

Sterling

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Musgrave urges USDA to buy Colorado beans

Colorado farmers, low-income families would benefit

WASHINGTON — As a leader for Colorado agriculture in the U.S. Congress, Representative Marilyn Musgrave petitioned Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns to consider dry beans from Colorado for a federal commodity purchase. This commodity would be distributed in the National School Lunch program and other federal food assistance programs. Colorado ranks fifth in the nation for number of dry bean farms, number of farm acres, and amount of product.

Dry beans include kidney, pinto, lima, black, garbanzo, great northern, cranberry, pink, and navy beans, black eyed peas.

"We have a reputation as a

leaders in agriculture and grow quality dry beans," said Musgrave. "I talked to Secretary Johanns about these purchases and stressed how important it is for him to consider this for the farmers in Eastern Colorado. Hundreds will benefit by a purchase — students, low-income families will benefit nutritionally."

Last month, when Johanns joined the Congresswoman for an agriculture forum in Greeley, she spoke to him about the Section 32 commodity purchase. Today, in a letter, she made her official request.

Musgrave highlighted the importance of the dry bean mar-

ket in Colorado and how much a bonus purchase from the federal government would help farmers. This purchase would be accomplished through Section 32 of the Agricultural Act of 1935, which directs the agriculture secretary to purchase commodities to provide food to children and families.

According to the Agriculture Census of 2002, there were more than 600 dry bean farmers in Colorado. This year, the Colo. Ag Statistics Service estimates there are 130,000 acres planted with dry beans. Colorado ranks fifth in the nation and over half of the dry beans are grown in Weld and Yuma Counties.