

What's ahead for Washington this week, with Agriculture Sec. Vilsack in Afghanistan

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Washington, Jan. 10 – The week kicks off Monday with a teleconference for Secretary Vilsack to report from Afghanistan on the first two days of his three days of meetings there with Afghan government officials, military commanders, and the farmers who may hold the key to victory. As Vilsack explained on the eve of his trip to the war zone, agriculture is the country's main income earner – and that income could be vastly increased if farmers switch from opium poppies to far-higher-value horticultural crops. (For figures on the different returns, see www.agri-pulse.com/uploaded/Jan0710H3.pdf.)

No rest this week for the Secretary. Soon after he's safely back on U.S. soil, Vilsack is headed to New York City for a series of events there covering everything from what he learned in Afghanistan to addressing other challenges including job creation and improving food stamps and other federal nutrition programs.

Plenty of action this week too for USDA crop reports: Monday Jan. 11, Vegetables. Tuesday Jan. 12, Cotton Ginnings, Crop Production & Annual Crop Production, Grain Stocks, Rice Stocks, Winter Wheat Seedings, & Weather-Crop Summary. Wednesday Jan 13, Broiler Hatchery. Friday, Jan. 15, Dairy Products Prices, Peanut Prices, Potato Stocks, & Turkey Hatchery.

Even Congress is getting back to work after its winter break. The House meets on Tuesday, then many Democrats will spend the rest of the week at their "2010 Issues Conference." Obama will show up there Wednesday or Thursday to discuss key issues including jobs, the economy and the need for a House/Senate agreement on healthcare legislation. The conference will hear more on healthcare from former President Bill Clinton who is scheduled to deliver the keynote address on Friday.

Also on the congressional schedule:

Wednesday, Jan. 13

- House Armed Services Committee hearing on "China: Recent Security Developments."

Friday, Jan. 15

- House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on "The Impact of U.S. Export Controls on National Security, Science and Technological Leadership."