

MISSION STATEMENT

We provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management.

VISION STATEMENT

To be recognized as a dynamic organization that is able to efficiently provide the integrated program delivery needed to lead a rapidly evolving food and agriculture system.

VALUES

In carrying out the goals of this plan, the Department will adhere to the key values articulated by President Bush (see text box at right). USDA employees will be guided by the following principles as they address challenges in food, agriculture, resources and related issues:

- Strong ethics;
- Service;
- Team work;
- Inclusive decision-making; and
- Fiscal responsibility.

President George W. Bush articulated this Administration's values to Federal employees on November 19, 2001, specifically:

- "First, we must always maintain the highest ethical standards. In addition to asking, 'what is legal,' we must also ask, 'what is right.'
- We must confront the tough problems, not avoid them. We are here to serve the public's long-term interests, not just to apply quick, short-term fixes.
- We must remember that political and career employees are part of the same team. The American people do not distinguish between them, and neither do I. The American people and I have high expectations for our entire Government. To meet those expectations, we need to work together."

To achieve USDA's strategic goals and management initiatives, this plan emphasizes results that hinge on teamwork across agencies. As part of this plan, we intend to improve both the short-term and long-term leadership ability needed to carry out public policy. All actions will be consistent with our equal opportunity and civil rights responsibilities; USDA will act in a manner both inclusive and open to public scrutiny.

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

The five strategic goals contained in this plan describe the Department's major programmatic policies and objectives. Sound management is an inherent part of achieving these goals. While this plan focuses on programmatic goals and objectives, the Department has separate management plans that detail our strategies for improvement in human capital, information technology and eGovernment, financial management and budget and performance integration. In addition, more detailed USDA mission area and/or agency plans are being developed to underpin this plan.

A set of performance measures will track progress in attaining our goals and objectives. Each measure specifies baseline information and long-term performance targets. Actionable strategies delineate the activities needed to reach the strategic goals. Finally, a survey of external factors highlights possible challenges to USDA's stated goals.

USDA's five strategic goals mirror our commitment to provide first-class service, state-of-the-art-science, and consistent management excellence across the broad responsibilities of USDA. Although change has

been a constant in the evolution of the U.S. farm and food sector, the new century brings growing importance to consumer preferences and the reach of global markets. To reflect this, these goals contain thirteen objectives that cover the myriad programs and services within USDA's responsibilities.

Through these objectives, USDA will strive to:

- Expand markets for agricultural products and support international economic development;
- Further develop alternative markets for agricultural products and activities;
- Provide financing needed to help expand job opportunities and improve housing, utilities and infrastructure in Rural America;
- Enhance food safety by taking steps to reduce the prevalence of foodborne hazards from farm to table;
- Improve nutrition and health by providing food assistance and nutrition education and promotion; and
- Manage and protect America's public and private lands working cooperatively with other levels of government and the private sector.

Across all USDA objectives, research—which provided the foundation for modern agriculture—is key. Developing commercially feasible renewable resources (such as bioenergy), food-based health products (such as nutraceuticals and functional foods), and manufacturing products (such as adhesives, lubricants, insulators, fibers, dyes, and other bioproducts) creates new demand for agricultural products and helps reduce U.S. dependence on foreign sources of nonrenewable resources. Scientific advances, coupled with spatial imaging technology, enable early detection and mitigation of naturally occurring or human-caused threats to food security before they can inflict major damage. Genetics and molecular biology hold promise to reduce recurring problems of plant and animal disease, invasive species, post-harvest losses, and food-related problems with human health. Finally, education builds scientific and agricultural literacy, and recruits, retains, and graduates the best and the brightest of a diverse population, ensuring the value of future research.