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USDA Looking to Expand Use of Plant Based Materials

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) - The U.S. Department of Agriculture says it's expanding a program to develop the use of plant-based plastic, rubber and fiber used in manufacturing.

The USDA is offering loan guarantees initially designed for ethanol plants to companies that replace petroleum-based materials with plant-based plastics and other components used in manufacturing a wide range of products from Coca Cola bottles to seat cushions used in Ford cars.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack says a report released Wednesday shows bio-based industries can boost the rural economy by providing new jobs and returning manufacturing to the U.S.

The report, mandated by the 2014 farm bill, was written by professors at Duke University and North Carolina State University. It says plant-based manufacturing contributed \$369 billion to the nation's economy in 2013 and created four million jobs.

Associated Press