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Departments

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250
Phone, 202–720–4623. Internet, www.usda.gov.

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[For the Department of Agriculture statement of organization, see the *Code of Federal Regulations,* Title 7, Part 2]

The Department of Agriculture works to improve and maintain farm income and to develop and expand markets abroad for agricultural products. The Department helps

to curb and to cure poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. It works to enhance the environment and to maintain production capacity by helping landowners protect the soil, water, forests, and other natural resources. Rural development, credit, and conservation programs are key resources for carrying out national growth policies. Department research findings directly or indirectly benefit all Americans. The Department, through inspection and grading services, safeguards and ensures standards of quality in the daily food supply.

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) was created by act of May 15, 1862 (7 U.S.C. 2201).

In carrying out its work in the program mission areas, USDA relies on the support of departmental administration staff, as well as the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Office of Communications, Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, Office of the Inspector General, and the Office of the General Counsel.

Rural Development

USDA's rural development mission is to assist rural Americans to increase their economic opportunities and improve their quality of life. To accomplish this, USDA works to foster new cooperative relationships among Government, industry, and communities. As a capital investment bank, USDA provides financing for rural housing and community facilities, business and cooperative development, telephone and high-speed Internet access, electric, water, and sewer infrastructure. Approximately 800 rural development field offices, staffed by 7,000 employees, provide frontline delivery of rural development loan and grant programs at the local level.

Rural Business-Cooperative Programs

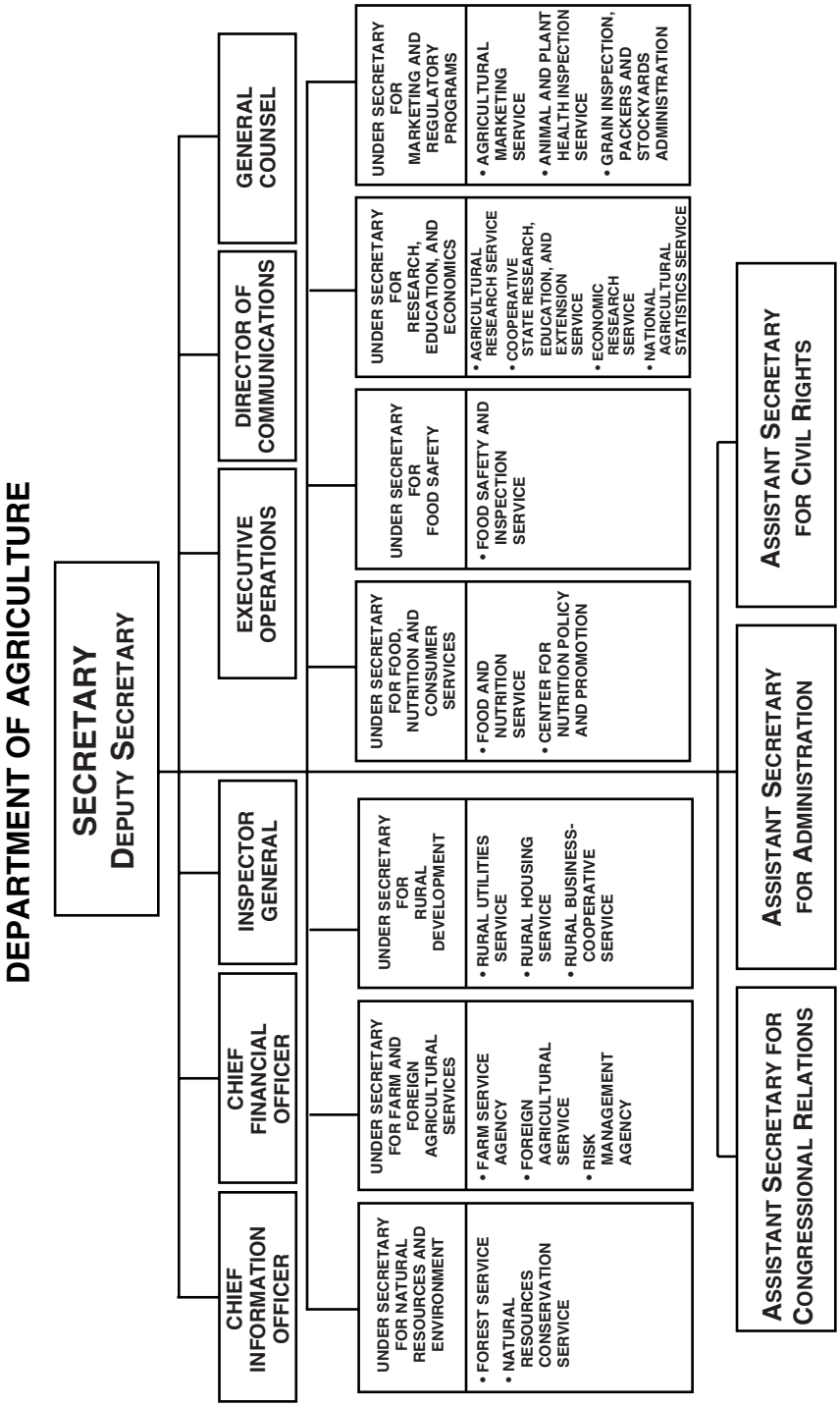
To meet business credit needs in underserved areas, USDA rural development business programs are usually leveraged with commercial, cooperative, or other private sector lenders. USDA's business programs are as follows:

Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans This program helps create jobs and stimulates rural economies by providing financial backing for rural businesses. Loan proceeds may be used for working capital, machinery and equipment, buildings and real estate, and certain types of debt refinancing.

Business Enterprise These grants help public bodies, nonprofit corporations, and federally recognized Indian tribal groups finance and facilitate development of small and emerging private business enterprises located in rural areas. Grant funds can pay for the acquisition and development of land and the construction of buildings, plants, equipment, access streets and roads, parking areas, utility and service extensions, refinancing, and fees for professional services, as well as technical assistance and related training, startup costs and working capital, financial assistance to a third party, production of television programs targeted to rural residents, and rural distance learning networks.

Business Opportunities This program promotes sustainable economic development in rural communities with exceptional needs. Funds are provided for technical assistance, training, and planning activities that improve economic conditions. Applicants must be located in rural areas.

Renewable Energy and Efficiency Loans and Grants This program encourages agricultural producers and small rural businesses to create renewable and energy-efficient systems.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• RURAL BUSINESS-COOPERATIVE SERVICE
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• FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE
• CENTER FOR NUTRITION POLICY AND PROMOTION
UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOOD SAFETY
• FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
UNDER SECRETARY FOR RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS
• AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE
• COOPERATIVE STATE RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EXTENSION SERVICE
• ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE
• NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
UNDER SECRETARY FOR MARKETING AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS
• AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE
• ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE
• GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CIVIL RIGHTS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATION
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS

Cooperative Development These grants finance the establishment and operation of centers for cooperative development. The primary purpose of this program is to enhance the economic condition of rural areas through the development of new cooperatives and improving operations of existing cooperatives, and encourage the development of value-added ventures.

Cooperative Opportunities and Problems Research This program encourages research, funded through cooperative agreements, on critical issues vital to the development and sustainability of agricultural and other rural cooperatives as a means of improving the quality of life in America's rural communities.

Cooperative Program This program helps farmers and rural communities become self-reliant through the use of cooperative organizations. Studies are conducted to support cooperatives that market farm products, purchase production supplies, and perform related business services. These studies concentrate on the financial, organizational, legal, social, and economic aspects of cooperative activity. Technical assistance and research is provided to improve cooperative performance in organizing new cooperatives, merging existing cooperatives, changing business structures, and developing strategies for growth. Applied research is conducted to give farmers and rural communities expert assistance pertaining to their cooperatives. The program also collects and publishes statistics regarding the role and scope of cooperative activity in U.S. agriculture. A bimonthly magazine, *Rural Cooperatives*, reports current developments and research for cooperative management leadership.

Economic Development These loans and grants finance economic development and job creation projects based on sound economic plans in rural areas. Loans and grants are available to any eligible USDA electric or telecommunications borrower to assist in developing rural areas from an economic standpoint, to create new job opportunities, and to help retain existing employment. Loans at zero interest are made primarily to finance business startup ventures and business expansion projects. Grants are made to eligible telephone and electric utilities to establish revolving loan programs operated at the local level. The revolving loan program provides capital to nonprofit entities and municipal organizations to finance business or community facilities which promote job creation in rural areas, for facilities which extend or improve medical care to rural residents, and for facilities which promote education and training to enhance marketable job skills for rural residents.

Intermediary Relending These loans finance business facilities and community development projects in rural areas. The Service lends these funds to intermediaries, which in turn provide loans to recipients who are developing business facilities or community development projects.

Sheep Industry The National Sheep Industry Improvement Center promotes strategic development activities to strengthen and enhance the production and marketing of sheep and goat products in the United States. It works to improve infrastructure and business development, market and environmental research, and designs unique responses to the needs of the industries for their long-term sustainable development. The Center's board of directors oversees its activities and operates a revolving fund for loans and grants.

Technology Transfer This program provides information to farmers and other rural users on a variety of sustainable agricultural practices that include both cropping and livestock operations. It offers reliable, practical information on production techniques and practices that reduce costs and that are environmentally friendly. Farmers can request such information by telephone at 800–346–9140.

For further information, contact the Rural Development, Legislative and Public Affairs Staff, Stop 0705, Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250–0320. Phone, 202–720–4323.

Rural Housing Programs

Rural Development provides affordable rental housing, homeownership opportunities, and essential community facilities to rural Americans through a broad array of direct loan, guarantee, and grant programs. Rural residents and communities may inquire about any of these programs through local and State rural development offices. It also provides financial and management assistance through the following services:

—guaranteed single-family housing (SFH) loans which guarantee loans made by commercial lenders to moderate-income rural residents with sufficient income and acceptable credit, who may lack the downpayment to secure a loan without assistance;

—direct SFH loans made available to people with incomes less than 80 percent of area median, to build, purchase, and repair rural homes;

—home improvement and repair loans and grants for owner-occupants to remove health and safety hazards from a home;

—mutual self-help housing technical assistance grants for nonprofit organizations and public bodies to help groups of six to eight very low- and low-income families to build their own homes by providing ''sweat equity'' which reduces the families' mortgages;

—rural housing site loans for private or public nonprofit organizations to purchase sites for the development of housing for very low- and low-income families;

—direct and guaranteed multi-family housing loans for private nonprofit corporations, consumer cooperatives, State or local public agencies, and individuals or organizations operating on a nonprofit or limited profit basis to provide rental or cooperative housing in rural areas for persons of very low, low, and moderate income;

—farm labor housing loans and grants enabling farmers, public or private nonprofit organizations, or units of local government to build, buy, or rehabilitate farm labor housing;

—housing preservation grants made to a public body or public/private nonprofit organization to provide assistance to homeowners and landlords to repair and rehabilitate housing for very low- and low-income families in rural areas;

—housing for the homeless, SFH real-estate-owned (REO) property to nonprofit organizations or public bodies for transitional housing for the homeless and to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to house families affected by natural disasters; and

—community program loans, direct and guaranteed loans and grants for public and quasi-public bodies, nonprofit associations, and Indian tribes for essential community facilities such as health care centers, public safety buildings and vehicles, and child care centers.

For further information, contact the Rural Development, Legislative and Public Affairs Staff, Stop 0705, Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250–0320. Phone, 202–720–4323.

Rural Utilities Programs

Rural Development assists rural electric and telecommunications utilities in obtaining financing and administers a nationwide water and waste loan and grant program to improve the quality of life and promote economic development in rural America. A total of 890 rural electric and 800 rural telecommunications utilities in 47 States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia have received financial assistance. It also provides assistance through the following programs:

—The electric program provides loans for improving electric service to persons in rural areas, including construction of electric generating plants and transmission and distribution lines to provide reliable electric service.

—The telecommunications program provides telephone service and high-speed Internet access in rural areas.

—The water and waste direct and guaranteed loan program provides assistance to develop water and wastewater systems, including solid

waste disposal and storm drainage, in rural areas, cities, and towns.

—Water and waste disposal grants assist in reducing water and waste disposal costs to a reasonable level for users of the system.

—Emergency community water assistance grants provide assistance to rural communities experiencing a significant decline in quantity or quality of drinking water.

—Technical assistance and training grants are available to 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.

—Solid waste management grants are available for nonprofit organizations and public bodies to provide technical assistance and training to rural areas and towns to reduce or eliminate pollution of water resources and improve planning and management of solid waste facilities.

—The rural water circuit rider technical assistance program provides, through the National Rural Water Association, technical assistance to rural water systems to solve operational, financial, and management problems.

—The distance learning and telemedicine program provides assistance to help rural schools and health care providers invest in telecommunications facilities and equipment to bring to rural areas educational and medical resources that otherwise might be unavailable.

—Rural Development also guarantees loans from the Department of the Treasury's Federal Financing Bank (FFB), which it lends to borrowers, primarily for large-scale electric and telecommunication facilities. It may also guarantee electric and telecommunications loans from private sources.

For further information, contact the Rural Development Legislative and Public Affairs Staff, Department of Agriculture, Stop 0705, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250–0320. Phone, 202–720–4323.

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 (AMS) 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, certification, market news, marketing orders, research and 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, shipments, prices, location, quality, condition, and other market data on farm products in specific markets and marketing areas. The data is disseminated nationally via the Internet and other electronic means and is shared with several countries. The Service also assists other countries in developing their own marketing information systems.

Standardization, Grading, and Classing Nearly 600 grade standards have been established for some 230 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 commodity 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 is also responsible for testing seed.

Laboratory Testing The Service provides microbiological, chemical, and other scientific laboratory support to its commodity and food procurement programs, testing peanuts for aflatoxin, and testing seeds for germination and purity. The Agency also carries out quality assurance and safety oversight activities for its milk market laboratories, 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 33 agricultural commodities for pesticides residue. It shares residue test results with the Environmental Protection Agency and other public agencies.

Food Quality Assurance Under a governmentwide quality assurance program, AMS is responsible for the development and revision of specifications used by Federal agencies in procuring food for military and civilian uses. The Service coordinates and approves certification programs designed to ensure that purchased products conform to the specification requirements.

Regulatory Programs The Service administers several regulatory programs designed collectively to protect producers, handlers, and consumers of agricultural commodities from financial loss or personal injury resulting from careless, deceptive, or fraudulent marketing practices. Such regulatory programs encourage fair trading practices in the marketing of fruits and vegetables, require truth in seed labeling and in advertising. The Service provides voluntary laboratory analyses of egg products, and monitors the disposition of restricted shell eggs—eggs that are a potential health hazard.

Marketing Agreements and Orders The Service administers marketing agreements and orders to establish and maintain orderly marketing conditions for certain commodities. Milk marketing orders establish minimum prices that handlers or distributors are required to pay producers. Programs for fruits, vegetables, and related specialty crops like nuts and spearmint oil promote product quality control and help stabilize supplies and market prices. In some cases, they also authorize research and market development activities, including advertising supported by assessments that handlers pay. Through the orderly marketing of commodities facilitated by these programs, the interests of both producers and consumers are protected.

Plant Variety Protection Program The Service administers a program that provides for the issuance of certificates of plant variety protection. These certificates afford developers of novel varieties of sexually reproduced plants exclusive rights to sell, reproduce, import, or export such varieties, or use them in the production of hybrids or different varieties for a period of 20 years for non-woody plants and 25 years for woody plants.

Research and Promotion Programs The Service monitors certain industry-sponsored research, promotion, and information programs authorized by Federal laws. These programs provide farmers and processors with a means to finance and operate various research, promotion, and information activities for cotton, potatoes, eggs, milk and dairy products, beef, pork, honey, watermelon, mushrooms, soybeans, blueberries, avocados, peanuts, and popcorn.

Transportation Programs The Service is also responsible for the promotion of an efficient transportation system for rural America that begins at the farm gate and moves agricultural and other rural products through the Nation's highways, railroads, airports, and waterways, and into the domestic and international marketplace. To accomplish this, AMS conducts economic studies and analyses of these systems, and represents

agricultural and rural transportation interests in policy and regulatory forums. To provide direct assistance to the transportation community, AMS supplies research and technical information to producers, producer groups, shippers, exporters, rural communities, carriers, governmental agencies, and universities.

Organic Standards The Service, with the assistance of the National Organic Standards Board, develops national organic standards.

Other Programs Other marketing service activities include financial grants to States for marketing improvement projects. The Agency also has responsibility for the conduct of studies of the facilities and methods used in the physical distribution of food and other farm products; for research designed to improve the handling of all agricultural products as they move from farm to consumers; for increasing marketing efficiency by developing improved operating methods and facilities; and for certifying equipment for processing, handling, and distributing dairy, poultry, and meat products.

Pesticide Recordkeeping Program The Agricultural Marketing Service manages the Pesticide Recordkeeping Program in coordination with State agencies, the National Agricultural Statistics Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency. The Service has developed educational programs and works with State agencies in inspecting applicator records.

For further information, contact the Public Affairs Staff, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, Room 3510, South Agriculture Building, Stop 0273, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202–720–8998 or visit the Web site at www.ams.usda.gov.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[For the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service statement of organization, see the *Code of Federal Regulations,* Title 7, Part 371]

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) was reestablished by the Secretary of Agriculture on March 14, 1977, pursuant to authority contained in 5 U.S.C. 301 and Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (5 U.S.C. app.).

The Service was established to conduct regulatory and control programs to protect and improve animal and plant health for the benefit of man and the environment. In cooperation with State governments, the agency administers Federal laws and regulations pertaining to animal and plant health and quarantine, humane treatment of animals, and the control and eradication of pests and diseases. Regulations to prevent the introduction or interstate spread of certain animal or plant pests or diseases are also enforced by the Service. It also carries out research and operational activities to reduce crop and livestock depredation caused by birds, rodents, and predators.

Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) Biotechnology regulatory officials are responsible for regulating the importation, movement, and field release of genetically engineered plants, insects, microorganisms, and any other known organism or potential plant pest.

BRS regulations are designed to ensure that genetically engineered organisms, such as herbicide-tolerant cotton or virus -resistant papayas, are just as safe for agriculture and the environment as traditionally bred crop varieties. In regulating biotechnology, BRS works in concert with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration, agencies that also play important roles in protecting agriculture, a safe food supply, and the environment. BRS involvement begins when a person or organization wishes to import, move across a State line, or field-test a genetically engineered plant. These activities are subject to the BRS permitting and notification system.

Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Plant protection officials are responsible for programs to control or eradicate plant pests and diseases. These programs are carried out in cooperation with the States involved, other Federal agencies, farmers, and private organizations. Pest control programs use a single tool or a combination of pest control techniques, both chemical and nonchemical, which are both effective and safe.

PPQ officials develop Federal regulations and policies that prohibit or restrict the entry of foreign pests and plants, plant products, animal products and byproducts, and other materials that may harbor pests or diseases. These regulations and policies, in conjunction with inspections conducted by the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) help protect agricultural production and natural resources from pests and diseases. CBP maintains inspection services at all major sea, air, and land border ports of entry into the United States. PPQ continues to be present at many of these locations to take regulatory action on prohibited or restricted products that are found.

Veterinary Services Animal health officials are responsible for programs to protect and improve the health, quality, and marketability of U.S. animals and animal products. The programs are carried out through cooperative links with States, foreign governments, livestock producers, and other Federal agencies.

Service officials exclude, control, and eradicate animal pests and diseases by carrying out eradication and control programs for certain diseases, providing diagnostic services, and gathering and disseminating information regarding animal health in the United States through land, air, and ocean ports. They also certify as to the health status of animals and animal products being exported to other countries, and respond to animal disease incursions or epidemics which threaten the health status of U.S. livestock and poultry.

The Service also administers a Federal law intended to ensure that all veterinary biological products, whether developed by conventional or new biotechnological procedures, used in the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of animal disease are safe, pure, potent, and effective. The Service regulates firms that manufacture veterinary biological products subject to the act, including licensing the manufacturing establishment and its products, inspecting production facilities and production methods, and testing products under a surveillance program.

Animal Care The Service administers Federal laws concerned with the humane care and handling of all warm-blooded animals bought, sold, and transported in commerce and used or intended for use as pets at the wholesale level, or used or intended for use in exhibitions or for research purposes. The agency also enforces the Horse Protection Act of 1970, which prohibits the soring of horses at shows and sales.

International Services Service activities in the international arena include conducting cooperative plant and animal pest and disease control, eradication, and surveillance programs in foreign countries. These programs provide a first line of defense for the United States against threats such as screwworm, medfly, foot-and-mouth disease, and other exotic diseases and pests. The Service also provides international representation concerning sanitary and phytosanitary technical trade issues, and manages programs for overseas preclearance of commodities, passengers, and U.S. military activities.

Wildlife Services Wildlife services officials cooperate with States, counties, local communities, and agricultural producer groups to reduce crop and livestock depredations caused by birds, rodents, and predators. Using methods and techniques that are biologically sound, environmentally acceptable, and economically feasible, they: participate in efforts to educate and advise farmers and ranchers on proper uses of control methods and techniques; suppress serious nuisances and threats to public health and safety caused by birds, rodents, and other wildlife in urban and rural communities; and work with airport managers to reduce risks of bird strikes. In addition, they conduct research into predator-prey relationships, new control methods, and more efficient and safe uses of present methods such as toxicants, repellants and attractants, biological controls, scare devices, and habitat alteration.

For further information, contact Legislative and Public Affairs, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202–720–2511.

Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration

The Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) was established in 1994 to facilitate the marketing of livestock, poultry, meat, cereals, oilseeds, and related agricultural products, and to promote fair and competitive trading practices for the overall benefit of consumers and American agriculture. The Agency's mission is carried out in two different segments of American agriculture. The Federal Grain Inspection Service provides the U.S. grain market with Federal quality standards and a uniform system for applying them. The Packers and Stockyards Programs (P&SP) enforces the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921 (P&S Act), 7 U.S.C. 181 *et seq.*, to promote fair and competitive marketing environments for the livestock, meat, and poultry industries. GIPSA also certifies State central filing systems for notification of liens against farm products. GIPSA is responsible for establishing official U.S. standards for grain and other assigned commodities, and for administering a nationwide official inspection and weighing system.

Inspection The United States Grain Standards Act requires that, with some exceptions, all U.S. export grain be officially inspected. At export port locations, inspection is performed by GIPSA or by State agencies that have been delegated export inspection authority by the Administrator. For domestic grain marketed at inland locations, the Administrator designates private and State agencies to provide official inspection services upon request. Both export and domestic services are provided on a fee basis.

Weighing Official weighing of U.S. export grain is performed at port locations by GIPSA or by State agencies that have been delegated export weighing authority by the Administrator. For domestic grain marketed at inland locations, the weighing services may be provided by GIPSA or by designated private or State agencies. Weighing services are provided on a fee basis, upon request.

Standardization The Administration is responsible for establishing, maintaining, and revising official U.S. standards for corn, wheat, rye, oats, barley, flaxseed, sorghum, soybeans, triticale, sunflower seed, canola, and mixed grain. It is authorized to perform applied research to develop methods to improve accuracy and uniformity in grading grain. It is also responsible for standardization and inspection activities for rice, dry beans, peas, lentils, hay, straw, hops, and related processed grain commodities. Although standards no longer exist for hay, straw, and hops, GIPSA maintains inspection procedures for and retains authority to inspect these commodities.

Methods Development The Administration's methods development activities include applied research or tests that produce new or improved techniques for measuring grain quality. Examples include new knowledge gained through study of how to establish the framework for real-time grain inspection and develop reference methods to maintain consistency and standardization in the grain inspection system, and the comparison of different techniques for evaluation of end-use quality in wheat.

Packers and Stockyards Activities The P&S Act prohibits unfair, deceptive, anti-competitive, and fraudulent practices by market agencies, dealers, packers, swine contactors, and live poultry dealers in those particular industries. The P&S Act protects producers and poultry growers by requiring most regulated entities to obtain bonds and meet strict payment requirements. To protect unpaid cash sellers of livestock, packers are subject to trust provisions which require that livestock and related investments or proceeds from meat, meat food products, or livestock products derived from them be held in trust for unpaid sellers until payment is made in full. A similar provision exists for live poultry dealers to protect growers. P&SP analyzes all trust and bond claims as a courtesy to the

regulated industries. It is also responsible for the Truth-in-Lending Act and the Fair Credit Reporting Act as each relates to persons and firms subject to the P&S Act. P&SP carries out the Secretary's responsibilities under section 1324 of the Food Security Act of 1985 pertaining to State-established central filing systems to prenotify buyers, commission merchants, and selling agents of security interests against farm products. GIPSA administers the section of the statute commonly referred to as the ''Clear Title'' provision and certifies qualifying State systems.

For further information, contact the Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202–720–0219.

Food Safety

Food Safety and Inspection Service

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) was established by the Secretary of Agriculture on June 17, 1981, pursuant to authority contained in 5 U.S.C. 301 and Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (5 U.S.C. app.).

Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products Inspection Federal meat and poultry inspection is mandatory for cattle, calves, swine, goats, sheep, lambs, horses (and other equines), chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, and guineas used for human food. The work includes inspection of each animal or bird at slaughter, and inspection of processed products during various stages of production. The Service conducts mandatory, continuous inspection of the production of liquid, dried, and frozen egg products, to ensure that egg products are safe, wholesome, unadulterated, and accurately labeled. The Service tests samples of egg products and meat and poultry products for microbial and chemical contaminants to monitor trends for enforcement purposes.

Each product label must be approved by the agency before products can be sold. The agency monitors meat and poultry products in storage, distribution, and retail channels; and takes necessary compliance actions to protect the public, including detention of products, voluntary product recalls, court-ordered seizures of products, administrative withdrawal of inspection, and referral for criminal prosecution. The Service also conducts State programs for the inspection of meat and poultry products sold in intrastate commerce.

The Service monitors livestock upon arrival at federally inspected facilities; conducts voluntary reimbursed inspection for rabbits, other domestic food animals, bison, other exotic food animals, ratites, and certain egg products not covered by the inspection law; and ensures that inedible egg products and inedible products from meat or poultry, such as offal rendered for animal feed, are properly identified and isolated from edible products.

The Service maintains a toll-free meat and poultry hotline (800–535–4555; in the Washington metropolitan area, 202–720–5604) to answer questions about labeling and safe handling of meat and poultry, meat and poultry products, and egg products. The hotline is also accessible (on the same extension) by TDD.

For further information, contact the Director, Food Safety Education and Communications Staff, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202–720–7943. Fax, 202–720–1843. Internet, www.usda.gov/agency/fsis/homepage.htm.

Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

The mission of Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services is to reduce hunger and food insecurity, in partnership with cooperating organizations, by providing access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education to children and needy people in a manner that supports American agriculture.

Food and Nutrition Service

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the USDA food assistance programs. These programs, which serve one in six Americans, represent our Nation's commitment to the principle that no one in this country should fear hunger or experience want. They provide a Federal safety net to people in need. The goals of the programs are to provide needy persons with access to a more nutritious diet, to improve the eating habits of the Nation's children, and to help America's farmers by providing an outlet for distributing foods purchased under farmer assistance authorities.

The Service works in partnership with the States in all its programs. State and local agencies determine most administrative details regarding distribution of food benefits and eligibility of participants, and FNS provides commodities and funding for additional food and to cover administrative costs. FNS administers the following food assistance programs:

—The Food Stamp Program provides food benefits through State and local welfare agencies to needy persons to increase their food purchasing power. The benefits are used by program participants to buy food in retail stores approved by the Food and Nutrition Service to accept and redeem the benefits.

—The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) improves the health of low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and nonbreastfeeding postpartum women, and infants and children up to 5 years of age by providing them with specific nutritious food supplements, nutrition education, and health care referrals.

—The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides WIC participants with increased access to fresh produce. WIC participants receive coupons to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from authorized farmers.

—The Commodity Supplemental Food Program provides a package of foods monthly to low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, their infants and children under age 6, and the elderly. Nutrition education is also provided through this program.

—The National School Lunch Program supports nonprofit food services in elementary and secondary schools and in residential child-care institutions. More than half of the meals served through these institutions are free or at reduced cost.

—The School Breakfast Program supplements the National School Lunch Program by supporting schools in providing needy children with free or low-cost breakfasts that meet established nutritional standards.

—The Special Milk Program for Children provides milk for children in those schools, summer camps, and child-care institutions that have no federally supported meal programs.

—The Child and Adult Care Food Program provides cash and commodities for meals for preschool and school-aged children in child-care facilities and for functionally impaired adults in facilities that provide nonresidential care for such individuals.

—The Summer Food Service Program for Children helps various organizations get nutritious meals to needy preschool and school-aged children during the summer months and during school vacations.

—The Emergency Food Assistance Program provides State agencies with commodities for distribution to food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, and other charitable institutions throughout the country, with administrative funds to assist in distribution.

—The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations and the Trust Territories provides an extensive package of commodities monthly to low-income households on or near Indian reservations in lieu of food stamps. This program is administered at the local level by Indian tribal organizations or State agencies.

—The Nutrition Program for the Elderly provides cash and commodities to States for meals for senior citizens. The food is delivered through senior citizen centers or meals-on-wheels programs.

—The Nutrition Assistance Programs for Puerto Rico and the Northern Marianas are block grant programs that replace the Food Stamp Programs in these two territories and provide cash and coupons to resident participants.

—The Nutrition Education and Training Program grants funds to States for the development and dissemination of nutrition information and materials to children and for training of food service and teaching personnel.

For further information, contact the Public Information Officer, Food and Nutrition Service, Department of Agriculture, Alexandria, VA 22302. Phone, 703–305–2286. Internet, www.usda.gov/fns.htm.

Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

The Center coordinates nutrition policy in USDA and provides overall leadership in nutrition education for the American public. It also coordinates with the Department of Health and Human Services in the review, revision, and dissemination of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, the Federal Government's statement of nutrition policy formed by a consensus of scientific and medical professionals.

For further information, contact the Office of Public Information, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, Suite 200, 1120 20th Street NW., Washington, DC 20036–3406. Phone, 202–418–2312. Internet, www.cnpp.usda.gov.

Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

Farm Service Agency

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers farm commodity, crop insurance, and resource conservation programs for farmers and ranchers, and makes and guarantees farm emergency, ownership, and operating loans through a network of State and county offices.

Farm Commodity Programs The Agency manages commodity programs such as the direct and countercyclical program, commodity and livestock disaster programs, marketing assistance loan programs, noninsured crop disaster assistance programs, and the tobacco transition payment program. It administers commodity loan programs for wheat, rice, corn, grain sorghum, barley, oats, oilseeds, tobacco, peanuts, upland and extra-long-staple cotton, and sugar. FSA provides operating personnel for the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), A Government-owned and operated organization providing short-term loans using the commodity as collateral, providing farmers with interim financing and orderly distribution of farm commodities throughout the year and in times of surplus and scarcity.

Farm Loan Programs FSA makes and guarantees loans to family farmers and ranchers to purchase farmland and finance agricultural production. These programs help farmers who are temporarily unable to obtain private commercial credit. These may be beginning farmers who have insufficient net worth to qualify for commercial credit, who have suffered financial setbacks from natural disasters, or who have limited resources with which to establish and maintain profitable farming operations.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) NAP provides catastrophic crop loss protection for crops not covered by Federal crop insurance. Crops that are eligible include

commercial crops grown for food and fiber, floriculture, ornamental nursery products, Christmas tree crops, turfgrass sod, seed crops, aquaculture (including ornamental fish such as goldfish), and industrial crops. Losses resulting from natural disasters not covered by the crop insurance policy may also be eligible for NAP assistance. NAP does not include trees grown for wood, paper, or pulp products.

Other Emergency Assistance In the aftermath of a natural disaster, FSA makes available a variety of emergency assistance programs to farmers in counties that have been designated or declared disaster areas, including cost-share assistance to producers who do not have enough feed to maintain livestock because of loss of a substantial amount of their normal feed production.

Conservation Programs FSA's conservation programs include enhancement of wildlife habitat and water and air quality. The Conservation Reserve Program is the Federal Government's single largest environmental improvement program on private lands. It safeguards millions of acres of topsoil from erosion improving air quality, increasing wildlife habitat, and protecting ground and surface water by reducing water runoff and sedimentation. In return for planting a protective cover of grass or trees on vulnerable property, the owner receives a rental payment each year of a multi-year contract. Cost-share payments are also available to help establish permanent areas of grass, legumes, trees, windbreaks, or plants that improve water quality and give shelter and food to wildlife.

Commodity Operations Commodity operations facilitates the storage, management, and disposition of the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust, commodities used to meet humanitarian needs abroad, and commodities such as wheat, feed grains, sugar, and cotton acquired through the commodity loan programs. Commodity operations administers the United States Warehouse Act (USWA) which authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to license warehouse operators who store agricultural products. Warehouse operators that apply must meet the USDA standards established within the USWA and its regulations. Under the milk price support program, the Commodity Credit Corporation buys surplus butter, cheese, and nonfat dry milk from processors at announced prices to support the price of milk. These purchases help maintain market prices at the legislated support level, and the surplus commodities are used for hunger relief both domestically and internationally. Commodity operations also coordinates with other Government agencies to provide surplus commodities and to purchase commodities for the National School Lunch Program and other domestic feeding programs.

For further information, contact the Public Affairs Branch, Farm Service Agency, Department of Agriculture, Stop 0506, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202–720–5237. Internet, www.fsa.usda.gov.

Commodity Credit Corporation

The Commodity Credit Corporation was organized in 1933, and was managed and operated in close affiliation with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation until 1939, when it was transferred to the Department of Agriculture. CCC stabilizes, supports, and protects farm income and prices, assists in maintaining balanced and adequate supplies of agricultural commodities and their products, and facilitates the orderly distribution of commodities.

Foreign Assistance The Corporation carries out assigned foreign assistance activities, such as guaranteeing the credit sale of U.S. agricultural commodities abroad. Major emphasis is also being directed toward meeting the needs of developing nations. Agricultural commodities are supplied and exported to combat hunger and malnutrition and to encourage economic development in developing countries. In addition, under the Food for Progress Program, the Corporation supplies commodities to provide assistance to developing democracies.

For further information, contact the Information Division, Foreign Agricultural Service, Department of Agriculture, Stop 1004, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202–720–7115. Fax, 202–720–1727.

Risk Management Agency

The Risk Management Agency (RMA), via the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC), oversees and administers the crop insurance program under the Federal Crop Insurance Act.

Crop insurance is offered to qualifying producers through 16 private sector crop insurance companies. Under the new Standard Reinsurance Agreement (SRA), RMA provides reinsurance, pays premium subsidies, reimburses insurers for administrative and operating costs and oversees the financial integrity, and operational performance of the delivery system. RMA bears much of the non-commercial insurance risk under the SRA, allowing insurers to retain commercial insurance risks or reinsure those risks in the private market.

In 2005, the Federal crop insurance program is expected to provide producers with more than $40 billion in protection on approximately 220 million acres through about 1.2 million policies. There are 22 insurance plans available and nearly 30 new insurance products under various stages of evaluation or development.

RMA is also working closely with the private sector to find new and innovative ways to provide expanded coverage. This includes risk protection for specialty crops, livestock and forage, and rangeland and pasture. Thus, RMA is able to reduce the need for ad hoc disaster bills and available coverage caused by long-term production declines that result from extended drought in many areas.

Additional information about RMA can be found on its Web site (www.rma.usda.gov), including Agency news, State profiles, publications, announcements on current issues, summaries of insurance sales, pilot programs, downloadable crop policies, and agency-sponsored events. The site also features online tools, calculators, and applications.

For further information, contact the Office of the Administrator, Risk Management Agency, Department of Agriculture, Stop 0801, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202–690–2803. Internet, www.rma.usda.gov.

Foreign Agricultural Service

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) has primary responsibility for USDA's overseas market information, access, and development programs. It also administers USDA's export assistance and foreign food assistance programs. The Service carries out its tasks through its network of agricultural counselors, attachés, and trade officers stationed overseas and its U.S.-based team of analysts, marketing specialists, negotiators, and other professionals.

The Foreign Agricultural Service maintains a worldwide agricultural intelligence and reporting system through its attaché service with staff posted in 130 countries around the world. They represent the Department of Agriculture and provide information and data on foreign government agricultural policies, analyses of supply and demand conditions, commercial trade relationships, and market opportunities. They report on more than 100 farm commodities, weather, economic factors, and related subjects that affect agriculture and agricultural trade.

At the Foreign Agricultural Service in Washington, DC, agricultural economists and marketing specialists analyze these and other reports. These analyses are supplemented by accumulated background information and by the crop condition assessment system, which analyzes Landsat satellite weather and other data.

To improve access for U.S. farm products abroad, FAS international trade policy specialists coordinate and direct USDA's responsibilities in international trade agreement programs and negotiations. They maintain an ongoing effort to reduce foreign trade barriers and practices that discourage the export of U.S. farm products.

To follow foreign governmental actions that affect the market for U.S. agricultural commodities, FAS relies on

its agricultural counselors and attachés. In Washington, a staff of international trade specialists analyzes the trade policies and practices of foreign governments to ensure conduct in conformance with international treaty obligations. During international negotiations, FAS provides staff and support for U.S. agricultural representation.

The Service has a continuing market development program to create, maintain, and expand commercial export markets for U.S. agricultural products. It carries out programs with nonprofit commodity groups, trade associations, and State agriculture departments and their regional associations. It manages market opportunity referral services and organizes trade fairs and sales teams.

The Export Credit Guarantee Program (GSM–102) and the Intermediate Export Credit Guarantee Program (GSM–103) provide guarantees on private financing of U.S. exports to foreign buyers purchasing on credit terms.

The Supplier Credit Guarantee Program guarantees a portion of a payment due for purchase of U.S. agricultural products for import, for which the exporter has directly extended short-term financing.

The Facility Guarantee Program facilitates the financing of U.S.-manufactured goods and services exported to emerging markets.

The Emerging Markets Program promotes agricultural exports to emerging markets through sharing U.S. agricultural expertise by technical assistance.

The Export Enhancement Program and the Dairy Export Incentive Program are export assistance programs designed to counter or offset the adverse effects from competitors' unfair trade practices on U.S. agriculture.

The Market Access Program provides cost-share assistance to trade promotion organizations, cooperatives, and small businesses to help fund their market development activities overseas.

The Service helps other USDA agencies, U.S. universities, and others enhance America's agricultural competitiveness globally; and increases income and food availability in developing nations by mobilizing expertise for agriculturally led economic growth.

The Service also manages programs to exchange visits, germplasm, and technologies between U.S. and international scientists; supports collaborative research projects of mutual interest to the United States and other nations; taps the U.S. agricultural community to provide technical assistance and professional development and training programs to assist economic development in lower income nations; serves as U.S. liaison with international organizations; and organizes overseas trade and investment missions.

For further information, contact the Public Affairs Division, Foreign Agricultural Service, Stop 1004, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250–1004. Phone, 202–720–7115. Fax, 202–720–1727. Internet, www.fas.usda.gov.

Research, Education, and Economics

This mission area's main focus is to create, apply, and transfer knowledge and technology to provide affordable food and fiber, ensure food safety and nutrition, and support rural development and natural resource needs of people by conducting integrated national and international research, information, education, and statistical programs and services that are in the national interest.

Agricultural Research Service

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) conducts research to develop and transfer solutions to agricultural problems of high national priority. It

provides information access and dissemination to ensure high-quality safe food and other agricultural products; assess the nutritional needs of Americans; sustain a competitive agricultural economy; enhance the natural resource base and the environment; and provide economic opportunities for rural citizens, communities, and society as a whole.

Research activities are carried out at 103 domestic locations (including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands) and 5 overseas locations. Much of this research is conducted in cooperation with partners in State universities and experiment stations, other Federal agencies, and private organizations. National Programs, headquartered in Beltsville, MD, is the focal point in the overall planning and coordination of ARS' research programs. Day-to-day management of the respective programs for specific field locations is assigned to eight area offices.

National Agricultural Library

The National Agricultural Library (NAL) is the primary resource in the United States for information about food, agriculture, and natural resources, and serves as an electronic gateway to a widening array of scientific literature, printed text, and agricultural images. The Library serves USDA and a broad customer base including policymakers, agricultural specialists, research scientists, and the general public. The library works with other agricultural libraries and institutions to advance open and democratic access to information about agriculture and the Nation's agricultural knowledge.

Information is made available through Web sites, loans, photocopies, reference services, and literature searches. NAL maintains public reading rooms in the South Building at USDA Headquarters, District of Columbia, and at the main library in the Abraham Lincoln Building, Beltsville, Maryland.

The library maintains more than 63,000 Web pages and in 2004 delivered more than 54 million direct customer services throughout the world via its Web site (www.nal.usda.gov).

NAL's eight national information centers are specialized gateways to science-based information in key areas of agriculture, including alternative farming systems (www.nal.usda.gov/afsic), animal welfare (www.nal.usda.gov/awic), food and nutrition (www.nal.usda.gov/fnic), food safety (www.nal.usda.gov/foodsafety), rural revitalization (www. nal.usda.gov/ric), technology transfer (www.nal.usda.gov/ttic), and water quality (www.nal.usda.gov/wqic). These centers collaborate with other organizations throughout the Government to provide timely, accurate, comprehensive, and in-depth coverage within their subject areas.

In addition to its own Web-based services, the Library maintains the following Governmentwide Web portals: www.science.gov, www.nutrition.gov, and www.invasivespecies.gov.

NAL's AGRICOLA (AGRICultural OnLine Access) bibliographic database, http://agricola.nal.usda.gov, contains more than 4 million citations to agricultural literature with links to the full text of many publications. NAL provides a broad base of users with no-cost access to this information.

NAL is also part of the AgNIC Alliance (Agriculture Network Information Center), www.agnic.org, which is a distributed collaboration of over 55 institutions to meet local, national, and international needs in a cost-effective manner.

For further information, contact the Public Affairs Officer, USDA National Agricultural Library, 10301 Baltimore Avenue, Beltsville, MD 20705–2351. Phone, 301–504–1668. Fax, 301–504–7042. E-mail, director@nal.usda.gov. Internet, www.nal.usda.gov.

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) links the research and education resources and activities of USDA and works with academic and land-grant institutions throughout the Nation. In cooperation with its partners and customers, CSREES advances a global system of research, extension, and higher education in the food and

agricultural sciences and related environmental and human sciences to benefit people, communities, and the Nation.

CSREES' programs increase and provide access to scientific knowledge; strengthen the capabilities of land-grant and other institutions in research, extension, and higher education; increase access to and use of improved communication and network systems; and promote informed decisionmaking by producers, consumers, families, and community leaders to improve social conditions in the United States and around the world. These conditions include improved agricultural and other economic enterprises; safer, cleaner water, food, and air; enhanced stewardship and management of natural resources; healthier, more responsible and more productive individuals, families, and communities; and a stable, secure, diverse, and affordable national food supply.

CSREES provides research, extension, and education leadership through programs in plant and animal systems; natural resources and environment; economic and community systems; families, 4–H, and nutrition; competitive research and integrated research, education, and extension programs and awards management; science and education resources development; and information systems and technology management.

CSREES' partnership with the land-grant universities is critical to the effective shared planning, delivery, and accountability for research, higher education, and extension programs.

For further information, contact the Communications Staff, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250–2207. Phone, 202–720–4651. Fax, 202–690–0289. E-mail, CSREES@csrees.usda.gov. Internet, www.csrees.usda.gov.

Economic Research Service

The mission of the Economic Research Service (ERS) is to inform and enhance public and private decisionmaking on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural development.

Activities to support this mission and the following goals involve research and development of economic and statistical indicators on a broad range of topics including, but not limited to, global agricultural market conditions, trade restrictions, agribusiness concentration, farm and retail food prices, foodborne illnesses, food labeling, nutrition, food assistance programs, worker safety, agrichemical usage, livestock waste management, conservation, sustainability, genetic diversity, technology transfer, rural infrastructure, and rural employment. Research results and economic indicators on such important agricultural, food, natural resource, and rural issues are fully disseminated to public and private decisionmakers through published and electronic reports and articles; special staff analyses, briefings, presentations, and papers; databases; and individual contacts. Through such activities, ERS provides public and private decisionmakers with economic and related social science information and analysis in support of the Department's goals of enhancing economic opportunities for agricultural producers; supporting economic opportunities and quality of life in rural America; enhancing the protection and safety of U.S. agriculture and food; improving U.S. nutrition and health; and enhancing the natural resource base and environment. More information on ERS's program is contained on the ERS Web site (www.ers.usda.gov).

For further information, contact the Information Services Division, Economics Research Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20036–5831. Phone, 202–694–5100. Fax, 202–694–5641.

National Agricultural Statistics Service

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) prepares estimates and reports on production, supply, price, chemical use, and other items necessary for the orderly operation of the U.S. agricultural economy.

The reports include statistics on field crops, fruits and vegetables, dairy, cattle, hogs, sheep, poultry, aquaculture, and related commodities or processed products. Other estimates concern farm numbers, farm production expenditures, agricultural chemical use, prices received by farmers for products sold, prices paid for commodities and services, indexes of prices received and paid, parity prices, farm employment, and farm wage rates.

The Service prepares these estimates through a complex system of sample surveys of producers, processors, buyers, and others associated with agriculture. Information is gathered by mail, telephone, personal interviews, and field visits.

NASS is responsible for conducting the Census of Agriculture. The Census of Agriculture is taken every 5 years and provides comprehensive data on the agricultural economy down to the county level. Periodic reports are also issued on aquacultures, irrigation and horticultural specialties.

The Service performs reimbursable survey work and statistical consulting services for other Federal and State agencies and provides technical assistance for developing agricultural data systems in other countries.

For further information, contact the Executive Assistant to the Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250–2000. Phone, 202–720–2707. Fax, 202–720–9013.

Natural Resources and Environment

This mission area is responsible for fostering sound stewardship of 75 percent of the Nation's total land area. Ecosystems are the underpinning for the Department's operating philosophy in this area in order to maximize stewardship of our natural resources. This approach ensures that products, values, services, and uses desired by people are produced in ways that sustain healthy, productive ecosystems.

Forest Service

[For the Forest Service statement of organization, see the *Code of Federal Regulations,* Title 36, Part 200.1]

The Forest Service was created by the Transfer Act of February 1, 1905 (16 U.S.C. 472), which transferred the Federal forest reserves and the responsibility for their management from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture. The mission of the Forest Service is to achieve quality land management under the sustainable, multiple-use management concept to meet the diverse needs of people. It's objectives include:

—advocating a conservation ethic in promoting the health, productivity, diversity, and beauty of forests and associated lands;

—listening to people and responding to their diverse needs in making decisions;

—protecting and managing the national forests and grasslands to best demonstrate the sustainable, multiple-use management concept;

—providing technical and financial assistance to State and private forest landowners, encouraging them toward active stewardship and quality land management in meeting their specific objectives;

—providing technical and financial assistance to cities and communities to improve their natural environment by planting trees and caring for their forests;

—providing international technical assistance and scientific exchanges to sustain and enhance global resources and to encourage quality land management;

—assisting States and communities in using the forests wisely to promote rural economic development and a quality rural environment;

—developing and providing scientific and technical knowledge, improving our capability to protect, manage, and use forests and rangelands; and

—providing work, training, and education to the unemployed, underemployed, elderly, youth, and the disadvantaged.

National Forest System The Service manages 155 national forests, 20 national grasslands, and 8 land utilization projects on over 191 million acres in 44 States, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico under the principles of multiple-use and sustained yield. The Nation's tremendous need for wood and paper products is balanced with the other vital, renewable resources or benefits that the national forests and grasslands provide: recreation and natural beauty, wildlife habitat, livestock forage, and water supplies. The guiding principle is the greatest good to the greatest number in the long run.

These lands are protected as much as possible from wildfire, epidemics of disease and insect pests, erosion, floods, and water and air pollution. Burned areas get emergency seeding treatment to prevent massive erosion and stream siltation. Roads and trails are built where needed to allow for closely regulated timber harvesting and to give the public access to outdoor recreation areas and provide scenic drives and hikes. Picnic, camping, water-sport, skiing, and other areas are provided with facilities for public convenience and enjoyment. Timber harvesting methods are used that will protect the land and streams, assure rapid renewal of the forest, provide food and cover for wildlife and fish, and have minimum impact on scenic and recreation values. Local communities benefit from the logging and milling activities. These lands also provide needed oil, gas, and minerals. Rangelands are improved for millions of livestock and game animals. The national forests provide a refuge for many species of endangered birds, animals, and fish. Some 34.6 million acres are set aside as wilderness and 175,000 acres as primitive areas where timber will not be harvested.

Forest Research The Service performs basic and applied research to develop the scientific information and technology needed to protect, manage, use, and sustain the natural resources of the Nation's forests and rangelands. The Service's forest research strategy focuses on three major program components: understanding the structure and functions of forest and range ecosystems; understanding how people perceive and value the protection, management, and use of natural resources; and determining which protection, management, and utilization practices are most suitable for sustainable production and use of the world's natural resources.

Manpower Programs The Service operates the Youth Conservation Corps and the Volunteers in the National Forests programs and participates with the Department of Labor on several human resource programs that involve the Nation's citizens, both young and old, in forestry-related activities. Included in these programs are the Job Corps and the Senior Community Service Employment Program. These programs annually accomplish millions of dollars worth of conservation work, while providing participants with such benefits as training, paid employment, and meaningful outdoor experience.

For further information, contact the Office of Communications, Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090–6090. Phone, 202–205–8333.

Field Offices—Forest Service

Region/Station/Area	Address
	National Forest System Regions—Regional Forester
1. Northern	Federal Bldg. (P.O. Box 7669), Missoula, MT 59807
2. Rocky Mountain	740 Simms St., P.O. Box 25127, Lakewood, CO 80225
3. Southwestern	517 Gold Ave. SW., Albuquerque, NM 87102
4. Intermountain	324 25th St., Ogden, UT 84401
5. Pacific Southwest	630 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94111
6. Pacific Northwest	333 SW. 1st Ave., P.O. Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208

Field Offices—Forest Service—Continued

Region/Station/Area	Address
	National Forest System Regions—Regional Forester
8. Southern	1720 Peachtree Rd. NW., Atlanta, GA 30367
9. Eastern	310 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53203
10. Alaska	Federal Office Bldg. (P.O. Box 21628), Juneau, AK 99802
	Research Stations—Director
Forest Products Laboratory	1 Gifford Pinchot Dr., Madison, WI 53705
North Central	1992 Folwell Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108
Northeastern	Suite 200, 100 Matson Ford Rd., P.O. Box 6775, Radnor, PA 19087–4585
Pacific Northwest	333 SW. 1st Ave., P.O. Box 3890, Portland, OR 97208
Pacific Southwest	800 Buchanan St., P.O. Box 245, Albany, CA 94710
Rocky Mountain	240 W. Prospect Ave., Fort Collins, CO 80526
Southern	200 Weaver Blvd., P.O. Box 2860, Asheville, NC 28802
	State and Private Forestry Areas—Director
Northeastern	Suite 200, 100 Matson Ford Rd., P.O. Box 6775, Radnor, PA 19087–4585
International Institute of Tropical Forestry	UPR Experimental Station Grounds, Botanical Garden, Call Box 25000, Rio Piedras, PR 00928

Natural Resources Conservation Service

[For the Natural Resources Conservation Service statement of organization, see the *Code of Federal Regulations,* Title 7, Parts 600 and 601]

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), formerly the Soil Conservation Service, has national responsibility for helping America's farmers, ranchers, and other private landowners develop and carry out voluntary efforts to conserve and protect our natural resources.

Conservation Technical Assistance This is the foundation program of NRCS. Under this program, NRCS provides technical assistance to land users and units of government for the purpose of sustaining agricultural productivity and protecting and enhancing the natural resource base. This assistance is based on the voluntary cooperation of private landowners and involves comprehensive approaches to reduce soil erosion, improve soil and water quantity and quality, improve and conserve wetlands, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve air quality, improve pasture and range condition, reduce upstream flooding, and improve woodlands.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program This program provides emergency assistance to safeguard lives and property in jeopardy due to sudden watershed impairment by natural disasters. Emergency work includes quickly establishing a protective plant cover on denuded land and stream banks; opening dangerously restricted channels; and repairing diversions and levees. An emergency area need not be declared a national disaster area to be eligible for help under this program.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program This program assists producers with environmental and natural resource conservation improvements on their agricultural lands. One-half of the available funds are for conservation activities related to livestock production. Technical assistance, cost-share payments, incentive payments, and education focus on priority areas and natural resource concerns identified in cooperation with State technical committees, including such areas as nutrient management, pest management, and grazing land management.

Farmland Protection Program (FPP) This program protects soil by encouraging landowners to limit conversion of their farmland to nonagricultural uses. States, Indian tribes, or local governments administer all aspects of acquiring lands that are in the FPP, except when it is more effective and efficient for the Federal Government to do so.

Forestry Incentives Program This program helps to increase the Nation's supply of products from nonindustrial private forest lands. This also ensures more effective use of existing forest lands and, over time, helps to prevent shortages and price increases for forest products. The program shares the cost

incurred by landowners for tree planting and timberstand improvement.

National Cooperative Soil Survey The National Cooperative Soil Survey provides the public with local information on the uses and capabilities of their soils. The published soil survey for a county or other designated area includes maps and interpretations that are the foundation for farm planning and other private land use decisions as well as for resource planning and policy by Federal, State, and local governments. The surveys are conducted cooperatively with other Federal, State, and local agencies and land grant universities. The Service is the national and world leader in soil classification and soil mapping, and is now expanding its work in soil quality.

Plant Materials Program At 26 plant materials centers across the country, NRCS tests, selects, and ensures the commercial availability of new and improved conservation plants for erosion reduction, wetland restoration, water quality improvement, streambank and riparian area protection, coastal dune stabilization, biomass production, carbon sequestration, and other needs. The Plant Materials Program is a cooperative effort with conservation districts, other Federal and State agencies, commercial businesses, and seed and nursery associations.

Resource Conservation and Development Program This program (RC&D) is a locally driven program—an opportunity for civic-oriented groups to work together sharing knowledge and resources in solving common problems facing their region. The program offers aid in balancing the environmental, economic, and social needs of an area. A USDA coordinator helps each designated RC&D council plan, develop, and carry out programs for resource conservation, water management, community development, and environmental enhancement.

Rural Abandoned Mine Program This program helps protect people and the environment from the adverse effects of past coal-mining practices and promotes the development of soil and water resources on unreclaimed mine land. It provides technical and financial assistance to land users who voluntarily enter into 5- to 10-year contracts for the reclamation of eligible land and water.

Small Watersheds Program The program helps local sponsoring groups to voluntarily plan and install watershed protection projects on private lands. These projects include flood prevention, water quality improvement, soil erosion and sediment reduction, rural and municipal water supply, irrigation water management, fish and wildlife habitat enhancement, and wetlands restoration. The Service helps local community groups, government entities, and private landowners working together using an integrated, comprehensive watershed approach to natural resource planning.

Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program This program collects snowpack moisture data and forecasts seasonal water supplies for streams that derive most of their water from snowmelt. It helps farm operators, rural communities, and municipalities manage water resources through water supply forecasts. It also provides hydrometeorological data for regulating reservoir storage and managing streamflow. The Snow Supply Program is conducted in the Western States and Alaska.

Watershed Surveys and Planning This program assists Federal, State, and local agencies and tribal governments in protecting watersheds from damage caused by erosion, floodwater, and sediment and conserves and develops water and land resources. Resource concerns addressed by the program include water quality, water conservation, wetland and water storage capacity, agricultural drought problems, rural development, municipal and industrial water needs, upstream flood damages, and water needs for fish, wildlife, and forest-based industries. Types of surveys and plans include watershed plans, river basin surveys and studies, flood hazard analysis, and flood plain management assistance. The focus of these plans is to identify solutions that

use land treatment and nonstructural measures to solve resource problems.

Wetlands Reserve Program Under this program, USDA purchases easements from agricultural land owners who voluntarily agree to restore and protect wetlands. Service employees help these owners develop plans to retire critical wetland habitat from crop production. The primary objectives are to preserve and restore wetlands, improve wildlife habitat, and protect migratory waterfowl.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program This program provides financial incentives to develop habitats for fish and wildlife on private lands. Participants agree to implement a wildlife habitat development plan, and USDA agrees to provide cost-share assistance for the initial implementation of wildlife habitat development practices. USDA and program participants enter into a cost-share agreement for wildlife habitat development, which generally lasts a minimum of 10 years from the date that the contract is signed.

For further information, contact the Management Services Division, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013. Phone, 202–690–4811.

Graduate School, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Fourteenth Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250
Phone, 888–744–4723

Executive Director	JERRY ICE
Deputy Executive Director	LYNN EDWARDS

The Graduate School was established by act of May 15, 1862 (7 U.S.C. 2201). It is a continuing education school offering career-related training to adults. Courses are planned with the assistance of Government professionals and specialists. The Graduate School's objective is to improve Government services by providing needed continuing education and training opportunities for Government employees and agencies.

The faculty is mostly part-time and is drawn from throughout Government and the community at large. They are selected because of their professional and specialized knowledge and experience and thus bring a practicality and experience to their classrooms.

The school does not grant degrees but does provide planned sequences of courses leading to certificates of accomplishment in a number of occupational and career fields important to government. Training areas include management, auditing, computer science, communications, foreign language, procurement, financial management, and others.

For further information, contact the Communications Office, Graduate School, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 270, 600 Maryland Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20024. Phone, 888–744–4723.

Sources of Information

Consumer Activities Educational, organizational, and financial assistance is offered to consumers and their families in such fields as rural housing and farm operating programs, improved nutrition, family living and recreation, food stamp, school lunch, donated foods, and other food programs.

Contracts and Small Business Activities To obtain information about contracting or subcontracting opportunities, attending small business outreach

activities, or how to do business with USDA, contact the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization. Phone, 202–720–7117. Internet, www.usda.gov/da/smallbus.html.

Employment Most jobs in the Department are in the competitive service and are filled by applicants who have established eligibility under an appropriate examination administered by the Office of Personnel Management or Department Special Examining Units. General employment information is available at www.usajobs.opm.gov.

Whistleblower Hotline Persons wishing to register complaints of alleged improprieties concerning the Department should contact one of the regional offices or the Inspector General's whistleblower hotline. Phone, 800–424–9121 (toll free, outside Washington, DC); 202–690–1622 (within the Washington, DC, metropolitan area); or 202–690–1202 (TDD). Fax, 202–690–2474.

Reading Rooms Located at each USDA agency at addresses indicated in the preceding text.

Speakers Contact the nearest Department of Agriculture office or county Extension agent. In the District of Columbia, contact the Office of Public Liaison, Office of Communications, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202–720–2798.

For further information concerning the Department of Agriculture, contact the Office of Communications, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202–720–4623. Internet, www.usda.gov.