

Technology In Our Lives



Fiber Optics Go To The Country

(NAPSA)—Living far from the rush of the big city doesn't have to mean putting up with slow telecommunications services. A government program is bringing fiber optic technologies to rural communities.

As late as the end of World War II, many rural areas in the United States were without electricity, telephone, water or waste disposal services. Modern utilities came to rural America through some of the most successful government initiatives in American history, carried out by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) working with rural cooperatives, non-profit associations, public bodies and for-profit utilities. Today, the USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS) carries on this tradition, helping rural utilities expand and keep their technology up to date, and helping establish new and vital services such as distance learning and telemedicine. RUS oversees a multi-billion-dollar budget designed to encourage the availability of telecommunication services in rural or under-served areas.

Now, Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman has announced that the USDA will expand efforts to bring farmers, rural residents and businesses greater access to improved telecommunication technology with more than \$1.4 billion in Federal financing.

"The expansion of this technology initiative will better equip our rural communities to enhance opportunities for economic development," Veneman said. "These tools will help farmers, rural businesses, students and health care



The government is taking steps to make broadband services available nationwide.

recipients, with new technologies and telecommunications services."

Building high-speed technology infrastructure is an investment in the future of rural America and a key element of President George W. Bush's economic agenda.

As part of this effort, the RUS has awarded "Technical Acceptance" to the Alcatel 7340 Fiber-to-the-User solution. This endorsement means that rural independent telephone operating companies will qualify for subsidization of their fiber optic-based service rollouts if they deploy it.

FTTU is an all-optical communications network that converts electronic signals for voice, video and data services into light and sends them through micron-thin glass strands. The newly accepted platform is a standards-based solution that delivers high quality voice, interactive video supporting hundreds of analog and digital channels and Internet access at speeds thousands of times faster than dial-up modem service. To learn more, visit www.alcatel.com.