



NEWS RELEASE

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VENEMAN LAUNCHES NEW SPANISH-LANGUAGE WEBSITE

MIAMI, Sept. 16, 2004—In recognition of National Hispanic Heritage Month Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today launched a new Spanish-language website, www.usda.gov/EnEspañol, as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's ongoing efforts to expand Hispanic access to USDA programs.

"This website is a new tool to help more people access USDA programs and services," said Veneman. "Consumers can use this website to find information from nutrition assistance to homeownership or conservation programs."

In recognition of the rich Hispanic culture that thrives in America and the many contribution of Hispanic Americans to the United States, President Bush has designated Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 as National Hispanic Heritage Month.

USDA "EnEspañol" unites the English-language website materials under one bi-lingual umbrella for the first time. In addition to a new look and easier navigation, the website offers comprehensive information about accessing Food and Nutrition programs, food safety tips, conservation programs and Rural Development Housing programs.

In 2000, the Census Bureau reported that the Hispanic population totaled more than 35 million, or about 13 percent of the total population. The dynamic growth of Hispanic populations in rural areas offers new energy and ideas that can serve as a powerful engine of growth and prosperity. USDA is providing nutrition assistance, financing for housing, community services and small business opportunities in rural areas across the country to help rural Hispanics open new businesses, buy their first homes and strengthen their roots in local communities.

For example, to achieve President Bush's goal of helping 5.5 million minority families become homeowners by 2010, USDA has simplified the home-buying process, recruited minority lenders, and established a cooperative effort to improve the economic condition of the Hispanic Colonias communities along the southwest border. So far this year, 32,894 families reached their dream of homeownership with the help of USDA's programs. Of those, 27,273 are first time homebuyers and 20% of these new homeowners are minorities.

President Bush made legal immigrants again eligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program. Signed into law as part of the 2002 Farm Bill, the provision is benefiting nearly 400,000 Hispanic families. To ensure that those who are eligible for nutrition assistance are aware of these important programs and services, USDA delivers materials in English and Spanish and has partnered with many community organizations to reach a wide-range of immigrant communities.

To enhance this effort, Secretary Veneman signed a partnership agreement in July with the Foreign Minister of Mexico, Louis Derbez, to utilize the 45 Mexican consulates in the U.S. to help educate eligible Mexican nationals living in the United States about available nutrition assistance.

The President's National Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation is available at: www.whitehouse.gov/news.

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