

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

USDA Food Commodity Contracting Opportunities for Rural America South Central Regional Small Business Conference University of Arkansas Pine Bluff – Pine Bluff, Arkansas December 9 and 10, 2009

SPONSORED BY: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, 202-720-7117, www.da.usda.gov/osdbu

HOSTED BY: University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, Pine Bluff, AR

WHEN: December 9, 2009 9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. at the S. J. Parker 1890 Extension Complex
December 10, 2009 – Farm Visit, TBD

WHERE: University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, Pine Bluff, AR
S. J. Parker 1890 Extension Complex

PURPOSE: To facilitate rural economic growth and increase small business contracting opportunities for Rural America.

BACKGROUND: Annually, USDA purchases more than \$5 billion dollars in goods and services essential to meeting the needs of our customers and the various missions of the agency. Approximately 60 percent of these dollars are spent on food commodities.

EXPECTED LONG-TERM OUTCOME: Small farmer-owned cooperatives, small rural businesses, and producers will:

- Gain a working knowledge necessary for developing the capabilities and certifications to participate in Federal food commodity procurements;
- Learn about USDA technical assistance resources for business development;
- Establish relationships with key USDA personnel who are responsible for the development of procurement policy and standards; and
- Increase demand for their products and services within local food systems, USDA, and other Federal agencies.

REGISTRATION: Registration is free. Attendees are asked to pre-register for the conference. Space is limited, so please email or fax your name, company name, full address, telephone number(s), and email address by December 4.

EMAIL: smallbizconf@da.usda.gov -OR- FAX: 202-720-3001

You may also call 202-720-7380 or 202-205-5949 to register for the conference.

This initiative supports Secretary Tom Vilsack's Rural Tour – "Renewing America's Promise," a program designed to engage in a more robust dialog with folks living in rural America and to help share innovative ideas as we build a foundation for success and prosperity for the new 21st century economy.