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Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services
United States Department of Agriculture

Friday, October 1, 2010

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From Gate to Plate - The Unsung Hero - The American Farmer

More than ever before, the vast majority of Americans are increasingly disconnected from the individuals who provide us with food, fuel and fiber.

As the Fall season is upon us, Indiana's farmers are busy harvesting, preparing the soil to plant another crop and caring for livestock. Now is a good time to stop and reflect on what agricultural producers do every day for our nation.

Many don't know that today's farmers produce double the yields their grandfathers produced on the same fields 50 years ago; that they harvest crops with twice the speed; that farmers are fierce protectors of natural resources; carefully tend to their livestock; steer hundred-thousand-dollar harvesting machines; pluck fruit, nuts and vegetables from trees and vines; and still find the time to manage their business within extremely tight margins.

So what does the hard work of the American farmer mean to you? In short, a lot!

Agriculture is responsible for one out of every 12 jobs in America. And while many sectors of our economy are running trade deficits, American agriculture has had a trade surplus for nearly 50 years. This year the surplus is expected to exceed \$30 billion dollars. Agricultural exports help create important income opportunities for producers as well as off-farm jobs that are so critical for strengthening economies all across America. In fact, every billion dollars in agricultural exports supports over 8,000 jobs and generates an additional \$1.4 billion in economic activity.

As Americans, we are fortunate to live in a country where the strength of our agricultural economy provides us with an income advantage over the rest of the world. On average, Americans spend about 11% of family income on food – much less than other western nations – freeing up extra income to save for retirement, send children to college and purchase goods that would otherwise be unaffordable. Agriculture is truly the unsung hero of the American economy.

Nowhere in the world do consumers enjoy such an abundant supply and wide array of food. If there is a group of Americans that fully embody our nation's values, it is the farmers and their families of the United States of America. These resilient men and women pursue their trade from sunrise to sunset - or longer - seven days a week, 52 weeks a year. Meanwhile they face the threat of natural disasters, rapidly fluctuating commodity prices and increasing input costs.

America's farmers have helped our country become strong and stay strong. They've long provided consumers with the highest quality food and fiber and today they are helping lay the foundation for a new energy economy – one rooted in our forests and fields, not foreign oil.

This week, as you visit the grocery store, a restaurant, or farmer's market; I am asking that you join my colleagues and me at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in thanking America's farmers. I'm certain they will be grateful to know that their fellow citizens appreciate their role in making America a truly great nation.

Respectfully Submitted,

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