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*School of Agriculture, Research,
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**MEDIA ADVISORY
USDA Deputy Secretary Visits
Alcorn State University**

Dr. Kathleen A. Merrigan, deputy secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), will hold a press conference from noon to 12:15 p.m. on Friday, March 25, 2011 at the School of Agriculture, Research, Extension and Applied Sciences (AREAS) at Alcorn State University in Lorman, according to Dr. Barry Bequette, dean and director of land-grant programs.

The press conference will be held in the Room 110-E of the Extension and Research Building. The press conference will cover questions about the state of agriculture, and the need to help farmers and ranchers throughout Mississippi.

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Dr. Merrigan's visit will also provide students the opportunity to learn firsthand about USDA's role in the food and fiber system and get an opportunity to talk to personnel officers about career opportunities to help them make informed decisions about their career choices, he said.

Working alongside Secretary Tom Vilsack, Merrigan oversees the day-to-day operation of USDA's many programs and spearheads the \$149 billion USDA budget process.

She serves on the President's Management Council, working with other Cabinet Deputies to improve accountability and performance across the federal government. Merrigan brings a wealth of knowledge to USDA from a decades-long career in policy, legislation, and research related to the many missions of USDA.

Deputy Secretary Merrigan has managed the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food effort to highlight the critical connection between farmers and consumers and support local and regional food systems that increase economic opportunity in Rural America.

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In November 2009 she made history as the first woman to chair the Ministerial Conference of food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. *Time Magazine* also recognized the history and scope of her work by naming her among the “100 Most Influential People in the World” in 2010.

For additional information, please contact Dr. Freda M. Lawrence at 601-877-2306.

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