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USDA Announces Funding Availability for Turning Biomass Material into Energy
Farm Bill Implementation Continues as Energy Facilities Can Now Apply for Renewed Biomass Crop Assistance Program

WASHINGTON, June 9, 2014 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will begin accepting applications June 16 from energy facilities interested in receiving forest or agricultural residues to generate clean energy. The support comes through the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP), which was authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill.

BCAP provides financial assistance to farmers and ranchers who establish and maintain new crops of energy biomass, or who harvest and deliver forest or agricultural residues to a qualifying energy facility. Of the total \$25 million per year authorized for BCAP, the 2014 Farm Bill provides up to 50 percent (\$12.5 million) each year for matching payments for the harvest and transportation of biomass residues. BCAP matching payments will resume this summer, while crop incentives will begin in 2015. Some matching payments will support the removal of dead or diseased trees from National Forests and Bureau of Land Management public lands. This will be turned into renewable energy while reducing the risk of forest fire. Agriculture residues, such as corn cobs and stalks, also may qualify as energy-producing feedstock.

"Removing dead or diseased trees from forests to use for biomass production creates clean energy while reducing the threat of forest fires and the spread of harmful insects and disease," said Vilsack. "Increasing our country's production of biomass energy also helps grow our economy. Food is made in rural America, but fuel is made in rural America, too. This program is yet another USDA investment in expanding markets for agricultural products made in rural places across the country."

With the 2014 Farm Bill requiring several regulatory updates to BCAP, the resumption of payments for starting and maintaining new sources of biomass (Project Areas) has been deferred until a later date when the regulatory updates occur.

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), which administers BCAP, will begin accepting applications from biomass conversion facilities beginning June 16, 2014, through July 14, 2014. Information on funding availability can be found in the Federal Register notice at http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2014-13617_PI.pdf. For more details on applications and deadlines on BCAP, visit a local FSA county office or go online to www.fsa.usda.gov/bcap.

BCAP was reauthorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past five years, while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for taxpayers. Since enactment, USDA has made significant progress to implement each provision of this critical legislation, including providing disaster relief to farmers and ranchers; strengthening risk management tools; expanding access to rural credit; funding critical research; establishing innovative public-private conservation partnerships; developing new markets for rural-made products; and investing in infrastructure, housing and community facilities to help improve quality of life in rural America. For more information, visit www.usda.gov/farmbill.

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