

USDA Agriculture Leadership Institute Graduates Small Farmers 26 Minority Farmers Receive Recognition

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WASHINGTON, March 27, 2009 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today presided over the Washington, D.C., graduation ceremony of 26 minority farmers from the Small Farmer Agricultural Leadership Training Institute, a 2-year course of study that gives small, socially disadvantaged, limited resource and/or minority farmers the knowledge to become successful agricultural entrepreneurs.

“President Obama recognizes that small farm operators are the custodians of about 48 percent of this nation’s farm and ranch land,” Vilsack said. “It’s vital that we support programs such as this that provide the tools needed to promote the sustainability of small family farms.”

USDA’s Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) administers and funds the program through the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program, which teaches participants the enhanced decision making skills and leadership development to become successful agribusiness managers and community leaders.

Throughout the course, students study a broad range of agriculturally-important topics, including the effects of global agriculture on the U.S. economy, leadership and analytical skills, business management and marketing, communications, and public policy. The program is unique in that it is the only one in the country specifically targeting minority, socially disadvantaged and/or limited resource agricultural producers. Participants were from Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Kentucky, Texas, Missouri, Tennessee, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Maryland and North Carolina.

Today’s ceremony was held at the USDA headquarters, in the Jamie L. Whitten Building.

Through federal funding and leadership for research, education and extension programs, CSREES focuses on investing in science and solving critical issues impacting people’s daily lives and the nation’s future. For more information, visit www.csrees.usda.gov.

