

NEWS RELEASE

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Lubbock Chamber Addresses U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack's Remarks Regarding Lack of Authority for Designation of Cottonseed as an "Other Oilseed"

LUBBOCK, Texas – The Lubbock Chamber of Commerce today expressed disappointment with remarks made yesterday by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack indicating doubt that he has the legal authority to designate cottonseed as an "other oilseed" in the Farm Bill. Earlier this year, the Chamber joined multiple organizations nationwide in urging this needed assistance to American cotton farmers.

The Chamber was appreciative of Secretary Vilsack's grasp of the dire situation currently facing cotton farmers across the U.S. but joined other organizations in differing with the Secretary's remarks. Along with organizations such as Plains Cotton Growers, the National Cotton Council and many Members of Congress, the Chamber continues to believe that the current Farm Bill allows for this authority for USDA.

"The Chamber will continue to stand alongside the cotton industry in finding a way to get cottonseed designated in this manner. Agriculture comprises 33 percent of our total economy in our region, and about 80 percent of agricultural economic activity within 80 miles of Lubbock is directly tied to cotton production and processing," said Lubbock Chamber Chairwoman Beth Bridges, adding, "When times are tough for cotton, we all feel the effects. A healthy cotton industry is integral to helping the Chamber achieve our mission to strengthen, promote, and serve our business community and our regional economic health."

Bridges' concerns echoed similar concerns raised yesterday by Congressman Randy Neugebauer (R-TX), who said, "The economic crisis in the cotton industry continues to harm not only the hardworking farm families in West Texas, but is also having a ripple effect throughout the entire region's economy."

The Chamber was in agreement with Agriculture Committee Chairman K. Michael Conaway (R-TX) who yesterday stated, "The heavy subsidies and protectionist policies put in place by China, India and other major players have deeply depressed the global cotton market and now seriously



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jeopardize the livelihoods of thousands of American farm families and an important sector of our nation's economy. Time and again the Secretary has used the tools made available to him under the law to respond to a crisis in agriculture. The current economic situation for cotton farmers is dire and it warrants the same urgent and meaningful action by the Department.”

The Lubbock Chamber of Commerce represents over 2,000 businesses and over 79,000 employees on the South Plains which accounts for over \$2 billion in annual household earnings in Lubbock and West Texas. The Chamber has twice earned the distinguished 5-Star Accreditation from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and is a two-time Chamber of the Year recognized by the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives.

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