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## **News Release**

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### **Northwestern Minnesota farmer sentenced for lying to USDA**

MINNEAPOLIS – Earlier today in federal court in St. Paul, a farmer from the northwestern town of Gary, Minnesota, was sentenced for lying to the United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) about the condition of dark red kidney beans he had agreed to sell pursuant to a contract with USDA. United States District Court Judge Donovan W. Frank sentenced Thomas Matthew Chisholm, age 38, to five years of probation on one count of causing the issuance of false official certificates. He was indicted on July 13, 2010, and pleaded guilty on January 10, 2011.

In his plea agreement, Chisholm admitted that on March 26, 2007, he caused the USDA to issue a false Federal Grain Inspection Service certificate. That certificate is provided to producers who properly load, handle, and submit grain and other commodities for inspection.

The case arose from a February 2007 award to Chisholm to provide dark red kidney beans to the USDA for export to Honduras for a Food for Work program, which helps feed Honduran families. In March of that year, Chisholm delivered 300 metric tons of beans in four “lots” for USDA inspection for use in the program. After one lot passed inspection, Chisholm re-labeled and re-submitted that same lot for inspection a second time, after which a certificate was issued. Then, Chisholm instructed employees to substitute uninspected moldy beans for those two lots. Subsequently, when those shipments were opened in Honduras, the beans were found to be moldy and spoiled.

This case was the result of an investigation by the USDA and the U.S. Agency for International Development. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kimberly A. Svendsen, David P. Steinkamp, and Kevin S. Ueland.

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