



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### USDA and ABA Executive Committee Meet – Discuss Important Bakery Industry Issues

On January 8, 2008, the American Bakers Association's Executive Committee met with USDA Acting Secretary Chuck Conner to discuss key priorities to the baking industry. Members of the ABA Executive Committee, including ABA Chairman Ron Turano, Turano Baking Company, Chip Klosterman, Klosterman Baking Company, Albert Lepage, Lepage Bakeries, Inc., Gary Prince, Weston Foods, Inc., and Allen Shiver, Flowers Foods Specialty Group, along with ABA Commodity Task Force Chairman Dave Brown, Sara Lee Corporation, discussed with Acting Secretary Conner their concerns on the Conservation Reserve Program, current commodity market conditions, the need for agricultural research for wheat and ABA support for the grain pilot program.



From left to right:  
Allen Shiver, Chip Klosterman, Gary Prince, USDA Acting Secretary Chuck Conner, ABA, ABA Chairman Ron Turano,  
Albert Lepage, Dave Brown, and ABA President & CEO Robb MacKie

“Current record high commodity prices and availability definitely impact the baking industry, but more importantly, these high prices arguably have a greater impact on consumers”, said Chairman Turano, referring to record high commodity prices across the world. ABA again strongly urged Secretary Conner to review the Conservation Reserve Program as a possibly relief valve to high commodity prices. “Government should not be in the business of artificially raising commodity prices, whether through ethanol provisions in the proposed energy

bill and farm bill, or by paying farmers not to plant crops on non-environmentally sensitive lands,” said Dave Brown, Chairman of the ABA Commodity Task Force.

ABA also discussed other important issues within the proposed Farm Bill. “We are pleased that Secretary Conner has reiterated the Administration's concerns with the current proposals within the farm bill and hope that Congress will work to institute real reform when House and Senate Conferees begin meeting soon after they return from their break”, commented Robb MacKie, ABA President & CEO. Congress is set to begin the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress in the next few weeks, with one of the main items on the agenda to begin Senate and House conference deliberations to create a palatable farm bill that the Administration will sign. The USDA has pushed for enhanced income limitations for farmers and for the sugar program to operate at no cost to consumers, but current farm bill proposals in Congress do neither. The

Administration has threatened to veto both the House and Senate farm bills if adequate reform is not adopted.

Executive Committee members also discussed the grain pilot program with the Secretary and his staff during this meeting. This grain promotion program is included in the Senate Farm Bill and will be overseen by the USDA Secretary through the Food and Nutrition Service. Provisions of this new program institute a grain promotion program in a select number of elementary or secondary schools in each of six states to students who qualify. “Bread & Grain products are widely recognized as a critical component of a healthy diet and for their other health benefits,” said Lee Sanders, Senior Vice President, Government Relations & Public Affairs. “The grain pilot program is a monumental step forward in promoting proper nutrition and healthful eating habits to children in the U.S.,” added Ms. Sanders. ABA will continue to lobby key House and Senate members to ensure that the grain pilot program is included in the final version of the Farm Bill.

For more information on any of the topics discussed in this meeting, please contact Cory Martin, Federal Government Relations Manager, at (202) 789-0300 / [cmartin@americanbakers.org](mailto:cmartin@americanbakers.org).