagle class counsel is holding a number of meetings in the next few weeks throughout Indian Country and they will provide assistance to help Track A claimants fill out a claims package at those meetings. The dates and times of the meetings are posted on the Keepseagle claims website: www.indianfarmclass.com.

Claimant services representatives can also be reached through calling 888-233-5506. Claimants must register for a claims package (by calling the number or visiting the website) and the claims package will be mailed to claimants. Class counsel will also assist individuals by telephone during this last month of the claims filing period. All those interested in learning more or receiving information about the claims process and claims packages are encouraged to attend a meeting and contact the website or claims telephone number.

The website is: www.indianfarmclass.com
The call number is: 888-233-5506
Claims period: June 29, 2011 to December 27, 2011

This announcement does not relate to claims for African American, women or Hispanic farmers. Those claims will be subject to different processes, and information will be forthcoming in the coming months.

Under Secretary Vilsack's leadership, USDA is addressing civil rights complaints that go back decades, to usher in "a new era of civil rights" for the Department and to pave the way for new and stronger relationships with the farming and ranching community. In February 2010, Secretary Vilsack announced the *Pigford II* settlement with African American farmers, the settlement was granted final approval by the court in October 2011, and the claims process for *Pigford II* began in November 2011. In February 2011, Secretary Vilsack announced the establishment of a process to resolve the claims of Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers and he has made it a priority to resolve all of the civil rights cases facing the Department which were inherited by this Administration.

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