



**For immediate release
February 4, 2010**

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About IATP

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota with an office in Geneva.

USDA not the only federal agency influencing our food system, new paper reports

Other government agencies could support a healthier, sustainable food system

MINNEAPOLIS – While the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is considered the most influential federal agency when it comes to our food system, many other government agencies combine to deeply affect what, and how, food is raised and consumed in the U.S., finds a new paper published by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP).

“Beyond the USDA: How other government agencies can support a healthier, more sustainable food system,” by Maggie Gosselin, reports on federal agencies and their role in administering programs, grants and regulatory oversight that affect food. This agency-by-agency review covers food safety regulations, community economic and housing development, health education, food procurement, labor standards, trade negotiations and transportation infrastructure.

“There is a growing recognition that our food system isn’t working for farmers, public health and the environment,” said IATP President Jim Harkness. “Federal policy has always played a big role in influencing our food system. Reform efforts have appropriately zeroed in on the U.S. Farm Bill and USDA. But we shouldn’t overlook the important role other federal agencies have on the food system, whether it is to improve access to healthier food in underserved communities or procurement for school lunches. Getting all these agencies on the same page is critical.”

Currently, there is no integrated approach among government departments and agencies to address food-related issues. There is the potential of one government agency undermining the work of another. The paper recommends that there be greater coordination among federal agencies and, as a start, that the USDA, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) convene an interdepartmental task force on food policy.

You can read the full paper at: www.iatp.org.