

USDA Releases Report on the Definition of Rural for Determining Eligibility for Government Programs

February 22, 2013 – Agriculture Secretary Vilsack today sent Congress a report providing an overview of the various definitions of the word “rural” as it is used to determine eligibility for a variety of government programs, including those administered by USDA Rural Development. This is a report mandated by Congress in the 2008 Farm Bill.

As population and economies continue to shift within and between states, eligibility criteria for programs serving “rural” residents and businesses based on total population warrant a second look. To that end, the report —

1. Assesses the various definitions of the terms “rural” and “rural area” that are used with respect to programs administered by the Secretary;
2. Describes the effects that the variations in these definitions have on these programs; and
3. Makes recommendations for ways to better target funds for programs that promote rural economic development.

The report primarily focuses on programs authorized through the Farm Bill.

One of the report’s key recommendations is to use a population limit of 50,000 for all non-housing programs targeted to rural businesses and communities.

To view the report, please click here:

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/Reports/RDRuralDefinitionReportFeb2013.pdf>

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