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Secretary Vilsack Announces Regional Hubs to Help Agriculture, Forestry Mitigate the Impacts of a Changing Climate

'Climate Hubs' will provide regional networks on climate science, forecasting impacts as part of President's Climate Action Plan

WASHINGTON, Feb. 5, 2014—Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today the creation of the first ever Regional Hubs for Risk Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change at seven locations around the country. "Climate Hubs" will address increasing risks such as fires, invasive pests, devastating floods, and crippling droughts on a regional basis, aiming to translate science and research into information to farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners on ways to adapt and adjust their resource management. In his State of the Union Address, President Obama pledged that his Administration will continue to do everything in its power to act on climate change. Today's announcement is part of the President's Climate Action Plan to responsibly cut carbon pollution, slow the effects of climate change and put America on track to a cleaner environment.

"For generations, America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners have innovated and adapted to challenges. Today, they face a new and more complex threat in the form of a changing and shifting climate, which impacts both our nation's forests and our farmers' bottom lines," said Vilsack. "USDA's Climate Hubs are part of our broad commitment to developing the next generation of climate solutions, so that our agricultural leaders have the modern technologies and tools they need to adapt and succeed in the face of a changing climate."

The Secretary first announced his intention to create the Hubs last summer. The Hubs will provide outreach and information to producers on ways to mitigate risks; public education about the risks climate change poses to agriculture, rangelands and forests; regional climate risk and vulnerability assessments; and centers of climate forecast data and information. They will also link a broad network of partners participating in climate risk adaptation and mitigation, including universities; non-governmental organizations; federal agencies such as the Department of Interior and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Native Nations and organizations; state departments of environment and agriculture; research centers; farm groups and more.

Across the country, farmers, ranchers and forest landowners are seeing an increase in risks to their operations due to fires, increases in invasive pests, droughts, and floods. For example, in the Midwest, growing seasons have lengthened by almost two weeks since 1950. The fire season is now 60 days longer than it was 30 years ago, and forests will become increasingly threatened by insect outbreaks, fire, drought and storms over the next 50 years. These events threaten our food supply and are costly for producers and rural economies. Drought alone was estimated to cost the U.S. \$50 billion from 2011 to 2013. Such risks have implications not only for agricultural producers, but for all Americans.

The hubs were chosen through a competitive process among USDA Regions. In addition to the seven Hubs, USDA is designating three Subsidiary Hubs ("Sub Hubs") that will function within the Southeast, Midwest, and Southwest. The Sub Hubs will support the Hub within their region and focus on a narrow and unique set of issues relative to what will be going on in the rest of the Hub. The Southwest Sub Hub, located in Davis, California, will focus on specialty crops and Southwest forests, the Southeast Sub Hub will address issues important to the Caribbean, and the Midwest Sub Hub will address climate change and Lake State forests.

The following locations have been selected to serve as their region's center of climate change information and outreach to mitigate risks to the agricultural sector:

- **Midwest:** National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment, Agricultural Research Service, Ames, Iowa
- Midwest Sub-Hub in Houghton, Mich.
- **Northeast:** Northern Research Station, Forest Service, Durham, N.H.
- **Southeast:** Southern Research Station, Forest Service, Raleigh N.C.
- Southeast Sub-Hub in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico
- **Northern Plains:** National Resources Center, Agricultural Research Service, Fort Collins, Colo.
- **Southern Plains:** Grazinglands Research Lab, Agricultural Research Service, El Reno, Okla.
- **Pacific Northwest:** Pacific Northwest Research Station, Forest Service, Corvallis, Ore.
- **Southwest:** Rangeland Management Unit/Jornada Experimental Range, Agricultural Research Service, Las Cruces, N.M.
- Southwest Sub-hub in Davis, Calif.

"This is the next step in USDA's decades of work alongside farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to keep up production in the face of challenges," Vilsack said. "If we are to be effective in managing the risks from a shifting climate, we'll need to ensure that our managers in the field and our stakeholders have the information they need to succeed. That's why we're bringing all of that information together on a regionally-appropriate basis."

The Climate Hubs will build on the capacity within USDA to deliver science-based knowledge and practical information to [farmers, ranchers and forest landowners](#) to support decision-making related to climate change across the country.

For more information, visit www.usda.gov/climatechange.

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