



USDA Sec. Vilsack announces Global Research Alliance to combat climate change

By Agri-Pulse Staff

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Copenhagen, Dec. 16 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack joined representatives from 20 other countries across the globe on Wednesday to announce the formation of the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA), an international research collaborative to combat climate change. Vilsack announced the new partnership at the climate change talks in Copenhagen, Denmark.

“Just as climate change has no borders, our research should not,” Vilsack said. “No single nation has all of the resources needed to tackle agricultural greenhouse gas emissions while at the same time enhancing food production and food security. We will not only pool our talents and existing resources but draw new resources, and even new scientists, to better understand climate change in an agricultural context and in so doing tackle one of the most important international issues of our time.”

Agriculture currently produces 14 percent of global annual greenhouse gas emissions. In the coming decades, agriculture will be faced with the twin challenges of not only reducing its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions but meeting a dramatic increase in global food demand.

Over the last half-century, research on agricultural production and energy efficiency in the United States has cut in half the energy used per unit of agricultural output, thereby helping to reduce agriculture’s “greenhouse gas intensity.” So while climate change presents the agricultural research community around the world with a daunting challenge and responsibility, it provides an opportunity for research to lead the way.

“We are here to send a strong message to the world that we are taking a historical and meaningful step in addressing the most important issue of our time,” Vilsack said.

Over the next four years, USDA will expand agricultural climate change mitigation research by \$90 million and contribute this research to the GRA. The increase will raise USDA’s agricultural climate change mitigation research portfolio to over \$130 million over the next four years, up from a base level of funding of just over \$10 million in FY 2009. USDA’s enhanced commitment is part of a larger increase on climate change

research at USDA. Overall, USDA expects to invest over \$320 million in the next four years on climate change mitigation and adaptation research for agriculture.

USDA will support the participation of developing countries in the GRA through the Borlaug Fellowship program granting Borlaug Fellowships to researchers from GRA member developing countries so that they can work side by side with U.S. scientists on climate change mitigation research.

The GRA will focus on research, development, and extension of technologies and practices to grow more food (and more climate-resilient food systems) without growing greenhouse gas emissions. This will be accomplished through partnerships among researchers in participating countries with the purpose of developing new knowledge and technologies that can be transferred to farmers and other land and resource managers around the globe. Anticipated products of the worldwide scientific collaboration include cost-effective and accurate ways of measuring greenhouse gas emissions and carbon stored in soil; new farming practices that reduce emissions and increase carbon storage in farmland in different countries; and farming methods that sustain yields while helping to mitigate climate change.

The countries which have agreed to participate in the GRA thus far include Australia, Canada, Columbia, Chile, Denmark, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, and Vietnam.

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