

## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY



I am pleased to present the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 Annual Performance Plan and Revised Plan for FY 2003. The plan is based on the long-term objectives described in the Department's revised Strategic Plan for FY 2002-2007 and the Administration's policy book *Food and Agriculture: Taking Stock for a New Century*. It commits us to annual targets and strategies using the resources requested in our FY 2004 budget proposal. As such, this plan is a key step in budget and performance integration.

USDA directly touches the lives of millions of Americans every day through its programs. The FY 2004 budget and the performance plan:

- Support international marketing opportunities by providing over \$6.0 billion for the Department's international programs and activities.
- Provide over \$11 billion in loans, grants and technical assistance for rural development needs, including electric and telecommunications systems, water and waste disposal systems, rural housing and business and industry.
- Strengthen protection against harmful bacteria in meat and poultry products by providing additional food safety inspectors and specialized food safety training and increasing microbiological testing.
- Protect American agriculture from threats to plants and animals and transfer necessary inspection and research functions to support the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).
- Provide continued support for fundamental and applied sciences in agriculture, including advancing research on agricultural genomics and on animal and plant pests and diseases.
- Support record levels of participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children and covers increases in participation in the Food Stamp Program, including legal immigrants and others newly eligible for benefits under the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (2002 FSRIA).
- Provide technical and financial assistance to enhance the conservation of natural resources.
- Improve the management and delivery of the Department's programs.

Homeland security will continue to be a key priority for the Department. The Department is working to ensure that programs are protecting consumers and the farm and food sector from any threat to the food supply.

This plan reflects our commitment to provide the best possible management of the resources under USDA's stewardship.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Ann M. Veneman".

Ann M. Veneman  
**Secretary of Agriculture**