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Secretary Vilsack promises to 'maintain appropriate safety net'

By Agri-Pulse Staff

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Speaking Wednesday in the daily White House press briefing, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack responded to reporters' questions about the White House budget proposal which would phase out direct farm program payments to farmers with more than \$500,000 in annual sales by explaining:

- “This is a time when it is very important for us to maintain the safety net, as we look at a number of producers. I know that I receive probably a letter or two a day from ag groups indicating the stress. Commodity prices have fallen just as stock prices have fallen. So it is important and necessary for us to maintain an appropriate safety net. As you all know, budgets are about choices and you have to make some difficult choices. The President has made a number of difficult choices. We need to make sure that those are implemented, monitor the implications of those steps, and then take the next step in the process. I can't tell you today what that next step will be. I want to see the impact of the steps that we've proposed.”
- “I think it is important for us to make the case and for the people of the country to understand that budgets are about choices and about a framework that the President has set forward and I think that as we begin to educate folks about that framework and the choices that we had to make, I think it is a very important component of my budget that we are increasing resources for child nutrition. I think Americans want that, they want more nutritious school lunches and school breakfasts for their children. They understand the connection with healthcare. As we begin to make that case, I think we will be successful in making that case. But it is up to us to make the case and I am looking forward to doing that.”