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12-6-1994

Agriculture News Release - 1994-12-06

United States. Congress. House. Committee on Agriculture

E. De la Garza

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news release

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Room 1301, Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

(NR94-099)

For further information:
Jim Davis, Press Secretary
(202) 225-2171
FAX (202) 225-3158

**USDA ANNOUNCES FIELD OFFICE PLAN;
DE LA GARZA SAYS SOUTH TEXAS MINIMALLY AFFECTED**

For immediate release, Tuesday, Dec. 6, 1994

WASHINGTON -- Rep. Kika de la Garza (D-Tex.) said American farmers and ranchers will be supportive of "the basic thrust and necessity" of Agriculture Secretary Espy's plan for closing and consolidating U.S. Department of Agriculture field offices.

"Secretary Espy and his staff have approached the sensitive issue of field office closures thoughtfully and pragmatically. Obviously, this is not an easy thing to do. And certain parts of the country will be affected more than others. Yet I believe most farmers and ranchers recognize that the decline in the number of agricultural producers and the budgetary pressures the Federal government faces require us to rethink the way these government services are delivered at the local level. I believe farmers and ranchers will be supportive of the basic thrust and necessity of these changes, and ask only that the quality of service not be compromised in the process," said Rep. de la Garza.

USDA currently maintains field offices in 3,700 locations in 3,071 counties nationwide. Secretary Espy's plan calls for downsizing this network through collocation and closures to create 2,531 USDA Service Centers. His plan includes closing or moving a total of 1,070 current offices, of which 498 offices will be closed in counties where service will be provided in a neighboring county.

Under the Espy plan, Texas will have 219 USDA Service Centers. Twenty-four offices are slated for closure and 74 offices will be collocated.

"Based on the information provided by Secretary Espy's staff, the field office plan calls for only minimal changes in USDA field office operations serving producers in the 15th District. All 10 current county locations will be designated USDA service centers. All but two county locations have already been fully collocated and the plan simply calls for completing this effort in Live Oak and Karnes counties," said Rep. de la Garza.

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