FACT SHEET: President Obama to Announce New *Made in Rural America* Executive Actions to Grow Export Opportunities in Rural Areas

Today, President Obama is announcing a set of new executive actions to help increase exports from rural areas and to provide new markets to small businesses across our nation's heartland. As part of the President's "Made in Rural America" initiative launched in February 2014, the Administration is bringing together federal resources to help rural businesses and communities take advantage of new investment opportunities and access additional markets at home and abroad. As part of the Obama Administration's long-term, sustained effort to build jobs and economic security in rural America, the White House Rural Council has hosted a series of regional forums across the country to connect rural leaders and businesses with resources to expand exports and to identify barriers to exporting for rural businesses. Based on feedback gained at those workshops, the White House Rural Council has developed a number of new executive actions to further encourage increased exports and manufacturing in rural America. Today President Obama is announcing the following:

- **A series of reverse trade missions and outreach events for rural businesses to meet foreign buyers, partners, and trade experts and facilitate access to additional foreign markets.**
- **An effort to double the number of rural businesses attending international trade shows and missions with the help and sponsorship of partners, including the Appalachian Regional Commission and Delta Regional Authority.**
- **A new National Rural Export Innovation Team to help more rural businesses access export-related assistance, information and events.**
- **A new partnership with community banks to educate local lenders on the needs of rural exporters and the federal export resources available to them and their customers.**
- **A new partnership with the United States Postal Service to host "Grow Your Business" Day workshops at 75 U.S. Postal Service locations throughout rural America to provide rural businesses an opportunity to learn about exporting and e-commerce, learn how to file customs forms online, and calculate and plan for export shipping costs.**
- **An effort to develop better financial indexing and metrics for rural infrastructure projects. This will help underpin additional investments in roads, bridges, inland ports, water supply systems, information technology, and community facilities that are vital to manufacturing and exports.**
- **A new effort to promote an entrepreneurial ecosystem mentorship program for rural communities.**
- **Launching an i6 Rural Challenge, which will focus on providing funding to rural communities to build capacity for commercializing technology by collaborating across agencies and providing funding to Challenge winners.**

Consumers, in both the U.S. and abroad, want to buy products made in rural America. For consumers abroad, American products represent high quality craftsmanship, as well as a dedication toward product longevity, safety and utility. For many U.S. consumers, supporting local and rural-made projects represents a commitment to supporting neighboring communities

and local jobs.

Yet, rural businesses face significant hurdles in accessing export-related services and international markets. Administration officials heard repeatedly throughout the regional forums this summer that challenges as simple as knowing who to call and meeting with foreign buyers continues to be an initial obstacle. Overcoming uncertainty in receiving payment on invoices, overcoming language barriers, and dealing with the difficulties of customs and administrative procedures are often barriers. In addition, local financing and accessing financial capital backing for international transactions are vital for success.

The following new initiatives are geared to meet the challenges that rural businesses have outlined for Administration officials. This package of policy initiatives will help grow the rural economy and help support job growth and the economic security of rural communities, and ensure that around the globe, consumers are familiar with the attributes of products and services "Made in Rural America."

A Series of Reverse Trade Missions and Outreach Events for Rural Businesses to Meet Foreign Buyers, Partners, and Trade Experts

Rural companies and exporters are eager to find more efficient and productive means to connect with foreign buyers and learn about international opportunities. The Administration and U.S. Department of Agriculture, through its partners, the State and Regional Trade Groups (or SRTGs), will sponsor multiple reverse trade missions that will be accessible to businesses across rural America. Of those missions, five will bring foreign buyer delegations directly to rural areas. In addition, the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration will hold a series of events across the United States for companies to learn about market opportunities specific to their business and make contacts with trade counselors who can help them through the exporting process. For example, the Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce representing the fifty-three counties surrounding greater Memphis will partner to conduct trade missions and rural outreach for those communities.

An Effort to Double the Number of Rural Businesses Attending International Trade Shows and Missions with the Help and Sponsorship of Partners, including the Appalachian Regional Commission and Delta Regional Authority

The Administration will double the number of rural businesses that participate in foreign trade shows and missions through the Appalachian Regional Commission, Delta Regional Authority, and other economic development partners. In addition, USDA will increase the participation in trade events of rural businesses with agricultural and food products.

Trade missions have an enormous positive benefit for rural companies. For example, a recent four-day trade mission coordinated by the Appalachian Regional Commission resulted in 21 companies signing new sales contracts valued in total at more than $45 million. The Delta Regional Authority, Appalachian Regional Commission, and other partners will increase sponsorship for rural businesses to participate in trade missions, ultimately helping 100 rural businesses attend trade shows and missions during the next year. In addition, the Administration will develop new partnerships with private companies to help sponsor rural participation in international business delegations.

A new National Rural Export Innovation Team to help more rural businesses access export-related assistance, information and events

A dedicated team of rural export professionals has been established by the Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration to assist and educate rural businesses and communities on the unique challenges that face rural exporters and to connect them with potential buyers and partners in foreign markets. This national team of Department of Commerce international trade specialists will work in areas throughout rural America and will engage with businesses and rural-based economic development organizations through workshops, webinars and other forums to ensure that rural-based businesses have access to information and resources to help them compete and win in global markets.

This team will also serve as a hub for rural export-oriented best practices and research as well as spur program innovations and enhancements to address the unique needs of rural businesses. The Administration's National Export Initiative and its successor, NEI/NEXT, prioritizes this type of customer-focused innovation to help more U.S. companies begin exporting and sell their products in more overseas markets.

A New Partnership with Community Banks to Help Increase Access to Capital for Rural Exporters

The Obama Administration will conduct a series of six capacity building workshops for rural community banks, focused on the suite of export-related financing resources. These workshops will be jointly sponsored by the Small Business Administration, U.S. Export-Import Bank, the U.S. Department of Commerce, USDA, the Delta Regional Authority, and the Appalachian Regional Commission, as well as state and local partners.

Additionally, the Delta Regional Authority will host, in partnership with other federal partners, capacity-building workshops in each of the eight Delta states in order to deliver concentrated technical assistance to Delta region businesses approaching export-readiness.

The Administration has also updated and launched a web portal and trade assistance tool located at: http://business.usa.gov/rural-exporting. This portal will be a key resource highlighted to assist rural customers and partner with rural financial institutions.

A New Partnership with the U.S. Postal Service to host "Grow Your Business" Day Workshops throughout Rural America.

The U.S. Postal Service will use their locations in rural America to host 75 "Grow Your Business" workshops for rural businesses to learn about exporting and e-commerce, learn how to file customs forms online, and calculate and plan for export shipping costs. These sessions will feature demonstrations and training sessions on tools that will help small rural businesses ship to international markets. Often, complications associated with shipping and export requirements present a challenge for small rural businesses. The training sessions will help ensure that small rural businesses successfully overcome these hurdles to trade.

A new financial index for rural infrastructure projects that will encourage additional investments in infrastructure that is vital to manufacturing and exports.

USDA will work with the investment community to develop new metrics for evaluating rural infrastructure project investments to help increase the flow of capital to rural places. As part of this effort, USDA will also make accessible more data on the performance of its loans over time. Together, these efforts will make it easier for the private sector to invest in critical rural infrastructure projects like roads, bridges and water systems.

Create an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Mentorship Program for Rural Communities

Many rural communities have started to recognize the value in leveraging innovation and entrepreneurship as engines of economic growth but lack the resources and the know-how to execute on it. Other communities have been successful doing this, and are willing to provide mentorship and share resources with these communities, recognizing the opportunity for a mutual exchange of ideas and opportunities. A mentor-protégé program, similar to a "sister-city" program but with a structured process and facilitated connectivity, will help the communities involved learn how to leverage their own assets, build their resources, and foster a culture that drives innovation and entrepreneurial thinking.

Launch an i6 Rural Challenge

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) will focus up to 25 percent of its i6 Challenge resources on providing funding to communities to build capacity for commercializing technology. Often, rural communities lack access to innovative research and technologies and the resources to turn them into viable businesses. EDA will ensure that part of its i6 Challenge investments are geared toward filling these gaps. First, they will bring in other agencies with technologies congruent with the talents, interests, and resources of rural communities. The Challenge winners will then receive funding to build out the commercialization resources needed to turn these innovations into businesses, thereby stimulating the local economy.

Obama Administration's Sustained Efforts to Strengthen the Rural Economy

In addition to these new executive actions, the Obama Administration and the White House Rural Council has engaged rural America and supported those issues most important to rural communities by:

- Announcing a new "Made in Rural America" export and investment initiative, which brought together federal resources to help rural business participate in the international economy.
- Enacting a new Farm Bill with strong components to promote rural goods, empower rural businesses, and strengthen international trade.
- Engaging rural business owners and other key stakeholders at six major Made in Rural America Regional forums, where the Administration convened the full suite of export-related resources for rural businesses and community leaders.
- Targeting investment to connect rural Appalachian business with worldwide markets. Through the Appalachian Regional Commission's Global Appalachia Initiative, $1.5 million was made available to thirteen states for training, technical support, and financial assistance to help small-to-medium sized businesses in rural Appalachia enter overseas markets.

- Launching http://business.usa.gov/rural-exporting as an online platform for rural businesses to easily find export-related information, resources, and contacts in their region.
- Hosting the inaugural Rural Opportunity Investment Conference, where leaders from the financial sector, senior government officials, and rural economic stakeholders strategized how to create jobs, boost rural small business, and investment in rural infrastructure.
- Creating a new $150 million investment fund that USDA will use to help grow rural small business.
- Collaborating with the American Farm Bureau Federation and Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business Global Social Enterprise Initiative to strategize innovative tools to support rural small business.
- Using executive authorities to increase the flow of private dollars into critical rural infrastructure projects through the Build America Investment Initiative.
- Partnering with federal agencies to support the Local Food, Local Places initiative.