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## Ag Secretary Vilsack talks farm bill, new university ag commission

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack visited Fresno State today, informing students and faculty about the Food, Farm and Jobs Bill and comprehensive immigration reform to support a strong U.S. agriculture sector.

Hosted by the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology in the Satellite Student Union, Vilsack also discussed the importance of agriculture exports to California's economy.

Fresno State President Joseph I. Castro and Jordan College Dean Charles Boyer welcomed the secretary, a member of President Barack Obama's Cabinet, to a crowd of about 400 including many from the local agriculture community such as Barry Bedwell and Bill Smittcamp.

Vilsack appealed to students about the benefits of this bill, which he said will be felt by everyone.

*"Every single American benefits from this bill in one way or another," Vilsack said.*

*"We need Congress to pass a farm bill to give us the tools to be able to build a new rural economy that can make the case to bright young people that there is extraordinary economic opportunity, the ability to change the economy of the U.S., the ability to impact and affect climate change in a meaningful way, the opportunity to meet that global food security challenge that is the world calling on this generation — all of which can be done and will be done in rural areas."*

Students from the Jordan College's Plant Science Club were among many students in attendance.

Vilsack also learned about Fresno State's new Presidential Commission on the Future of Agriculture announced recently by President Castro.

Co-chaired by dairy farmer and industry leader George Soares of Hanford and Fresno State Interim Provost Andrew Hoff, the commission will include agribusiness and industry leaders from throughout the Valley, plus university representatives.

Castro has asked members to assess industry needs and make recommendations to him regarding how Fresno State's agricultural programs — defined to include intersections with science, math, engineering, business and other areas — can be among the best in the nation and world.

The commission will produce and submit its initial report to President Castro by May 1.

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