

Agricultural Expertise Needed to Feed, Fuel World's Skyrocketing Demands for Food, Energy

LEXINGTON, Ky., Feb. 23 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – As National Teach Ag Day on February 25 nears, communities across the nation are asked to consider the teachers that will be needed to prepare students for the increasing number and complexity of agriculture-related jobs expected to be available in the United States. “Perhaps most importantly – we will need qualified teachers to prepare students for these increasingly sophisticated professions,” said Jay Jackman, Ph.D., executive director of the National Association of Agricultural Educators.

The United States Department of Agriculture predicts 52,000 Ag-related job openings for college graduates(*Note 1) will be needed in 2010 – even as the country finds its national unemployment rate hovering around 10 percent. Available jobs are expected in broad areas of food, animal and environmental science. Jobs such as animal geneticists, biochemists, botanists and food engineers will be needed.

Food, Energy Needs Driving Increase:

World food demand is expected to increase 100 percent by 2050(*Note 2) due to a rapidly expanding population in countries such as China, India and the United States. And, yet 963 million people, 14 percent of the world's population, are already chronically hungry(*Note 3).

“To increase the supply of safe, nutritious and affordable food, we all share in the responsibility to ensure those responsible for producing food have the knowledge required to do their jobs,” said Jackman. “For millions of people, it could be the difference between sustenance and starvation.”

Additional agricultural crops will also be needed to meet growing energy demands. For example, without biofuels such as ethanol produced from corn, the United States would have used 7.2 billion more gallons of gasoline in 2008(*Note 4). And, earlier this month President Barack Obama announced a series of steps his administration is taking to boost biofuel production to enhance America's energy independence(*Note 5).

“However, as we implement new technologies to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and increase food production, we also will need an increasing number of agricultural experts to help ensure this growth does not cause irreparable harm to the environment or compromise safety in the food supply chain,” said Jackman.

Jackman said Ag teachers will have enormous opportunities in the 21st century to contribute multifaceted, innovative solutions to the challenge of providing enough crops to feed the world and power the planet. “But these challenges can't just be the concerns of educators-all citizens across the

nation should advocate and support agricultural education – at both local and national levels so that we are preparing our youth for the challenges that await them.”

About National Teach Ag Day:

The primary purpose of National Teach Ag Day is to open the minds of young people to consider a career in teaching agriculture science. In acknowledgement of the day’s importance, National Teach Ag Day has been sponsored by Rep. Travis Childers, (D-MS) and endorsed by the House of Representatives.

National Teach Ag Day is a component of the National Teach Ag Campaign, an initiative of the National Council for Agricultural Education, led by the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE). The day is sponsored by Campbell Soup Company and Landmark Nurseries as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.

About NAAE:

The National Association of Agricultural Educators is a federation of state agricultural educators associations with more than 7,650 members. NAAE seeks to advance agricultural education and promote the professional interest and growth of agriculture teachers as well as recruit and prepare students who have a desire to teach agriculture. More information: www.naae.org.

NOTES:

*(Note 1: www.naae.org/links/resources/pdf/USDA_05_Report.pdf)

*(Note 2: Green, R. et al. January 2005. “Farming and the Fate of Wild Nature.” Science 307.5709: 550-555; and Tilman, D. et al. August 2002. “Agricultural sustainability and intensive production practices.” Nature 418.6898: 671-677.)

*(Note 3: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/i0291e/i0291e00.pdf>)

*(Note 4: www.energy.gov/media/FactSheet__Biofuels_Lower_Gas_Prices.pdf)

*(Note 5:

www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/obama-announces-steps-boost-biofuels-clean-coal).

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