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VENEMAN ANNOUNCES BOVINE GENOME SEQUENCING PROJECT

NIH To Lead International Effort

WASHINGTON, Dec. 12, 2003 –Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced the launch of the \$53 million Bovine Genome Sequencing Project during a ceremony at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This joint sequencing effort is a collaboration among the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), which is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH); USDA; the state of Texas; Genome Canada; The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization of Australia; and Agritech Investments Ltd (a subsidiary of Meat New Zealand), Dairy Insight Inc. and AgResearch Ltd, all of New Zealand.

“This project is an excellent example of what can happen through public/private partnerships,” said Veneman. “Sequencing the bovine genome is a vital first step that will lay the groundwork for breakthroughs that will benefit both human health and agriculture. Eliminating hunger, improving nutrition and reducing agriculture’s impact on the environment are all potential outcomes of this research.”

Contributors to the Bovine Genome Sequencing Project include: NHGRI, \$25 million; USDA, \$11 million; the state of Texas, \$10 million; Genome Canada, \$5 million; The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization of Australia, \$1 million and Agritech Investments Ltd., Dairy Insight Inc. and AgResearch Ltd., all of New Zealand, \$1 million.

Attending the event were Dr. Joseph J. Jen, agriculture undersecretary for Research, Education and Economics; Dr. Francis Collins, director of NHGRI; Kathie L. Olsen, associate director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy; Dr. Martin Godbout, president and CEO of Genome Canada and representatives from the state of Texas, Australia, and New Zealand.

“The National Human Genome Research Institute is gratified that the U.S. federal government, state government and international agencies have joined together to support this important project. This unique collaboration will have benefits for both the world’s health and the world’s food supply,” said Dr. Collins.

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The bovine genome is similar in size to the genomes of humans and other mammals, with an estimated size of 3 billion base pairs. Besides its potential for improving dairy and meat products and enhancing food safety, adding the genomic sequence of the cow (*Bos taurus*) to the growing list of sequenced animal genomes will help researchers learn more about the human genome. The genomic DNA sequencing activities will be carried out by Baylor College of Medicine's Human Genome Sequencing Center in Houston, while the full-length cDNA sequencing (the sequencing of genes) will be carried out at the sequencing platform of Genome British Columbia, located at the British Columbia Cancer Agency in Vancouver and at the University of Alberta.

“The recent occurrence of “*Mad Cow Disease*,” involving a single cow in Canada, demonstrated quite clearly how deeply an economy can be affected by a problem in the cattle industry and how crucial it is to avoid another situation like this one,” said Dr. Martin Godbout, president & CEO of Genome Canada. “It is important for the international community to invest in fundamental science that will help us all overcome the challenges of this industry. Research in this field is imperative and Genome Canada is extremely proud to be a partner in this important project and very enthusiastic it has now been launched.”

Genome Canada is the primary funding and information resource relating to genomics and proteomics in Canada. To date, Genome Canada has invested more than \$310 million across Canada. With funding from other partners, this amounts to an investment of \$710 million in 57 innovative genomics and proteomics research projects and science and technology platforms.

NHGRI is one of the 27 institutes and centers at NIH, an agency of the Department of Health and Human Services. Additional information about NHGRI can be found at <http://www.genome.gov>.

Editors' Note: NHGRI has a photo of the type of cow that is being sequenced available at <http://www.genome.gov/10506722>.