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MEDIA CONTACT: Jim Philipps, 202.942.4220

Rodgers, Vilsack team up for drought relief

WASHINGTON, D.C. – National Association of Counties (NACo) President Chris Rodgers joined U.S. Agriculture Tom Secretary Vilsack today in Omaha, Nebraska to kick off a daylong regional drought relief meeting to address concerns and seek solutions for communities affected by the 2012 summer drought.

Rodgers, commissioner, Douglas County, Neb., introduced Secretary Vilsack, who said the USDA has been engaged on drought relief assistance since the beginning.

“From the early days of this disaster, USDA has taken action to help,” Vilsack said. “We've streamlined our disaster designation process, provided easier access to farm credit, opened more conservation lands for emergency haying and grazing, and much more. Meanwhile, we continue to convene regular meetings of White House Rural Council to coordinate the federal response and identify every effort we can take to provide additional help and assistance.”

“In order to do the most good,” Vilsack continued, “we must ensure a strong partnership between local communities, states, tribes, and the federal government.”

Rodgers said elected county officials across the country are deeply concerned about the effects of the summer drought on farmers and ranchers.

“Our goal is to bolster agriculture through our role in helping to fund county extension agents, through our work to invest in Ag technical training, through our investments in roads, water systems and other infrastructure critical to business and industry,” Rodgers said. “Perhaps, most importantly it is our community leaders who are striving to build communities that offer opportunities and a high quality of life for our next generation of farmers and ranchers.”

The day’s events featured the first in a series of USDA roundtable/workshop sessions. Over the month of October, USDA said additional meetings will take place in Pueblo, Colo. Pine Bluff, Ark., and Archbold, Ohio.

Click here to read the full Omaha agenda.

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The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation’s 3,068 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public’s understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit www.naco.org.