

Requirements for applicants are the same as for loans.

**Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants** Grants may be made up to 100 percent of project costs to assist rural communities experiencing a significant decline in quantity or quality of drinking water. Grants can be made to rural cities or towns with populations not exceeding the State's nonmetropolitan median household income requirement.

**Technical Assistance and Training Grants** Grants are available for nonprofit organizations to provide rural water and waste system officials with technical assistance and training on a wide range of issues relating to the delivery of water and waste service to rural residents. Legislation requires that at least 1 percent but no more than 3 percent of the funds appropriated for water and waste disposal grants be set aside for these grants.

**Solid Waste Management Grants** Grants are available for nonprofit organizations and public bodies to provide technical assistance and training to rural areas and towns with populations under 10,000 to reduce or eliminate pollution of water resources

and improve planning and management of solid waste facilities.

**Rural Water Circuit Rider Technical Assistance Program** Since 1980, the National Rural Water Association has provided, by contract, technical assistance to rural water systems. Circuit riders assist rural water districts with solving operational, financial, and management problems. Currently there are 52 circuit riders covering the 48 continental United States. The assistance may be requested by rural water systems or by RUS. When circuit riders are not working on specific requests, they call on rural water systems to offer assistance. The Association reports monthly to the national office. The program complements loan supervision responsibilities.

**Distance Learning and Medical Link Grant Program** This program was established by the Rural Economic Development Act of 1990, which gave borrowers authority to defer RUS loan payments to make investments in rural development.

For further information, contact the Rural Utilities Service, Department of Agriculture, Room 4051-S, Fourteenth Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250-0320. Phone, 202-720-1255.

## Alternative Agricultural Research and Commercialization Center

As an independent entity within USDA, the Alternative Agricultural Research and Commercialization Center (AARC) provides and monitors financial assistance for the development and commercialization of new nonfood and nonfeed products made from agricultural/forestry commodities. By law, AARC is administered by a 9-member board comprising representatives for processing, financial, producer, and scientific interests.

The Center's mission is to assist the private sector in closing the gap between research results and commercialization of industrial nonfood and nonfeed products made from farm and forestry

materials. It also seeks to expand market opportunities through development of value-added industrial products and promotion of environmentally friendly products. Any private individual or firm may apply for assistance. While most of the Center's clients are small firms, nonprofit organizations and large businesses have also been successful applicants. Universities and similar institutions may participate as well.

The Center can supply financial assistance at the precommercialization stage of a project—that point in a project when the costs are the greatest and the ability to obtain lending from traditional sources is the most difficult. Financial

assistance is in the form of a repayable cooperative agreement and includes a repayment portion that recognizes the investment risk taken by AARC.

Applicants are expected to provide at least a 1:1 match when seeking funding from AARC. The Center receives an annual appropriation from Congress and operates under a revolving fund. As

Center-funded projects become profitable and reimburse AARC, the money will be returned to the fund to help finance future projects.

For further information, contact the Alternative Agricultural Research and Commercialization Center, Fourteenth Street and Independence Avenue SW., Cotton Annex, Second Floor Mezzanine, Washington, DC 20250-0400. Phone, 202-690-1634.

## Marketing and Regulatory Programs

This mission area includes marketing and regulatory programs other than those concerned with food safety.

### Agricultural Marketing Service

The Agricultural Marketing Service was established by the Secretary of Agriculture on April 2, 1972, under the authority of Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (5 U.S.C. app.) and other authorities. The Service administers standardization, grading, inspection, certification, market news, marketing orders, and research, promotion, and regulatory programs.

**Market News** The Service provides current, unbiased information to producers, processors, distributors, and others to assist them in the orderly marketing and distribution of farm commodities. Information is collected on supplies, demand, prices, movement, location, quality, condition, and other market data on farm products in specific markets and marketing areas. The data is disseminated nationally via a modern satellite system and is shared with several countries. The Service also assists countries in developing their own marketing information systems.

**Standardization, Grading, and Classing** Grade standards have been established for nearly 240 agricultural commodities to help buyers and sellers trade on agreed-upon quality levels. Standards are developed with the benefit of views from those in the industries directly affected and others interested. The Service also participates in developing international standards to facilitate trade.

Grading and classing services are provided to certify the grade and quality of products. These grading services are provided to buyers and sellers of live cattle, swine, sheep, meat, poultry, eggs, rabbits, fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, peanuts, dairy products, and tobacco.

**Classing services** are provided to buyers and sellers of cotton and cotton products. These services are mainly voluntary and are provided upon request and for a fee. The Service also is responsible for the certification of turpentine and other naval stores products, and the testing of seed.

**Laboratory Testing** The Service provides scientific and laboratory support to its commodity programs relating to testing of microbiological and chemical factors in food products through grading, certification, acceptance, and regulatory programs; testing of peanuts for aflatoxin; testing of imported flue-cured and burley tobacco for pesticide residues; and testing seeds for germination and purity. The agency also carries out quality assurance and safety oversight activities with respect to the Service's commodity division laboratory and testing activities relating to milk market administrators, resident grading programs, and State and private laboratory programs.

The Service also administers the Pesticide Data Program which, in cooperation with States, samples and analyzes fresh fruits and vegetables for pesticide residues. It shares residue test results with the Environmental Protection Agency and other public agencies.