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Washington, April 27, 2011—Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack welcomed St. Louis Rams Quarterback Sam Bradford to the Agriculture Department today and joined him in urging Native American youth to spend the summer pursuing healthy outdoor activities. Bradford, an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation, participated with over 30 Native American students at USDA's People's Garden in planting a Native American garden, called The Roots of American Agriculture.

"Through programs like 'Fuel Up to Play 60' and Let's Move!, the Obama administration is helping get kids active in order to help them have a healthy future," said Vilsack. "Our partners at the NFL and across the country are key to engaging kids in an exciting way that teaches them that physical activity can be fun, while also important to their health."

Bradford and Vilsack noted that a recent study of four year-old children found that obesity is more than twice as common among American Indian/Alaska Native children than among white or Asian children. In 2002, nearly 15 percent of those receiving care from the United States Indian Health Service (IHS) were estimated to have diabetes.

The USDA People's Garden Initiative promotes the establishment of school and community gardens to grow healthy food, people and communities across the country. Over 30 Native students helped plant the garden. Those participating included students representing Eastern and Western tribes, Southeast Alaska, and a class from a Native elementary school in Tuba City, Arizona. The garden showcases heirloom Native American crops and planting techniques and celebrates the tremendous contributions Native Americans have made to the foods we eat today.

Bradford and Vilsack were joined at USDA by Robin Schepper, executive director of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Campaign; Keith Moore, the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Education Director, and Janie Hipp, Senior Advisor to Secretary Vilsack with the USDA Office of Tribal Relations.

The First Lady's Let's Move! initiative, which aims to end childhood obesity, has also since joined in support of Fuel Up to Play 60 and USDA's HealthierUS Schools Challenge, which are both helping to combat this issue and provide access to nutrition information.

Fuel Up to Play 60 is an in-school nutrition and physical activity program launched by the National Dairy Council (NDC) and the National Football League (NFL), with additional partnership support from USDA. The program encourages youth to consume nutrient-rich foods (low-fat and fat-free dairy, fruits, vegetables and whole grains) and achieve 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Fuel Up to Play 60 is designed to engage and empower youth to take action for their own health by implementing long-term, positive changes for themselves and their schools.

On April 22, 2010, Bradford was selected by the St. Louis Rams as the first overall pick in the 2010 NFL Draft. He grew up in Oklahoma and spent his college career with the Oklahoma Sooners. In 2008, Bradford became the second sophomore to win a Heisman Trophy. In his first season in the NFL,

Bradford won the NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year award after setting the record for most completions by a rookie in NFL history.

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