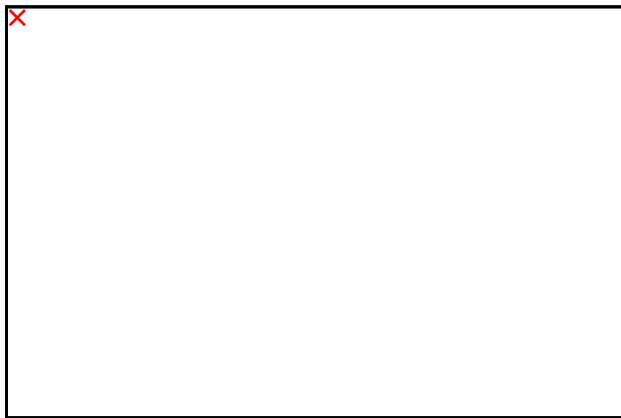


Vilsack Highlights Virtues of Agriculture in Kansas Visit

In a whirlwind tour of Manhattan April 10, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack encouraged K-State students in pursuit of agriculture degrees; told a Landon Lecture audience why agriculture is vitally important to the United States and helped usher in a new era of research at the USDA's Agricultural Research Service Center for Grain and Animal Health Research facility in Manhattan.

Vilsack is the 30th person to lead the USDA, which was created by President Abraham Lincoln and the 1862 Congress as "the People's Department." Vilsack credited the nation's leaders with



USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, presenting a Landon Lecture in Manhattan April 10.

having the vision to develop the USDA, the Morrill Act which created land-grant universities, The Transcontinental Railroad Act and the Homestead Act - which combined, expanded the nation's ability to feed and clothe itself exponentially. Remarkably, these were passed during the Civil War. "Our nation's leaders understood the key to the health of this country was agriculture," Vilsack says.

America is a country that is food secure. 85% of the food consumed in the U.S. is grown here; 15% is imported. One-tenth of 1% of the nation's farmers produce 85% of that total. "A country that is well-fed," Vilsack says, "is at peace with itself."

The U.S. can feed the world and keep it safe. Demand for food will increase as the world population is expected to reach 9 billion people by 2050. "We have to increase food production by 70% to meet that demand, and American agriculture will lead the way," he says. Furthermore, the U.S. has proven to be an ambassador of food, creating programs such as the Dole-McGovern Feeding Program, which provides food for school-aged children in troubled nations. Agriculture is responsible for a healthy economy. In 2011, the U.S. exported \$137 billion worth of agriculture goods - 10% of all exports - and the trade surplus in agriculture was a record \$37 billion. Moreover, agriculture creates one out of every 12 American jobs.

American agriculture is paving the way for energy independence. Without a renewable fuels policy powered in part by ethanol, a gallon of gasoline would cost from 80 to 130 cents more. And agriculture is finding new ways to turn livestock waste and crop residue into energy. The nation's scientists are finding new uses for plants and animal by-products. Vilsack says researchers at The Ohio State University are using dandelion milk in tires, and hog manure in asphalt.

Rural America represents the majority of the U.S. land mass. "There are no better stewards of the land, than those who depend on it," Vilsack says. Farmers and ranchers are leaders in making sure water quality is pure and that conservation programs promote wildlife habitat. In turn, this promotes outdoor recreation, a \$730 billion sector of the economy.

Agriculture represents the American system of values. Rural America represents 16% of the U.S. population, but comprises 40% of the U.S. military community. Rural Americans feel a sense of honor and duty to help others and are unselfish in fulfilling that sense of obligation.

Vilsack told his Kansas audiences to be proud of agriculture and to promote the industry that feeds and clothes this nation. "You are far too humble. We have a job to do in this country. There are so few of us to represent agriculture, but agriculture feeds this country. It is important for all of us to do a better job of promoting what we do."