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ASI Awarded Portion of \$200 Million Export Allocation

The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) is one of 67 U.S. trade organizations that will share the \$200 million worth of funding to promote U.S. agricultural products overseas. This is a \$60 million dollar increase from the \$140 million announced in 2005.

The allocations for the Market Access program (MAP), as well as \$39 million for the Quality Samples Program (QSP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD), were announced this week by Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns. These funds are administered under the Foreign Agricultural Service division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"Developing overseas markets is critical to American agriculture," said Johanns. "These programs support U.S. producer associations so they can tap into market opportunities. Agricultural exports support not only the food and agriculture sectors, but the economy as a whole."

ASI received funding in three program areas: MAP, QSP and FMD. MAP funds were increased to \$395,713 from last year's \$389,597, with QSP and FMD allocations being \$305,000 and \$162,810, respectively.

"This is extremely important funding for the U.S. wool industry as it continues to explore new markets. The programs are particularly effective when investigating markets that are either high risk or developing, like China and India," commented Rita Kourlis Samuelson, wool marketing director for ASI. "Working with the U.S. wool industry is invaluable to the success of the international wool programs. ASI welcomes the involvement of companies that have export capacity to market wool and that can assist in promoting U.S. wool."

The MAP program utilizes matching organizational funding as a means of cost-sharing overseas marketing and promotional activities. ASI uses this funding for projects such as top-combing and scouring trials, trade show participation, trade missions and reverse-trade missions. QSP funding enables U.S. exporters to provide foreign importers with wool samples while FMD focuses on reducing market impediments and improving the processing capabilities of importers. *Staff contact: Rita Kourlis Samuelson, ext. 29*