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USDA Launches New Biobased Product Label to Boost Demand for Products Made from Renewable Commodities and Support Green Jobs

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19, 2011 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture's BioPreferred program announced today that a final rule to initiate a voluntary product certification and labeling program for qualifying biobased products will be published in the Federal Register tomorrow. This new label will clearly identify biobased products made from renewable resources, and will promote the increased sale and use of these products in the commercial market and for consumers.

"Today's consumers are increasingly interested in making educated purchasing choices for their families," said Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan. "This label will make those decisions easier by identifying products as biobased. These products have enormous potential to create green jobs in rural communities, add value to agricultural commodities, decrease environmental impacts, and reduce our dependence on imported oil."

Biobased products are those composed wholly or significantly of biological ingredients – renewable plant, animal, marine or forestry materials. The new label indicates that the product has been certified to meet USDA standards for a prescribed amount of biobased content. The final rule applies to product manufacturers and distributors who wish to label products with USDA's distinctive product mark.

With the launch of the USDA biobased product label, the BioPreferred program is now comprised of two parts: a biobased product procurement preference program for Federal agencies, and a voluntary labeling initiative for the broad-scale marketing of biobased products. BioPreferred is a low cost, high return market development program demonstrating environmental leadership and creating green jobs and new markets for farmers, manufacturers, and vendors. In addition, biobased products help not only to increase U.S. energy independence by reducing the use of petroleum in manufactured products but also to reduce the introduction of fossil carbon into the atmosphere, thus mitigating potential climate change impacts.

Through implementation of the BioPreferred program, USDA has already designated approximately 5,100 biobased products for preferred purchasing by Federal agencies. The new label will make identification of these products easier for Federal buyers, and will increase awareness of these high-value products in other markets. USDA estimates that there are 20,000 biobased products currently being manufactured in the United States and that the growing industry as a whole is responsible for over 100,000 jobs.

To see an example of USDA's new BioPreferred product label, visit www.biopreferred.com.

USDA's BioPreferred program was created by the 2002 Farm Bill to increase the purchase and use of biobased products within the Federal government and the commercial market. Congress reauthorized and strengthened the program in the 2008 Farm Bill to further promote the sale of biobased products. To learn more, please visit www.biopreferred.gov.

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