

A Message from Secretary Vilsack

According to Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack, some recent news stories have focused on suspicions and rumors about the Obama administration's work on agriculture. The truth is that the President, EPA Administrator Jackson and I are listening to farmers, ranchers and producers so we can be the best possible partner for successful operations. These efforts are helping farmers enjoy some of the best incomes they have seen in decades.

Vilsack commented that sadly, rumors and misconceptions have become the norm, not the exception, especially when it comes to regulations and how they might affect our nation's producers. First, it was that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was considering treating spilled milk like an oil spill. Not true. And in terms of water regulations, EPA has made it clear that recent rules do not seek to regulate land that occasionally ponds during heavy rains.

Regulation of farm dust is another frequently repeated myth, based on a congressionally-mandated review that the EPA has conducted every 5 years for decades. We all know you can't farm without dust. And EPA has no plans to propose stricter standards. And the Department of Transportation announced just last week that it has no intention of proposing any new regulations or rules on the transport of agricultural products, farm machinery, or farm supplies to or from a farm.

Secretary Vilsack said that perhaps more importantly, the Obama Administration has worked to be the most accessible and collaborative in history. The President and I are listening to farmers, ranchers and other producers and actively collaborating across the federal government to help everyone understand the facts of American agriculture.

"I maintain a regular dialogue with Lisa Jackson at EPA and we even visited farms in Iowa together. The collaborative partnership we enjoy is reflected in our policies: pursuing common-sense standards that will give farmers a seat at the table and let them make the decisions they feel are best for their own operations", said Mr. Vilsack. One result of this sort of collaboration is that in 2009 and 2010, the federal government issued fewer new rules than it did in 2007 and 2008.

I ask that as you hear from producers about their concerns, you will continue to be helpful in providing them with the information they need to help their operations succeed, and not to get caught up in rumor or exaggeration. And you should urge folks with additional questions to contact the EPA directly, where they should be able to get further help in separating fact from fiction.

In closing, Secretary Vilsack remarked that EPA and USDA understand that if we are going to solve the major environmental challenges of our time - combating climate change, reducing soil erosion, and ensuring an ample supply of clean water and healthy food for our families - farmers must help lead the way.