



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **VENEMAN SIGNS NEW FOOD FOR EDUCATION AGREEMENT WITH DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

SANTO DOMINGO, Aug. 17, 2004 – Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today signed a new food for education donation agreement with the Dominican Republic's recently elected head of state, President Leonel Fernandez. Veneman traveled to the Dominican Republic to represent President George W. Bush at yesterday's inauguration of President Fernandez.

"I am pleased to announce that we will assist the new government in continuing the effort to provide school meals and improve education and nutrition throughout the country," Veneman said. "This U.S. donation will help build more classrooms and water systems, provide needed health services and help educate and feed several thousand poor, rural children in the Dominican Republic."

The United States will donate 12,500 metric tons of U.S. wheat to the Dominican Republic under the fiscal year 2004 McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. The U.S. donation, valued at nearly \$3.4 million, will be partially matched by the Dominican government, private voluntary organizations working in the country, and local communities where school feeding projects are being conducted.

The donated U.S. commodities will be sold within the country to provide funding for school repairs and new classrooms, water and sanitation systems, de-worming of children, and the development of school gardens, poultry projects and other agricultural production initiatives to generate sustainable incomes for schools and rural communities.

The McGovern-Dole program replaced the pilot Global Food for Education program, which began in 2001. USDA, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the government of the Dominican Republic and private voluntary organizations worked together under the pilot program for more than two years.

Supported in part by USDA's Global Food for Education donations, the Dominican government implemented a school feeding project that brought daily lunches and educational improvements to 48,000 children in 360 Dominican schools. Other accomplishments included building 117 new classrooms, 152 school kitchens, and more than 2,000 latrines; repairing, furnishing or equipping hundreds of classrooms and libraries; organizing 360 parent-teacher organizations; and training more than 700 teachers and other leaders.

Under the 2004 McGovern-Dole program, the Dominican Republic is one of 13 countries receiving a total of nearly 70,000 tons of U.S. agricultural commodities. These USDA donations will support school and pre-school feeding, nutrition and education projects for around 2 million children in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

Earlier this month in Washington, the United States and the Dominican Republic, along with five Central American nations, also signed the U.S.–Dominican Republic–Central America Free Trade Agreement to open markets, expand trade and create new regional economic opportunities.