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DEPUTY SECRETARY KATHLEEN MERRIGAN

AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK FORUM
OPENING REMARKS
"MOVING AGRICULTURE FORWARD"
CRYSTAL GATEWAY MARRIOTT
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2012
8:00-8:10 A.M.

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Good morning. May I ask everyone to turn off your cell phones? Thanks very much.

I'm Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Kathleen Merrigan and it's a pleasure to open the 2012 Agricultural Outlook Forum.

I want to welcome each of you joining us here in Arlington, Virginia … especially our international guests … and everyone who will watch the Forum later via webcast.

For the second year running, registration exceeds 2,000 people.

We have a terrific team that does an outstanding job of organizing this conference each year and I thank each and every person …

… with special recognition to Chief Economist Joe Glauber and World Board Chairman Jerry Bange for chairing our Steering and Program Committees …

… and to Ann Wright, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations and Chair of USDA's 150th Anniversary Committee.

This year …to celebrate the 150th anniversary … and mark another first for this Forum … we thought we'd look to the leaders of this historic department over the past 35 years for their insight into agriculture's future.

And so, we've invited former Secretaries of Agriculture to come on back … talk about their years in office … and draw on their experiences for our benefit.

We are honored to host a panel with former Secretaries John Block, Clayton Yeutter, Mike Espy, Dan Glickman, Ann Veneman, Mike Johanns, and Ed Schafer.

Their presence here is a great way to remember that USDA—founded by President Lincoln in 1862—now has roots in three centuries.

In their time, through some seven Farm Bills, these Secretaries influenced the course of agricultural history … conservation, trade, the farm safety net, nutrition, energy, research, food safety, the vitality of America's rural communities … and so much more.

Their gains for American food and agriculture remind us that our work here constantly builds on the progress of the past.

You'll have a chance to ask a former Secretary your question by using the white card you found on your chair. Volunteers will take your cards as you leave the room for the 10 a.m. break.

In the next two days, experts will take us through five concurrent sessions in each time slot.

Along with core sessions on economic and commodity outlooks, this Forum features a range of specialized tracks.

More than 80 speakers and moderators will examine international agriculture, renewable energy, science, conservation, climate, local foods, financial markets and more.

They'll break these broad areas down into issues like environmental markets, the next generation of farmers, and feeding a growing world.

Again this year we have a wonderful group of young people with us from the Outlook Student Diversity Program. I encourage you to read their essays online.

Now in its sixth year, this program is a fine opportunity for these 24 students to get first-hand insights about U.S. agriculture.

I'm so glad to have one of the alumni of the program—Johnie Jones—working with me now in my office. He's here in the audience today.

Many thanks to our sponsors who make the Student Diversity Program possible: CHS, Farm Credit, USDA's Economic Research Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service … as well as

our partners, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

Students, would you please stand?

I hope that all of you are planning to join us at dinner this evening when Jim Miller, Senior Policy Adviser on the Senate Budget Committee, give us his "Prospects for Farm Policy."

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It's now my pleasure to introduce a leader … an innovator … colleague and friend … I've had the pleasure of working with for three years.

(Deputy's intro of Secretary Vilsack)

Ladies and gentlemen, opening this Forum with his Keynote Address … Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack.

8:10-8:40 am

Secretary Vilsack delivers Keynote Address.

Thank you, Secretary Vilsack.

While this Forum delves into virtually every major area affecting food and agriculture today, the nuts and bolts remain the outlook for the agricultural economy and trade.

We look to USDA Chief Economist, Dr. Joe Glauber, to outline these issues in some detail.

Dr. Glauber was USDA Deputy Chief Economist for 15 years before heading up the Office of the Chief Economist four years ago.

In 2007, he was named Special Doha Agricultural Envoy at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

He has served as economic adviser at the Blair House agreements leading to the completion of the Uruguay Round negotiations … and as senior staff economist at the President's Council of Economic Advisers.

The Secretary and I look to Dr. Glauber and his team of top economists to advise us on developments in agricultural commodity markets.

Among his responsibilities are global climate change analysis and energy policy. Dr. Glauber also chairs the Board of Directors of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation.

Ladies and gentlemen … I’m delighted to introduce a trusted advisor and colleague … Dr. Joe Glauber.