

RENEWABLE ENERGY MEETINGS SCHEDULED

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WEST DES MOINES, IA – May 7, 2004 -- Farmers and small business owners can learn more about the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development renewable energy and energy efficiency improvement grant program at several informational meetings throughout the state.

On May 5, Rural Development announced the availability of \$22.8 million through the Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements program, which was created in the 2002 Farm Bill.

The program helps farmers, ranchers and rural small business owners develop renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements to their operations. Rural Development funds up to 25 percent of the project costs.

In 2003, the USDA awarded \$21.7 million through the grant program, including more than \$1.7 million for 10 recipients from Iowa.

The informational meetings will provide a detailed overview of the renewable energy and energy efficiency improvement grants, including eligibility and application requirements. Rural Development staff will be available to answer questions about specific projects that may be eligible for the grants. In addition, attendees will learn about programs offered by the Iowa Energy Center in Ames.

The meetings are open to the public at no charge. Registration is not required. The meetings will be held at the following dates and locations:

- May 24, 1 p.m., Cherokee County Farm Bureau office, Cherokee
- May 24, 7 p.m., Carroll County Farm Bureau office, Carroll
- May 25, 1 p.m., Iowa Energy Center's BECON Center, Nevada
- May 25, 7 p.m., Cerro Gordo County Farm Bureau office, Mason City

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- May 26, 9 a.m., Bremer County Farm Bureau office, Waverly
- May 26, 1 p.m., Linn County Farm Bureau office, Hiawatha
- May 26, 7 p.m., Jefferson County Farm Bureau office, Fairfield
- May 27, 7 p.m., Wallace Foundation Learning and Outreach Center, Lewis

Iowa Farm Bureau is coordinating the meetings in collaboration with USDA Rural Development and the Iowa Energy Center. Other sponsors include the Iowa Area Development Group, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, Iowa Ag Innovation Center, Iowa State University Extension, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

For more information about renewable energy and the energy efficiency program, visit <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/farbill/> .