



ASTC Announces Partnership with U.S. Department of Agriculture

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack today signed a partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) that will provide more than 500 member museums and science-technology centers with resources to incorporate agricultural science and research in their programs.

The memorandum of understanding was signed by Vilsack and ASTC President and CEO Anthony (Bud) Rock at USDA headquarters in Washington. ASTC and its members provide social and interactive learning experiences that are tailored to the unique needs of their communities. Under the agreement, USDA will provide ASTC with resources for programs, exhibits, and other education and outreach activities based on the department's work at its network of Research Centers, Land-Grant Universities, Tribal Colleges, Forest Service, National Arboretum, and other programs.

"USDA is at the forefront of scientific and technological research, ranging from using satellites to sense soil moisture from 400 miles above the Earth to creating biomass-based energy sources," said Vilsack. "This partnership with science and technology centers is another step to ensuring we maintain the pipeline of students engaged in science, technology, engineering, and math education."

"Science centers and museums are ideal places for inspiring people to interact with agriculture and all its facets, ranging from biofuels and sustainability to conservation and trade," said Anthony (Bud) Rock, ASTC President.

USDA is helping to lead transformational change across the country in energy, nutrition, trade, research, conservation, and in building a bio-based economy from the ground up. For more than 150 years, USDA has reached a widespread audience through its extension activities and fostered an understanding of the dynamic science and future of agriculture, and to encourage more students to consider the field. Today's agreement builds on this foundation.

"We are facing a shortage of scientists in agriculture," Vilsack said. "I want to commend USDA's Chief Scientist, Dr. Catherine Woteki, who was instrumental in bringing this agreement into being. Having developed her own interest in science by visiting museums as a young girl, she recognized the potential of museums to inspire the next generation of scientists and to help recruit them into the exciting field of agriculture. This will be a key factor in meeting the challenge of feeding 9 billion people by the year 2050."

[Photos of the signing event](#) are available on USDA's Flickr photostream.

About USDA:

Founded in 1862, USDA was signed into law by an act of Congress and President Abraham Lincoln, who called USDA "The People's Department." Through its work on food, agriculture, economic development, science, natural resource conservation and other important issues, USDA still fulfills Lincoln's vision - touching the lives of every American, every day. For more information and resources, please visit www.usda.gov.

About ASTC:

The Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) is a global organization providing collective voice, professional support, and programming opportunities for science centers, museums, and related institutions, whose innovative approaches to science learning inspire people of all ages about the wonders and the meaning of science in their lives. Founded in 1973, ASTC now represents over 650 members in nearly 50 countries, including not only science centers and museums, but also nature centers, aquariums, planetariums, zoos, botanical gardens, and natural history and children's museums, as well as companies, consultants, and other organizations that share an interest in informal science education. For more information about ASTC, or to find a science center near you, visit www.astc.org.

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