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KEENUM ANNOUNCES CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS FOR AFRICAN COUNTRIES

ACCRA, GHANA, July 19, 2007 – Agriculture Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services Dr. Mark Keenum announced three U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) capacity building programs in AGOA-eligible countries at the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum in Accra, Ghana.

First, USDA will organize a series of regional workshops throughout sub-Saharan Africa in 2008 to address organic certification. Organic products represent potentially lucrative markets for African producers and exporters.

Second, the Norman E. Borlaug Fellowship Program is planning to sponsor seven fellows for a six-week training and scientific exchange program at U.S. universities focusing on cocoa. Young scientists will learn modern production and supply chain practices and techniques related to cocoa and cocoa products.

And third, under USDA's Faculty Exchange Program, faculty members from AGOA countries will visit U.S. land-grant universities to observe classes and develop curriculum on agricultural science policy and research techniques.

Keenum also invited African and U.S. agribusiness firms to participate in a trade and investment mission to Western Africa in 2008. The AGOA Forum encourages trade and investment in African nations that have implemented good economic and political reforms. The goal of the trade and investment mission is to promote U.S.-Africa agribusiness cooperation and trade and investment, particularly in the food processing, horticulture, beer and spirits, seafood, livestock genetics, production inputs and equipment. Mission participants will have the opportunity to form partnerships with at least 50 African entrepreneurs from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

In 2006, AGOA helped to boost two-way trade between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa to almost \$71.3 billion. U.S. imports of agricultural products from AGOA-eligible countries were \$746 million in 2006. During this time, more than 98 percent of U.S. imports from AGOA-eligible countries entered the United States duty-free. Meanwhile, the United States was a leading provider of foreign direct investment to sub-Saharan Africa. At year-end 2005 (most recent data available), the U.S. direct investment position had risen 16 percent from 2004, to \$14.8 billion.