

For Immediate Release: June 19, 2011

Media Contact: USDA Office of Communications, 202-720-4623

USDA Notice to Women and Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers: Compensation for Claims of Discrimination

Concord, New Hampshire, June 16, 2011 - If you are a female farmer or rancher or a Hispanic farmer or rancher and you believe that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) improperly denied farm loan benefits to you for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000 because you are a female, or because you are Hispanic, you may be eligible to apply for compensation, the USDA State Food & Agriculture Council (*SFAC*) in New Hampshire announced in a joint news release.

You may be eligible if:

- you sought a farm loan or farm-loan servicing from USDA during that period; and
- the loan was denied, provided late, approved for a lesser amount than requested, approved with restrictive conditions,
- or USDA failed to provide an appropriate loan service; and
- you believe these actions occurred because you are female or Hispanic.

"We want all producers who may be eligible to be aware of this claims process for female and Hispanic farmers and ranchers, as well as the recent settlements with Native American and African American farmers and ranchers, so they can come forward and participate in these processes," said Molly Lambert, State Director, Rural Development (RD), New Hampshire, who serves as this year's chair of the *SFAC*.

The *SFAC* is comprised of State-level agency heads of the three USDA partner agencies - RD State Director Molly Lambert, Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director Jay Phinizy and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist, Rick Ellsmore - with membership from other USDA agencies in New Hampshire.

If you want to register your name to receive a claims package in the female and Hispanic farmers claims process, you can call the Farmer and Rancher Call Center at 1-888-508-4429 or access the Website: www.farmerclaims.gov.

In 2011, a Class Administrator will begin mailing claims packages to those who have requested one through the Call Center or Website. The claims package will have detailed information about the

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice), or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).

eligibility and claims process. In order to participate, you must submit a claim to the Claims Administrator by the end of the claims period.

The claims process offers a streamlined alternative to litigation and provides at least \$1.33 billion in compensation, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief, to eligible Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers.

The claims process provides up to \$50,000 for each woman or Hispanic farmer who can show that USDA denied them a loan or loan servicing for discriminatory reasons for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000. Hispanic or female farmers who provide additional proof and meet other requirements can receive \$50,000. Successful claimants may also be eligible for funds to pay the taxes on their awards and for forgiveness of certain existing USDA loans.

There are no filing fees or other costs to claimants to participate in the program. Participation is voluntary, and individuals who opt not to participate are not precluded by the program from filing a complaint in court.

If you are currently represented by counsel regarding allegations of discrimination against USDA or in a lawsuit claiming discrimination by USDA, you should contact your counsel regarding your claims process. USDA cannot provide legal advice to you. You are not required to hire an attorney to file a claim, but you may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider in your community for additional guidance.

Audio and video public service announcements in English and Spanish from Secretary Vilsack and downloadable print and web banner ads on the Hispanic and women farmer claims process are available at: http://www.usda.gov/PSAs_Print_and_WebBanner_Ads.xml

For more information, contact the **Farmer and Rancher Call Center at 1-888-508-4429** or access the following Website: www.farmerclaims.gov.

This announcement follows the Obama Administration's settlement of litigation brought by Native American farmers and ranchers and African American farmers. Any Native American farmer or rancher who was denied a Farm Loan or Loan Servicing by the USDA between Jan. 1, 1981 and Nov. 24, 1999, may be eligible for benefits from a Class Action Settlement.

To request a Claims Package or for more information, call **1-888-233-5506** or visit **www.IndianFarmClass.com**.

African-American farmers who submitted a request to file a late claim on or between October 13, 1999 and June 18, 2008 under the 1999 settlement in the earlier class action known as Pigford v. Glickman ("Pigford") and who did not receive a merits determination of their discrimination claim should call 1-866-950-5547 or 1-866-472-7826 or visit www.blackfarmercase.com.

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