

02-12-09

Secretary Vilsack breaks ground for organic community garden

By Jon H. Harsch

© Copyright Agri-Pulse Communications, Inc.

Promising to “sequester greenhouse gases” and “raise awareness about global warming,” Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack jack-hammered pavement Thursday to break ground for a new organic community garden beside USDA’s headquarters building on the national mall.

Vilsack handled the jack-hammer skillfully, explaining that “it is something I used 40 years ago when I was putting myself through college.” Vilsack also explained that he was naming the garden The People’s Garden to commemorate the fact that Feb. 12th marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of President Lincoln who founded the Department of Agriculture in 1862 and called it “The People’s Department.”



Secretary Vilsack breaks pavement for new People’s Garden at USDA headquarters

Vilsack said that “We will first of all grow an assortment of fruits and vegetables to symbolize USDA’s commitment to providing healthy diets to our children and to fight childhood obesity. With this garden, we will also demonstrate conservation practices for landowners.” He said the new garden will be organic, with no use of synthetic fertilizers or pesticides, and “sustainable,” pointing out that “Our Agricultural Research Service is composting waste from our own cafeterias and recycling it for use in the garden.” He said USDA employees will tend the garden by volunteering on their own time and that “We will be donating the produce grown here to local food banks.”

Vilsack said that by tearing up pavement to create a productive carbon-absorbing garden that will help protect the Chesapeake Bay watershed, this initiative will send “a good, positive message to all of our federal partners. . . It is essential for the federal government to lead the way in enhancing and conserving our land and water resources. President Obama has expressed his commitment to responsible stewardship of our land, water and other natural resources, and one way of restoring the land to its natural condition is what we are doing here today – breaking pavement for The People’s Garden.”

#30