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Strategic Plan for FY 2002-2007

USDA



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MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

This Nation's food and agricultural system is influenced by many of the same forces that shape America's economy—globalization of markets, advances in technology, new delivery systems, and modern science. Driven by these and other forces, the farm and food sector operates in a highly competitive marketplace that must continuously respond to changing consumer demands for high quality, nutritious and convenient food and agricultural products.

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, homeland security has become an even more important priority for USDA. The Department has been working to ensure that programs are protecting the farm and food sector, as well as consumers, from not just unintentional threats, but intentional acts that might impact the food supply.

USDA's Strategic Plan is an important tool to assist one of the federal government's most diverse and complex agencies plan and respond effectively to the challenges and opportunities ahead. The foundation for the Plan is the Bush Administration book, *Food and Agricultural Policy: Taking Stock for the New Century*. That publication provides a comprehensive examination of the changing food system and articulates the long-term view of the policies needed to build upon past accomplishments and ensure continued success in the future.

The Strategic Plan identifies key policy and management objectives that will be integrated with USDA's budget priorities and provide accountability through a series of annual performance plans. Central to the plan is effective management of the Department's limited resources in an effort to best deliver its multi-faceted programs.

USDA is strongly committed to strategic planning and the goals and strategies outlined in this current Plan. Within this framework, we intend to continue to improve by remaining flexible and open to new opportunities and change. As such, this Strategic Plan is a dynamic, working document that will evolve in response to changes not only in the farm and food sector, but the many mission areas in which the Department has responsibility.



Ann M. Veneman
Secretary of Agriculture

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.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: ENHANCE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

Expanding markets for agricultural products is critical to the long-term economic health and prosperity of our food and agricultural sector. U.S. farmers have a wealth of natural resources, cutting edge technologies, and a supporting infrastructure that result in a production capacity beyond domestic needs. This capacity can be used in expanding global markets and in the development of new uses for agriculture in industrial and pharmaceutical markets.

Objective 1.1: Expand International Marketing Opportunities

The most effective means of expanding foreign market opportunities is through new trade agreements that increase market access and reduce trade impediments. To achieve this, USDA will work with the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative to pursue new trade agreements and enforce provisions of existing agreements. Greater access to foreign markets for our producers requires aggressive trade policy to lower tariffs and eliminate distorting subsidies. Other nations are aggressively pursuing agreements, many in the Western hemisphere where the U.S. should have transportation and other advantages. Without persistent efforts on our part, our producers will find market opportunities denied by others' preferential agreements.

USDA plans to sharpen the focus of its programs, services, education, and information toward high economic growth areas while working actively to maintain existing markets. In managing these programs, USDA works in partnership with producers, trade associations and exporters to realize the benefits that will flow from trade reform and the resulting global market expansion. High-growth areas for food demand are middle-income and developing countries where both population and income are growing relatively rapidly. While exports of traditional commodities will continue to grow, consumer-oriented, high-value exports (meats, poultry, fruits and vegetables, and processed grocery products) will grow even more rapidly and now account for two-thirds of total sales.

Performance Measures

Negotiations and enforcement of multilateral, regional, and bilateral trade agreements, and other market access activities will support the expansion of U.S. agricultural exports.

Baseline: 2002 — Ongoing World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations with 144 developed and developing countries; Ongoing Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations with 34 hemispheric democracies; Ongoing or proposed bilateral and regional negotiations with Australia, Chile, Singapore, Morocco, Central America and Southern Africa Customs Union.

Target: 2005 — WTO negotiations completed which result in much improved competitive environment for U.S. agriculture; FTAA negotiations completed which foster freer trade in goods and services among countries in the hemisphere; Bilateral and regional negotiations completed which allow for improved economic conditions and greater access for U.S. food and agricultural products to these markets.

Actionable Strategies

USDA will continue to work aggressively to increase U.S. food and agricultural exports to global markets. We also will support expansion of domestic markets for U.S. agricultural products and provide

timely and accurate market information and education to help producers make marketing decisions. Future actions will include:

- Work with the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative to negotiate a comprehensive liberalization package for agriculture under the Doha Development Agenda of the WTO, regional trade agreements, and selected bilateral agreements.
- Implement a global strategy for trade development and promotion assistance that aligns programs, technologies, trade capacity building, research and education (through a new Trade Education Initiative), and marketing strategies to maintain existing markets and while pursuing new growth opportunities.
- Conduct research to fully comprehend and articulate the effects and impacts of trade agreements, political and economic structural changes, and technology developments on the comparative and competitive advantage of U.S. agriculture.
- Expand efforts to reduce sanitary and phytosanitary restrictions and other technical barriers to trade placed on U.S. exports by aggressive enforcement of existing trade agreements and research to develop technologies to mitigate animal and plant health threats.
- Enhance the exchange of information relating to the practical implications of implementing laws and regulations that require testing and labeling of products developed through modern biotechnology.
- Provide timely and accurate agricultural statistics, information, economic research, and education to assist farm business decision-making.

Objective 1.2: Support International Economic Development and Trade Capacity Building

The United States carries out a broad range of activities and initiatives, including foreign food assistance that fosters economic growth and trade capacity building in developing countries around the world. Because many developing and transition countries' economies are largely agrarian-based, agriculturally based development and trade are extremely important to economic growth. USDA works with the U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and other Federal agencies supplying technical research and development assistance to developing and transition economies, in a number of different fields, to improve and expand their capacity to produce and trade agricultural products in which they have a comparative advantage.

Performance Measures

Increase the number of activities/projects completed in support of international economic development and trade capacity building in developing and transition countries.

Baseline: 2002 — 1,005 activities/projects completed.

Target: 2007 — 1,100 activities/projects completed.

Provide targeted foreign food assistance that assists developing and transition countries in meeting their immediate food and agricultural import needs and that fosters economic growth and development, which increases their ability to meet their import needs commercially.

Baseline: 2001 — Share of countries' food import needs met through USDA-administered food assistance programs is 1.1 percent.

Target: 2007 — With increased reliance on commercial imports, the share of countries' food import needs met through USDA-administered food assistance programs is reduced to 0.8 percent.

Actionable Strategies

- Provide targeted foreign food assistance that supports needed agricultural investments and policy reforms that will foster agricultural development and economic growth in developing and transition countries.
- Work with developing and transition countries to achieve freer trade and to help ensure that benefits, especially increased incomes and more stable supplies of food, are equitably realized.
- Provide technical assistance to developing and transition countries to help them bring their sanitary standards up to par with those of major import markets so they can sell their agricultural commodities on international markets.
- Offer technical assistance to developing and transition countries to help them develop credible processes and systems to collect, analyze, and report statistics needed to monitor agriculture sector performance, to formulate agriculture policies, and to implement agriculture programs.
- Assist developing and transition countries in building institutions that can provide the economic and technical assistance directly to farmers and merchandisers to augment production for local consumption and international markets.
- Strengthen research and training programs that share vital agricultural knowledge with producers around the world in order to expand the productivity and nutritional impact of global agriculture.
- Continue research, training, and technical assistance activities related to building trade and economic capacity via sound science and technology—especially agricultural biotechnology—based on the expanded goals outlined in our U.S. Action Plan on Food Security. Future actions will include: enhancing our ability to respond to regulatory and trade issues concerning agricultural biotechnology products through monitoring, research, policy analysis, and assessment.

Objective 1.3: Expand Alternative Markets for Agricultural Products and Activities

Technological progress is increasingly pushing the market for agricultural products in new directions. Biobased technologies promise new opportunities for energy, industrial, and pharmacological markets for U.S. farmers. For example, agriculture is the source of: clean-burning fuel and industrial ethanol, a variety of specialty chemicals, soy-based inks and diesel fuel, industrial adhesives, biopolymers, and films, all derived from plants rather than from petroleum and other mined raw materials. In addition to the emergence of new markets for products made from agricultural materials, new markets are emerging for environmental activities and products that mitigate environmental concerns, such as offsetting greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration and other farming and ranching activities. Key priorities for USDA will be research to support development of new markets and products, including implementation of Title IX of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (2002 FSRIA), the first energy title ever in a farm bill.

Performance Measures

Implement the President's Energy Policy through the Federal procurement program for biobased products.

Baseline: 2002 — Few Federal agencies are aware of or purchase biobased products.

Target: 2004 — USDA guidelines developed in accordance with Title IX of 2002 FSRIA direct all Federal agencies to give procurement preference to biobased products. At least 50 products in five or more categories are qualified for inclusion on the Designated Biobased Products List for procurement by Federal agencies. Criteria will have been established for granting use of a “USDA Certified Biobased Product” Label for qualifying manufacturers and vendors.

Baseline: 2002 — Few Federal agencies have specified administrative procedures governing their acquisition of biobased products.

Target: 2004 — USDA will have developed and implemented a model education program and procurement guidelines for procurement of biobased products by USDA agencies. Based on this model, and working with the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, USDA supports an outreach effort to other Federal departments and agencies to help them develop biobased procurement programs.

Baseline: 2002 — Few farms produce energy on the farm for their own use or sale.

Target: 2004 — At least 50 farms, which could be used as demonstration projects, will have on-farm processes, such as methane digesters, supported by USDA technical and financial assistance programs, to produce energy.

Baseline: 2002 — Bioproducts made from biomass account for a very small fraction of farm output and face a range of technical barriers to commercial application.

Target: 2004 — USDA, working with the Department of Energy, will have in place a jointly developed research program of competitive grants to speed commercialization of a variety of bioproducts made from biomass.

Baseline: 2002 — Essentially no farms are sequestering carbon as an economic activity, such as receiving compensation for sequestration activities from an emitter of greenhouse gases.

Target: 2004 — USDA, in conjunction with the Department of Energy, will provide accounting rules and guidelines for entities that offset greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration of other means, thereby providing the verifiable and quantifiable basis for establishing a market for greenhouse gas offset activities in agriculture.

Actionable Strategies

USDA will continue research, education and technical assistance activities related to building economic capacity and trade via sound science and technology—especially technologies that help commercialize new processes and new uses of agricultural products and activities that improve energy security, promote sustainable agricultural and forest practices, and stimulate farm income and rural economic activity.

Future actions will:

- Focus existing research, education and marketing programs to encourage new, innovative, and alternative uses for agricultural commodities and bioproducts.
- Expand research, education and extension output to help producers, processors, and distributors address changing consumer needs, tastes, and preferences, risk, and agricultural market structural changes.
- Qualify and test biobased products for inclusion in a preferred procurement list and develop guidelines to direct Federal agencies in their procurement of biobased products.
- Establish a voluntary labeling program for biobased products and make manufacturers and purchasers of biobased products aware of the Federal procurement program.
- Use loan and grant programs to increase energy production from the nation's farms, ranches, and forests and to increase electricity production by the nation's electrical cooperatives from renewable sources.

- Use conservation programs to achieve the simultaneous benefits of conservation, greenhouse gas offsets and development of biomass and other products, helping to generate new markets for products such as renewable energy.
- Strengthen working relationships with other Federal agencies and departments to coordinate programs related to development of new markets for agricultural products and activities, including the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of the Interior and the Office of Federal Procurement Policy.

Objective 1.4: Provide Risk Management and Financial Tools to Farmers and Ranchers

Agricultural producers, like other business owners, use a variety of tools to manage risks, including crop insurance, credit, direct payments (including countercyclical payments) and marketing alternatives. Today, about three-quarters of the acreage planted to major crops is at least minimally insured and coverage is expanding through the provision of crop insurance to more crops and the development of new types of coverage, such as for livestock and revenue. These programs, along with diversified production, marketing, use of futures and options, and other federal program alternatives, allow each producer to customize their risk management strategy. USDA's role is to expand and improve these safety net programs and to provide research and education to help producers better manage their natural and economic risks. We will also ensure that minority and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers have the opportunity to participate fully in all programs.

Performance Measures

Expand USDA risk management tools available for agricultural producers to use in managing production and price risks.

Baseline: 2001 — Crop insurance is provided for about \$36 billion in potential liabilities.

Target: 2007 — Crop insurance will be provided for about \$43 billion in potential liabilities.

Baseline: 2001 — 78 percent of planted acres had crop insurance coverage.

Target: 2007 — 80 percent of planted acres will have crop insurance coverage.

Baseline: 2001 — Crop insurance was available for 355 commodities.

Target: 2007 — Crop insurance will be available for 437 commodities with an emphasis on increasing livestock, pasture and rangeland, hay and specialty crop coverage.

Improve customer service by increasing the efficiency of loan processing.

Baseline: 2001 — Average direct loan processing time was 44 days.

Target: 2007 — Will reduce the average direct loan processing time to 34 days (more than a 22% improvement).

Baseline: 2001 — Average guaranteed loan processing time was 17 days.

Target: 2007 — Will reduce the average guaranteed loan processing time to 14 days (more than a 17% improvement)

Improve fiscal soundness of the direct loan portfolio.

Baseline: 2001 — Direct loan delinquency rate was 15.4% (average for FY 1996-2001).

Target: 2007 — Reduce direct loan delinquency rate to 15% or lower.

Baseline: 2001 — Loss rate on direct loans was 4.9% (average for FY 1996-2001).

Target: 2007 — Maintain loss rate at or below 5%.

Increase the efficiency, integrity and ease-of-use of the farm programs through electronic filing.

Baseline: 2002 — 63 percent of farm commodity and loan program forms can be accessed, completed and returned electronically.

Target: 2007 — 85 percent of farm commodity and loan program forms can be accessed, completed and accepted electronically.

Actionable Strategies

Improve the effectiveness of programs to support producers . Future actions will:

- Increase available coverage of risk management programs to additional products, including livestock.
- Provide access to credit, financing and education to support farm ownership and operations.
- Provide timely and accurate payments to farmers in accordance with the 2002 FSRIA.
- Continue to use prudent underwriting practices, borrower supervision, and loan servicing tools to maintain low loss rates.
- Fully implement recent actions to increase access to credit programs for minority and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers including: 1) establishing the Office of Minority and Socially Disadvantaged Farmer Assistance and a national toll-free telephone help line to work with farmers who have concerns and questions about loan applications; 2) establishing a national team to review all borrower files for minority farmers; and 3) increased funding for direct operating loans for minority, small, beginning, limited resource and other farmers.
- Integrate USDA loan-making business processes and systems with the President's eLoans initiative.

Key External Factors for Strategic Goal 1

Weather and other growing conditions at home and abroad, domestic and international macroeconomic factors including consumer purchasing power, the strength of the U.S. dollar and competing currencies, and political changes in other countries, can have major impacts on domestic and global markets in any year.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: SUPPORT INCREASED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL AMERICA

Rural America, home to one fifth of the Nation's population, is a collage of people and economic activity. Seven out of eight rural counties are now dominated by varying mixes of manufacturing, services, and other non-farming activities. While the majority of rural residents are not dependent on agriculture for their income, many small family farmers rely on local, off-farm employment to supplement their farm income.

Of the 60 million people who live in rural America, only 2 million are directly engaged in production agriculture. A diversity of other enterprises, including support services for agriculture, forestry and mining, recreation, and manufacturing, provides most of the jobs and income in rural America. USDA's role is to enhance the economic opportunities and quality of life for rural residents by providing financial and technical assistance for business and industry, water and waste disposal and other essential community facilities, advanced telecommunications, electric utilities, and housing. Our objective is to ensure that rural residents have equal opportunity to share in the Nation's prosperity and technological advancement.

USDA takes a leadership role in fulfilling Presidential initiatives such as increasing minority homeownership by the end of the decade and encouraging the production of renewable energy. We will work with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and the full range of private sector interests to achieve a coordinated effort for the realization of Presidential initiatives, as well as other activities important to rural America.

Objective 2.1: Expand Economic Opportunities Through USDA Financing of Businesses

One of USDA's core missions is ensuring that rural Americans enjoy economic opportunities equivalent to those of other Americans. Lack of credit and other market imperfections sometimes limit the ability of rural economies to create the jobs and incomes that would allow rural families to succeed and rural youth to remain in their communities as adults. USDA serves as a capital enhancement tool for rural America by investing in businesses and economic infrastructure. Through capital enhancement, and implementing energy-related provisions of 2002 FSRIA, USDA will expand its ability to improve economic opportunities in rural areas.

The development of the Internet-based economy provides unique opportunities for rural America. It eliminates the limitations on business development in rural areas caused by geographical distance and a limited customer base. USDA is providing rural communities with access to broadband service that is critical if a rural business is to participate in the developing global economy.

Performance Measures

Increase the number of jobs created or saved through USDA financing of businesses.

Baseline: 2001 — Created or saved approximately 105,000 jobs annually through USDA financing of businesses in rural areas.

Target: 2007 — Will create or save 125,000 jobs annually in rural areas.

Significantly improve the ability of rural counties and towns of up to 20,000 inhabitants to enjoy economic growth through provision of financing to support high-speed telecommunications services (broadband).

Baseline: 2001 — Helped 16 entities serving 163 rural counties to provide high-speed broadband services.

Target: 2007 — Will help 100 entities deploy broadband services to residents and businesses in 800 rural counties and towns of up to 20,000 inhabitants.

Manage the Business and Industry Portfolio effectively to minimize the delinquency rate.

Baseline: 2002 — Business and Industry Portfolio delinquency rate (excluding bankruptcy cases) was 10.29%.

Target: 2007 — Reduce the Business and Industry Portfolio delinquency rate to 8% (excluding bankruptcy cases).

Actionable Strategies

To improve the effectiveness of programs to increase economic opportunity, USDA will:

- Fully implement the provisions of the 2002 FSRIA, including the Rural Business Investment Program and the Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements Program, and the expanded assistance for broadband.
- Increase outreach and partnerships with financial institutions and non-traditional lenders to encourage access to capital for rural minority business owners.
- Develop formal partnerships with other Federal Departments and agencies to efficiently bring additional resources to rural areas.
- Focus on value-added activities in agriculture and other natural resource industries by encouraging the establishment and growth of locally owned and operated rural businesses.
- Concentrate efforts on States with high delinquency rates and provide additional training, as necessary, to minimize the delinquency rates.
- Develop a comprehensive and integrated base of information about rural economic and social conditions that can be used by Federal policymakers for strategic planning, policy development, and program assessment.
- Undertake analysis that identifies how investment, technology, employment opportunities and job training, Federal policies and demographic trends affect rural America's capacity to prosper in the global marketplace.
- Expand research to assess the effectiveness of developing profitable alternative crops and on- or near-farm processing that add value to agricultural products and enhance the economic viability of rural communities and families.

Objective 2.2: Improve the Quality of Life Through USDA Financing of Quality Housing, Modern Utilities, and Needed Community Facilities

If new businesses are to startup in or relocate to rural America, the local rural community must possess the amenities that businesses require and employees desire. This includes not only access to such basic needs as clean water, adequate housing, and reliable electricity and telecommunications, but also access to essential needs such as quality education, health care and day care. USDA is an important source of

credit and technical assistance, which are essential to rural residents and communities if they are to improve their standard of living in rural America.

Critical to the well being of any community is the availability of adequate housing for all members of the community. Ensuring low-income families have access to decent and safe housing is a major concern in every area, whether urban or rural. USDA provides financing for low and moderate income rural families, who cannot obtain credit from other sources, to help them achieve homeownership. The ownership of a home provides stability to families and gives them the opportunity to strengthen their financial condition by the accrual of equity in their home. The President has expressed his desire to ensure all Americans share in the homeownership opportunity and has established a major initiative to increase minority homeownership nationwide. USDA will implement a five star action plan in support of the President's goal.

Performance Measures

Increase by over 20 percent the number of rural households receiving financial assistance to buy a home of their own.

Baseline: 2001 — 44,000 households received financial assistance.

Target: 2007 — 54,000 households will receive financial assistance.

Support the President's Initiative to increase the number of minority homeowners by 5.5 million by 2010

Baseline: 2001 — 6,300 minority households in rural areas received financing for affordable housing.

Target: 2007 — 8,800 minority households in rural areas will receive financing for affordable housing.

Increase by over 17 percent the number of rural residents who will have access to new and/or improved essential community facilities.

Baseline: 2002 — 6.8 million rural residents will have access to new or improved community facilities as a result of funding in the fiscal year.

Target: 2007 — 8.0 million rural residents will have access to new or improved community facilities as a result of funding in the fiscal year.

Increase the numbers of rural residents given access to clean drinking water through the financing of the construction of new, or extension of existing, rural central water systems.

Baseline: 2002 — 1.96 million residential users benefited from water facilities receiving financing.

Target: 2007 — 2.16 million residential users will benefit from water facilities receiving financing.

Actionable Strategies

- Support the President's minority homeownership initiative by implementing a five star action plan:
 - lowering fees to reduce barriers to minority homeownership;
 - doubling the number of self-help participants by 2010;
 - increasing participation by minority lenders through outreach;

- promoting credit counseling and homeownership education; and
- monitoring lending activities to ensure 10 percent increase in minority homeownership.
- Increase the leveraging of outside funds by developing relationships with all potential sources of funding in rural communities for water, environmental and essential community facilities.
- Conduct research to identify social and economic issues facing rural communities as they adjust to broad forces affecting their futures, such as welfare reform, increased foreign competition in low-wage industries, growing demand for highly-skilled labor, an aging population and rapid growth in communities near major cities.
- Conduct research to better understand the role and effectiveness of investments in infrastructure, housing and business assistance for sustaining rural communities, particularly in areas characterized by rapid population growth or long-term population decline.

Key External Factors for Strategic Goal 2

Achievement of these goals will depend on the level of funding Congress provides for these programs. The amount of loans that can be made with the budget authority that is appropriated will depend upon various factors that affect subsidy rates, including interest rates and program losses. USDA can stretch its limited resources by jointly funding projects with private lenders only if those lenders are willing to participate and loan recipients are able to meet the higher payments normally required from joint funding. USDA can reach out to rural communities, but it cannot require them to apply for financial help. Applicants must compete for funding with other applicants and the recipient must demonstrate the ability to repay the Government loan. Significant fluctuations in interest rates or unemployment also have a major impact on the ability of many rural residents, communities and businesses to qualify. The availability of credit from other lenders will also affect the demand for USDA assistance, and may vary with overall economic conditions as well as the willingness of other lenders to serve rural areas.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: ENHANCE PROTECTION AND SAFETY OF THE NATION'S AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SUPPLY

USDA has unique and critical responsibilities to help ensure the safety of the U.S. food and fiber supply chain and the security of the U.S. agricultural production system. The Department will continue to assess current systems and develop countermeasures against threats to farms and ranches, in coordination with the private sector, other Federal agencies, and State governments. Research programs are essential to an effective U.S. agricultural biosecurity program to develop methods of early detection, rapid and accurate assessment, and immediate responses that prevent spread and control harmful agents. USDA facilities and operations must also be secure from external and internal threats.

Objective 3.1: Reduce the Incidence of Foodborne Illnesses Related to Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products in the U.S.

USDA will improve public health by further reducing the prevalence of foodborne hazards from farm to table, striving to become a model for all other public health institutions. Emerging pathogens and the dynamic nature of foodborne hazards mean that our food safety systems must be continually assessed and updated in order to maintain consumer confidence in our food supply. The assessment of public health issues and associated policies for addressing them will be based on sound scientific principles. We will assure the American public of the safety of meat, poultry, and egg products through effective management and implementation of regulatory actions. To do this, we will strengthen domestic and international regulatory strategies developed through a cooperative approach that integrates research, public health regulation and education. We will also broaden our collaboration with other Federal agencies, States, and international cooperators on regulatory actions and education programs addressing all aspects of food safety.

Performance Measures

Enhance public health in the United States by implementing modernized and risk-based food safety inspection of meat, poultry, and egg products.

Baseline: 2002 — A hazard-based work assignment system is not used to allocate Federal food safety inspection resources in processing establishments.

Target: 2007 — A hazard-based work assignment system will be used to allocate Federal food safety inspection resources in all processing establishments (100%).

Reduce the prevalence of *Salmonella* on raw meat and poultry products.

Baseline: 2002 — Prevalence of *Salmonella* on broiler chickens was 11.6%.

Target: 2007 — Prevalence of *Salmonella* on broiler chickens reduced to 10.4%.

Baseline: 2002 — Prevalence of *Salmonella* on market hogs was 4.3%.

Target: 2007 — Prevalence of *Salmonella* on market hogs reduced to 3.9%.

Baseline: 2002 — Prevalence of *Salmonella* on ground beef was 2.8%.

Target: 2007 — Prevalence of *Salmonella* on ground beef reduced to 2.5%.

Reduce the prevalence of *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat meat and poultry products.

Baseline: 2002 — Samples testing positive for *Listeria monocytogenes* was 1.02%.

Target: 2007 — Samples testing positive for *Listeria monocytogenes* reduced to 0.91%.

Develop and transfer to USDA agencies and the private sector systems that rapidly and accurately detect, identify, and differentiate the most critical and economically important foodborne pathogenic bacteria and viruses.

Baseline: 2002 — Achieved various stages of sequencing the full genome DNA for several different pathogens which will be used to develop these systems.

Target: 2007 — Will develop new systems for detecting foodborne illness-causing bacteria and pathogens, including strains of *Campylobacter*, *Clostridium*, *E. coli* 0157:H7, Hepatitis A, *Listeria*, Norwalk viruses, and *Salmonella*.

Actionable Strategies

USDA must continue to increase investments in the infrastructure that protect the integrity of the food and agricultural system. We need enough people and laboratories, supported by modern equipment, to ensure that our scientific and regulatory activities are up to the challenges posed by emerging pathogens and other animal and foodborne hazards. Future actions will:

- Require scientific validation and ongoing verification by industry of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems.
- Leverage USDA and industry resources to expand risk-based product testing and initiate environmental sampling programs for *Listeria monocytogenes* in establishments that produce certain ready-to-eat products.
- Strengthen procedures for evaluating and auditing foreign inspection systems and State inspection programs.
- Recruit, train, and deploy an inspection workforce with enhanced scientific skills and public health expertise.
- Recruit, retain, graduate, and place the next generation of research scientists, educators, and technicians in the food and agricultural sciences.
- Leverage investments in the infrastructure across USDA and with other Federal departments to reduce redundancy and improve data sharing.
- Provide the general public with food safety and biosecurity information and education through expanded outreach programs that address all aspects of food safety, including safe handling practices, microbiological testing and innovative food safety technologies.
- Work with Federal food safety agency partners to evaluate available foodborne illness data related to meat, poultry, and egg products and to develop more accurate measures of the effectiveness of regulatory strategies in reducing preventable foodborne illness.
- Conduct food safety research with the goal of providing a science-based, epidemiological approach to food safety that is valuable to industry and policy makers.
- Sponsor research to characterize the sequence, structure, and function of genes.
- Conduct education and outreach to improve biosecurity, food safety, food security, and nutritional content.
- Support scientifically sound programs for mapping microbiological genomic data to provide the base for research and diagnostic work.
- Expand research, modeling, and rigorous risk assessments that identify emerging, potentially high-risk threats to public food safety.

Objective 3.2: Reduce the Number and Severity of Agricultural Pest and Disease Outbreaks

Safeguarding America's animal and plant resources from invasive pests and diseases is essential to enhancing the agricultural trade that underlies much of America's prosperity and to housing, feeding, and clothing our Nation. To keep crop and animal pests and diseases out of the U.S. and to manage those inside our borders, USDA sponsors prevention activities to reduce the number of pest and disease outbreaks and coordinates effective pest and animal disease emergency response systems to reduce the severity of pest and disease outbreaks. We partner with Federal and State agencies, industries, and professional organizations to develop and maintain effective emergency response systems to detect, respond to, and eliminate outbreaks of invasive pests and diseases. We also partner with other nations and Federal agencies in research and operations that proactively prevent such outbreaks.

Performance Measures

Protect against accidental and intentional threats to farm livestock, poultry, plants, and crops.¹

Baseline: 1999 — 4.2% of international air travelers did not comply with restrictions to prevent entry of pests and diseases.

Target: 2007 — 3% of air travelers will not comply with restrictions (reductions will focus on high-risk pathways).

Reduce the number and severity of pest and disease outbreaks in the U.S. by ensuring that States and territories meet standards for State emergency management systems for animal health.

Baseline: 2000 — No States and territories met the standards.

Target: 2007 — 50 States and 2 territories will meet the standards.

Increase the number of States that can provide necessary Federal diagnostic services for animal diseases.

Baseline: 2000 — 20 States have at least one laboratory certified to provide necessary Federal diagnostic services.

Target: 2007 — 28 States have at least one laboratory certified to provide necessary Federal diagnostic services.

Improve the capabilities of plant diagnostic laboratories.

Baseline: 2000 — There is no International Standard Operational Certification for plant diagnostic facilities.

Target: 2007 — There will be an International Standard Operational Certification in place and all 5 National Plant Pest and Disease Diagnostic Network Centers will be certified.

Baseline: 2002 — The 5 National Plant Pest and Disease Diagnostic Centers are connected and providing data to the National Agricultural Pest Information System (NAPIS) at Purdue University.

Target: 2007 — A plant diagnostic laboratory in each state will be connected to and providing data to NAPIS at Purdue University.

¹ USDA will transfer its Agriculture Quarantine Inspection function to the Department of Homeland Security in March 2003.

Develop and release to potential users varieties and/or germplasm that are new or provide significantly improved (either through traditional breeding or biotechnology) characteristics enhancing pest or disease resistance.

Baseline: 2002 — Developed molecular diagnostics for classification of diseases that threaten economically significant plants, and established more effective technologies for selecting plants with disease resistance to Sclerotinia, downy mildew, rusts and exotic viral diseases.

Target: 2007 — Release a series of new or improved varieties or germplasm that exhibit enhanced disease resistance to Sclerotinia, downy mildew, rusts and exotic viral diseases.

Actionable Strategies

USDA must continue to increase investments in the infrastructure that protect the integrity of the food and agricultural system. We need enough people and laboratories, supported by modern equipment, to ensure that our scientific and regulatory activities are up to the challenges posed by invasive pests and diseases. Future actions will:

- Strengthen procedures for evaluating and auditing foreign inspection systems and State inspection programs.
- Intensify research and education efforts to rapidly identify pests and diseases that enter the U.S.
- Increase scientific monitoring for a broader array of emerging agricultural pests and diseases.
- Develop, validate and deploy new identification devices that can rapidly detect pathogens and toxins threatening livestock, poultry, plants/crops and food, such as a rapid deployment automated mobile laboratory that can be operational anywhere in the nation.
- Conduct research and disseminate results on: the role of genes and proteins on the immune systems of animals and plants; microorganisms, pathogens and toxins that can contaminate foods; advanced molecular biological and immunological studies of the effects of pathogens on vulnerable animal species; and advanced diagnostics, protections, and treatments.
- Conduct research, education, and information transfer on transmission and epidemiology of animal and plant diseases to develop and rapidly apply strategies for controlling disease outbreaks.
- Develop rapid, economical, environmentally sound and humane methods of euthanasia for animals as well as large-scale disposal of animal carcasses should an emergency occur.
- Conduct research and education on effective real-time cleaning and disinfecting technologies to limit or contain the spread of infectious materials, and to isolate and contain potential disease outbreaks.
- Undertake research and education to support approval and licensing by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of safe and effective disinfectants, tick and mite pesticides, insecticides, and other emergency compounds.

Key External Factors for Strategic Goal 3

The introduction of hazardous substances—whether accidental or intentional—may pose a threat to human health and to the environment, making prevention, early detection, identification, and rapid control or eradication a vital challenge. Collaboration between the public and private sectors plays a large role in emergency preparedness.

In FY 2001-2002, USDA requested that the National Academy of Sciences and the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Food study the role of microbiological criteria and microbiological performance standards as part of an overall approach to improving food safety. As the results of these ongoing studies become available, USDA will be able to propose new regulatory strategies to reduce the prevalence of pathogenic bacteria that cause foodborne illness.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: IMPROVE THE NATION'S NUTRITION AND HEALTH

USDA promotes America's health through food and nutrition education, guidance and promotion to the general public and to targeted groups. We teach, inform and motivate Americans to use this information to improve their diets and physical activity patterns. We expand research and scientific knowledge about public health. By promoting better diets, reaching children early and ensuring access to healthy food, we make a major contribution to the Nation's health.

USDA is seeking to contribute to significant changes in the U.S population's nutrition status, and in management of the nutrition assistance programs, for 2007. We are targeting:

- Reductions in overweight and obesity that are consistent with the Nation's *Healthy People 2010* objectives published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- A 30% decrease in hunger among low-income people;
- A 15% increase in the participation rate among eligible people in the Food Stamp Program, a 12 % increase in the participation rate in the National School Lunch Program, and continued high participation rate in the WIC Program;
- Five point increases in the Healthy Eating Index (HEI) scores of children and low-income people, and a 2-point increase among the general public (HEI uses food intake data to measure the quality and variety of the American diet.).

In addition to these core program outcomes, we provide measures for significant projects and activities related to effective stewardship of the funds used to deliver these programs

Objective 4.1: Improve Access to Nutritious Food

USDA nutrition assistance programs, which serve 1 in 5 Americans over the course of a year, constitute the lion's share of the Federal effort to fight hunger in the United States. These programs include the Food Stamp Program, which provides coupons or electronic cards to help participants improve their food purchasing power, the school meals programs, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), which provides supplemental food packages, nutrition education and referrals to health and human services. The Administration is committed to improving nutritional intake through increased access to, and utilization of, these vital programs by those eligible to participate.

Performance Measures

Baseline: 2000 — 10.9% of low-income households report experiencing hunger in an annual population survey.

Target: 2007 — Reduce low-income households that report hunger to 7.4%.

Baseline: 2000 — 58.7% of eligible individuals participated in the Food Stamp Program.

Target: 2007 — Reach 68% of the eligible population.

Baseline: 2002 — 52% of children enrolled in U.S. schools (public and private) participated in the National School Lunch Program.

Target: 2007 — Reach 55% of enrolled children.

Actionable Strategies

- Continue commitment to a national nutrition safety net by working with Congress to secure funding for the major nutrition assistance programs at a level that will ensure access for all those eligible who wish to participate.
- Implement a coordinated national effort to increase access to three underutilized programs: the Food Stamp Program, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and the School Breakfast Program (SBP):
 - Conduct aggressive national and local outreach campaigns and grant awards;
 - Work with States to develop Food Stamp Program outreach plans;
 - Develop and promote policy improvements, including Food Stamp streamlining options included in the 2002 FSRIA, to reduce burdens for program operators and enhance support and access for working families.
- Work with the National Research Council’s Committee on Statistics to assess alternatives for estimating the number of WIC eligibles. Once this is complete, we will establish a target for servicing WIC eligibles.
- Increase awareness of the availability and value of Federal nutrition programs and services among the general public, including those potentially eligible for these programs and key State and local decision-makers:
 - Launch a national media campaign;
 - Translate program information and promotional materials into Spanish and other languages as appropriate;
 - Target outreach efforts to special audiences, such as the working poor, elderly, homeless, and eligible immigrants; and
 - Partner with external stakeholders to provide information and outreach to potential program participants.

Objective 4.2: Promote Healthier Eating Habits and Lifestyles

The Nation faces significant public health issues related to the quality of America’s eating habits—including an increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity. USDA intends to make use of its nutrition assistance programs and its broader nutrition education efforts as key opportunities to promote more healthful eating and physical activity across the Nation.

Performance Measures

Baseline: 1996 — On a 100-point scale, the Healthy Eating Index (HEI) of Americans with income under 130% of poverty was 61, and the HEI of American children in households under 185% of poverty was 63; the HEI of the U.S. population (2 years of age and over) was 63.8.

Target: 2007 — Increase scores for children and low income people by at least 5 points; increase the score for the broader U.S. population by at least 2 points.

Baseline: 2000 — 44.5% of postpartum women in the Women Infants and Children Program initiated breastfeeding.

Target: 2007 — 60% of WIC postpartum women initiated breastfeeding

Baseline: 1999 — 82% of elementary schools and 91% of secondary schools offered meal options to students that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines.

Target: 2007 — All elementary and secondary schools will offer meal options to students that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines.

Baseline: 2000 — 30% of U.S. adults (age 20 years and older) are obese; 15% of U.S. children and adolescents (ages 6-19 years) are overweight.

Target: 2007 — As a partner with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, take actions to encourage a reduction in overweight and obesity such that adult obesity will be no greater than 20% and child and adolescent overweight will be no greater than 8%.

Actionable Strategies

- Support the President’s *HealthierUS* initiative by:
 - Developing and supporting an integrated, cross-program nutrition education effort designed to address overweight and obesity, and other diet-related problems;
 - Partnering with the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services to promote healthy nutrition environments in schools; and
 - Partnering with the National 5 A Day Partnership, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to promote increased consumption of fruits and vegetables.
- Work with providers to improve nutritional quality of nutrition assistance program meals and benefits.
- Promote breastfeeding as the preferred infant feeding practice.
- Help more people assess and improve their eating habits to reduce and prevent overweight and obesity by developing and disseminating printed and Internet-based tools.
- In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, update the Dietary Guidelines for Americans in 2005, and review the Food Guide Pyramid and consider improvements.
- Continuously advance the science of nutrition by monitoring food and nutrient consumption; updating nutrient requirements and food composition data; defining relationships between diet, genetic and lifestyle to prevent obesity and disease; and identifying socio-economic, cultural, and environmental forces that influence eating habits.

Objective 4.3: Improve Food Program Management and Customer Service

USDA is also strongly committed to maintaining a high level of integrity in the nutrition assistance programs and, to the extent possible, preventing errors and other problems before they occur.

New communication and e-commerce technologies represent a prime opportunity to serve our customers and work with our partners more effectively. We plan to make targeted, cost-effective investments to enable USDA to bring its programs and its business into the digital age.

Performance Measures

Increase the Food Stamp payment accuracy rate.

Baseline: 2001 — 8.7% error rate in Food Stamp payments.

Target: 2004 — Reduce the Food Stamp error rate to 7.8%.

Decrease to 9% the number of children certified for free school meals in excess of those estimated eligible.

Baseline: 1999 — 27% more children were certified for free meals than were eligible.

Target: 2007 — Will reduce to 9% the number of children certified for such meals in excess of those estimated eligible.

Provide services electronically to increase efficiency and ease-of-use.

Baseline: 2002 — 89% of Food Stamp benefits were delivered by Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT); one state used EBT to issue all WIC benefits.

Target: 2005 — All Food Stamp benefits will be delivered by EBT.

Target: 2007 — Four states will deliver all WIC benefits electronically; 10 additional states will test WIC EBT systems.

Baseline: 2002 — A small number of states used a web-based pre-screening tool to help recipients determine potential eligibility for Food Stamps.

Target: 2007 — All states will use a web-based FSP pre-screening tool (either USDA's or their own).

Actionable Strategies

- Support State efforts to improve food stamp benefit accuracy through oversight, training, technical assistance and “best practices” information-sharing.
- Pilot test, evaluate and work with Congress to enact major policy changes to improve school meals certification accuracy. Enlist the support of other Federal, State and local users of school meals certification data to ensure that resources can be properly targeted to those most in need.
- Increase training and technical assistance to improve State and local management in vulnerable programs.
- Provide technical assistance on EBT to States, and work with less active States to more aggressively implement systems.
- Support development of national WIC EBT standards, and test the viability of alternative WIC EBT technologies, including on-line, real time point-of-sale transaction processing.
- Continue development and promotion of a web-based eligibility “pre-screening” tool that allows recipients to determine their potential eligibility for the Food Stamp Program.

Key External Factors for Strategic Goal 4

Efforts to reduce hunger and improve dietary habits depend on coordination between USDA and its Federal, State and local partners, and effective compliance by partners with program standards and rules. Competing demands on tight State budgets may also affect the availability of administrative funds for certain efforts. The Department's ability to improve dietary habits is influenced strongly by the emphasis that the Nation more broadly places on healthy eating, including products and practices in the food marketplace.

The eGovernment goals and initiatives will depend on approval by policy officials external to USDA, and will be pursued in the context of a wide range of competing eGovernment priorities that may ultimately require shifts in attention and resources to more time-critical needs.

STRATEGIC GOAL 5: PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE NATION'S NATURAL RESOURCE BASE AND ENVIRONMENT

The management of our natural resources, both public and private, is a continual balancing act between sometimes contrary and competing concerns. In maintaining this balance, it is imperative that a portfolio approach be utilized that incorporates various conservation management tools including technical assistance, cost-share, incentive, land retirement, easement and regulatory assistance programs. In ensuring these program funds are spent effectively and leveraged wisely, continued and increased cooperation with State, local, and Tribal governments, as well as private for-profit and not-for-profit partner organizations is needed.

Objective 5.1: Implement the President's Healthy Forest Initiative and Other Actions to Improve Management of Public Lands

USDA has stewardship responsibility for the natural resources on 192 million acres of Federally managed lands. Policies are carried out to ensure sustainable forest and rangeland ecosystems and natural resource amenities that are resilient to natural and human disturbance. We manage our natural resources for a sustainable flow of uses, products, and services for the American public, using science-based criteria for and indicators of sustainable development. Under Federal multiple-use principles, USDA-managed lands also support activities of national economic and security significance—oil, natural gas, timber, recreation, tourism, mineral production, and livestock grazing.

USDA is dedicated to implementing the President's Healthy Forest Initiative, which is based on a common-sense approach to reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfires by restoring forest and rangeland health. We are committed, with the Department of the Interior (DOI) and State and Tribal governments, to a ten-year interagency, intergovernmental strategy to reduce risk and damaging effects to resources and communities from wildland fire. We will continue to work with these partners to identify priority areas that will benefit from hazard reduction.

Performance Measures

Restore, rehabilitate, and maintain fire-adapted ecosystems, using appropriate tools to provide sustainable environmental, social, and economic benefits.

Baseline: 1999 — 24 million acres of land with vegetative fuels were at low risk of catastrophic fire (fuel levels within historical levels), 44 million areas were at moderate risk, and 29 million acres with natural fuels were at high risk. (Note: Acres determined by Fire Regime Grouping identified in the 10 Year Implementation Plan developed jointly by USDA and the Department of the Interior.)

Target: 2007 — Will treat 11 million acres (cumulative), moving them from a moderate/high risk to a lower risk of catastrophic fire.

Ensure that acres covered in Federal fire management plans are in compliance with Federal Wildland Fire Policy.

Baseline: 2001 — 51% were in compliance with the Federal Wildland Fire Policy.

Target: 2007 — 100% will be in compliance with the Federal Wildland Fire Policy.

Restore, rehabilitate, and/or maintain rangeland ecosystems within grazing allotments to achieve desired condition objectives established in Forest Plans, using appropriate management tools to provide sustainable environmental, social, and economic benefits.

Baseline: 2002 — Rangelands within grazing allotments total approximately 72,300,000 acres. 44 million acres of land with range vegetation management objectives are presently either meeting or moving towards desired conditions.

Target: 2007 — Will treat 6 million acres (cumulative), moving them from acres of unknown condition or lands not meeting desired conditions to lands that are either meeting desired conditions or are moving towards desired conditions.

Reduce threats to human health and the environment from hazardous materials that have contaminated USDA-managed lands.

Baseline: 2001 — Identified 2000 sites requiring cleanup.

Target: 2007 — Will cleanup 150 sites.

Actionable Strategies

In addition to continuing to provide effective technical assistance, technology development, and maintain a resource inventory, future actions will:

Managing Fire

- Complete Federal fire management plans, and cooperate in developing State plans, in compliance with Federal Wildland Fire Policy.
- Develop and maintain an accurate prioritized list of all communities designated by States as being at-risk for wildland fire, including contact information.
- Improve procedures for developing and implementing fuels treatment and forest restoration projects in collaboration with Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments.
- Improve fire suppression decision-making training for line officers, fire suppression officers, and responsible officials.
- Provide supplemental assistance for the training, equipment, safety awareness, and services provided by rural, volunteer, and other firefighters who work in the wildland/urban interface, and report those findings to Congress.
- Reduce overlapping environmental reviews with combined analyses and clearances.
- Develop guidance for weighing the short-term risks against the long-term benefits of fuels treatment and restoration projects.
- Apply consistent National Environmental Policy Act procedures for fuels treatment and restoration activities.

Managing Rangelands

- Develop strategy for completing National Environmental Policy Act analysis in a timelier manner for grazing allotments in need of updated or new analyses.
- Improve monitoring of project actions and/or instructions to ensure project prescriptions are implemented.

Managing Cleanups

- Promote partnerships with Federal and State agencies, Tribal organizations, and private individuals in prioritizing planning, and carrying out environmental cleanups and related activities.
- Conduct all work in a way consistent with the Superfund National Contingency Plan.
- Before spending funds under the Hazardous Materials Management Program or other appropriated funds, seek appropriate contributions toward cleanup costs from those responsible for the contamination.

Objective 5.2: Improve Management of Private Lands

Farmers, ranchers and private forest owners manage more than 70 percent of the Nation's land. These groups are the primary stewards of soil, water, and related resources on those lands. We provide a portfolio of services to help owners be good stewards. These services include research, education, and technical assistance; cost share and incentive payments for conservation practices; and rental payments or easements to protect fragile or environmentally important land. We develop conservation technology tailored to local conditions based on continuing agency resource assessments and response to local needs and priorities. USDA's field staff works in partnership with local conservation districts, extension universities, Tribal and State staff, and volunteers. Many Federal and State agencies rely on our technical expertise and conservation technology. We play a key role in protecting property and natural resources on non-Federal lands by increasing preparedness, mitigating hazards, and preventing fires. Over the next few years, we will work collaboratively with our partners to sustain past environmental gains while increasing efforts to address new and emerging environmental concerns. We will adopt a holistic approach that ensures compatibility of conservation and trade policies and effective coordination of conservation and farm policies.

Performance Measures

Protect the productive capacity of agricultural and forestland.

Baseline: 2001 — 530 million acres of cropland and grazing land needed additional conservation treatment to handle degrading quality and long-term productivity problems.

Target: 2007 — Needed treatment will be applied to a total of 130 million acres in the period 2002 through 2007.

Baseline: 2001 — Stewardship management plans have been developed for landowners of non-industrial private forestlands for 23.5 million acres cumulatively from 1991-2001.

Target: 2007 — Provide stewardship management plans covering an additional 10 million acres (cumulative 2002 through 2006) of non-industrial private forestlands.

Baseline: 2001 — Forestry Best Management Practices had a national implementation rate of 86%, with 17 States conducting effectiveness monitoring.

Target: 2007 — Will increase national implementation rate to 92%, with 35 States conducting effectiveness monitoring.

Manage watersheds to provide clean and abundant water supplies.

Baseline: 2002 — Owners and operators of an estimated 257,000 animal feeding operations needed help to carry out comprehensive nutrient management plans to protect water and air quality.

Target: 2007 — 50,000 owners and operators of animal feeding operations will have initiated implementation of comprehensive nutrient management plans.

Baseline: 1997 — Annual erosion was 1.06 billion tons. Part of that eroding soil moved beyond the field to contribute to sediment problems in waterways.

Target: 2007 — Will reduce annual erosion to a nationwide level of 0.9 billion tons.

Baseline: 2001 — Helped to improve irrigation water management on 1.2 million acres (about 50 million acres of the Nation’s farmland are irrigated).

Target: 2007 — Will help improve irrigation water management on a total of 9 million more acres.

Ensure diverse wildlife habitats.

Baseline: 2002 — A cumulative total of 1,075,000 acres of wetlands enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Acres enrolled in the WRP play an important role in reducing the average annual net loss of wetlands to agriculture.

Target: 2007 — Will increase wetlands protection by enrolling in the WRP 1.2 million acres of wetlands identified as high priority by states.

Baseline: 2001 — New management practices that improved wildlife habitat were applied on 11.6 million acres and an additional 19.2 million acres had rental agreements or easements in place that provide long-term protection for habitat.

Target: 2007 — Will apply new management practices to improve wildlife habitat on 20 million acres of working land, and have rental agreements or easements on 24 million acres to provide long-term protection for habitat.

Actionable Strategies

In addition to continuing to provide effective technical assistance, technology development, and maintain a resource inventory, future actions will:

- Provide high-quality, site-specific technical assistance to producers and other resource managers, enabling them to meet their production goals and protect the quality of the environment.
- Implement provisions authorizing private sector vendors, non-profit organizations, and public sector agencies to provide education and technical assistance to landowners and producers who receive financial assistance under our conservation programs.
- Increase program efficiency and help producers to comply with local, state, and national regulatory requirements through education and by streamlining procedures for applying to conservation programs and administrative processes.
- Increase incentives to help minority, limited-resource, and beginning producers to practice conservation in their operations.
- Work with State agencies and local sponsors to develop watershed-level plans to enhance water supplies, protect water quality, mitigate drought and flood hazards, and enhance wildlife habitat.
- Focus our land retirement programs more on protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat.

- Expand support of research that addresses the measurement, fate and transport of agricultural pollutants and the associated policy, social and economic aspects.
- Develop nationally comparable definitions for identifying at-risk wildland/urban interface communities and for prioritizing communities within State or Tribal jurisdiction.

Key External Factors for Strategic Goal 5

Agricultural lands are co-mingled with urban and developing land as part of watersheds and ecosystems. Activities taking place in parts of forests, lands or watersheds outside USDA influence can offset the effects of improved management on agricultural land, so that the state of the whole watershed may fail to improve as much as expected.

OVERVIEW OF MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

We are working to strengthen USDA's management through vigorous execution of the President's Management Agenda (PMA). Better management will result in more efficient program operations that offer improved customer service and more effective stewardship of taxpayer funds. We expect to:

- Ensure an efficient, high-performing, diverse, competitively sourced workforce, aligned with mission priorities and working cooperatively with USDA partners and the private sector.
- Enhance internal controls, data integrity, management information, and program and policy improvements as reflected by an unqualified audit opinion and a reduction of erroneous payments by USDA programs.
- Implement business processes and information technology needed to make our services available electronically.
- Link budget decisions and program priorities more closely with program performance, and recognize the full cost of programs.

Detailed plans are available for each of the PMAs. Here is a brief summary of our plans.

Improve Human Capital Management

The President has identified strategic management of human capital as a means to making government more citizen-centered and creating a high-performing workforce. We will manage our human capital according to a comprehensive plan that includes implementing initiatives both within the agencies and from a corporate perspective. Our Human Capital Plan focuses on strategic workforce planning and maximizing employee performance. Because automation and process efficiency play a large role in achieving optimal performance of our employees, support systems for human resources, procurement, property management, and finance are critical for us to achieve our performance targets. Other human capital challenges include meeting the demand for cutting edge research talent, ensuring a responsive and effective workforce with technology, customer service and business skills, and supporting a broader scope of program responsibilities with the same or fewer staff.

In managing our human capital and in delivering our services to customers, USDA will continue to focus on ensuring civil rights and equal employment opportunity for everyone, regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability, marital or familial status, or any other factor. We are committed to continuous civil rights progress in the workplace, in program delivery, and in processing complaints in a timely and efficient manner.

Our plans include:

- Linking human capital plans with business plans, and integrating the human capital impacts of Presidential initiatives such as competitive sourcing and eGovernment.
- Using workforce planning and flexible tools to recruit, retain, and reward employees while developing a high-performing and accountable workforce.
- Ensuring employment opportunities for all members of the workforce, while implementing programs targeted at 1) critical occupations with projected skill gaps, and 2) underrepresented groups.
- Increasing the use of competitive sourcing.
- Ensuring timely resolution of program and employment civil rights complaints.

Improve Financial Management

Effectively managing the use of taxpayer dollars is a fundamental Federal responsibility. USDA intends to ensure that all funds we spend are properly accounted for to the taxpayers, the Congress, and the GAO. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) works to improve financial management, in partnership with the Chief Financial Officers of USDA agencies, as a core attribute of our operating culture. Owing to our recent efforts to improve financial management, we have received an unqualified opinion on our 2002 financial audit. OCFO is working closely with USDA agencies to eliminate all material weaknesses by 2004.

The OCFO will lead efforts to improve management information by helping USDA's agencies in crafting and accessing useful, timely information, such as monthly financial reports, on-line access to real-time information, and program cost reporting. By enhancing the integrity of financial and administrative data, we will protect corporate assets and conserve scarce resources.

Our plans include:

- Maintaining an unqualified audit opinion on USDA Financial Statements.
- Eliminating all material weaknesses.
- Improving financial reporting procedures and systems.

Expand Electronic Government

USDA's eGovernment Strategic Plan provides a framework for transforming the delivery of information and services through cross-agency business planning and integrated investment approaches that focus on cutting costs by delivering services collaboratively. By relentlessly focusing on customers, working with business partners, and empowering employees, we will use information and communications technologies to conduct our mission-critical business and support functions "better, cheaper, faster." Building on numerous existing successes, the eGovernment Program focuses on leveraging our investments and taking a customer-centric approach. We are underscoring a shift from working in silos to delivering information and services through integrated, enterprise-wide and inter-departmental solutions.

Our plans include:

- Improving citizens' knowledge of and access to USDA to enhance service delivery.
- Enhancing collaboration with public and private organizations to develop and deliver USDA programs.
- Improving internal efficiency by promoting enterprise-wide solutions.
- Ensuring the security of the information provided to USDA by our customers

Establish Budget and Performance Integration

USDA continues to improve how we integrate performance information into our budget decisions. In FY 2002, we began to develop a consistent way to integrate budget and performance at every stage, from the initial agency presentations, to our presentation to OMB, and eventually into the President's budget request to Congress. As part of this integration, USDA planning, evaluation, and budget staff work closely with USDA program managers and policy makers to set budget priorities based on our strategic goals and program performance data. Over the next few years, we will continue to improve our performance information and use program evaluations more effectively. We also will use OMB's Program Assessment Rating Tools (PART) and other tools to judge program performance and management. We are working with OMB to develop common measures for performance in seven cross-cutting areas so as to compare selected programs that have similar goals.

Our plans include:

- Providing a systematic means to review performance information during all stages of the budget process.
- Systematically evaluating programs and integrating the results of those evaluations into the budget decision-making process.
- Creating budget line items and cost accounting systems that align with the Department's goals and encourage effective management.

APPENDIX A: PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

USDA used several tools that fed the development of this Strategic Plan. The types of tools included:

- Program Evaluations
- Advisory Committees
- Inspector General (OIG), General Accounting Office (GAO), and Other External Reviews
- Internal Management Studies and Performance Measurement Systems

The following table highlights some of these tools as they relate to USDA’s strategic goals and management initiatives.

Program Evaluations Used to Develop the Strategic Plan				
Goal	Evaluations/Analyses	Brief Description	What Was The Effect	Date
Goal 1 <i>Economic opportunities</i>	Regional market evaluations in preparation of FAS export support/ assistance	Over the past 18 months, 5 regional market teams in FAS have evaluated foreign competition, export potential, trade barriers, and government program resource applications.	FAS completed a new, market-based export support strategy with regional sales goals to help U.S. exporters recapture an increased export share.	2000 through July 2002
	FAS staff review agency-wide performance reporting and verification.	Staff interview each FAS division with GPRA reporting responsibilities, evaluate verification procedures, and report to the Administrator.	Enabled FAS to validate the information provided, identify discrepancies, and develop more meaningful performance measures.	Annually
	OIG and GAO audits and reviews	Review the export credit guarantee programs as part of annual CCC financial audit. Provide procedural and security evaluations.	FAS staff discuss audit and program procedures for potential changes to be more effective and cost efficient.	Annually
Goal 3 <i>Protect agriculture</i>	Mission Area Assessments	Review the vulnerabilities, exercises and corrective actions.	Protect the food & agriculture system’s critical infrastructure	September 2004
	Animal Health Safeguarding Review	Review by the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture.	Recommendations set a strategic roadmap for the Agency around animal health issues.	October 2001
	Agency reports	Review initiatives to monitor progress, evaluate results and ensure goals and objectives are met.	Internal taskforce activity.	Various
Goal 4 <i>Nutrition and health</i>	Household Food Security in the U.S., 2000	A statistical report on the prevalence of food security, food insecurity, and hunger in U.S. households (based on the September 2000 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement).	Used to define the outcome measures, and set targets, for the prevalence of hunger among children and low-income people in the U.S.	March 2002 Annually
	Food Assistance Research Conferences	Customers, subject-matter experts, and academics identify information needs and issues for next year’s competitive grants and cooperative agreements.	Identified major research themes for the year’s competitive grants process.	May 2002 Annually
Goal 5 <i>Natural resources</i>	Assessments of U.S. natural resources under RPA (Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act)	Track indicators used by the RPA Assessment	Identified policy issues for priority attention.	Every 5 years

Program Evaluations Used to Develop the Strategic Plan				
Goal	Evaluations/Analyses	Brief Description	What Was The Effect	Date
All Goals	Review of the Relevance and Adequacy of the Research, Education and Economics (REE) agencies' budget	As required by law, annually the National Research, Education, Extension, and Economics Advisory Board reviews the relevance, priority, and adequacy of REE funding. The Board then sends the results to the Secretary in a letter.	Influenced budget decisions.	Annually
	OMB Program Performance Assessment using the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART)	Review Electric Loan Program, Multiple Family Housing Program, Direct Payments Program, Water and Wastewater Grants, Wildland Fire Management, Farmland Protection Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Forest Service Capital Improvement and Maintenance Program, Crop Insurance Program, Agriculture Quarantine Inspection, Animal Welfare, Food Aid, Food Safety and School Lunch Program.	Structured OMB Review as part of the budget process to help determine program effectiveness.	Fall 2002
	OIG audits	Audit USDA financial systems, 5 stand-alone agency financial statements, and the USDA Consolidated Financial Statements.	Improved internal controls and financial system, and received an unqualified opinion.	Various

USDA will also undertake many new evaluations over the next five years. The following table highlights some of the longer-term studies as they relate to USDA's strategic goals and management initiatives.

Future Program Evaluations and Other Analyses				
Goal	Evaluations/Analyses	General Scope	Methodology	Timetable
Goal 1 <i>Economic opportunities</i>	Analysis of FCIC's product portfolio	Comprehensive review of the risk management products offered by FCIC.	Actuarial and underwriting experts will review current and proposed crop insurance products, and opportunities for new products to assist the FCIC Board in developing a product strategy.	The initial phase of the evaluation is scheduled for completion on May 15, 2003.
	Review of FCIC policies, plans of insurance and related materials	Comprehensive quality review of FCIC's policies plans of insurance and related materials.	Actuarial and underwriting experts will review FCIC legislation, regulation, and program materials to recommend any potential ways to improve the overall quality of the program.	The initial phase of the review is scheduled for completion on March 31, 2003.
Goal 2 <i>Rural opportunities</i>	No program evaluations are planned.			

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Future Program Evaluations and Other Analyses				
Goal	Evaluations/Analyses	General Scope	Methodology	Timetable
Goal 3 <i>Protect agriculture</i>	Coordinate with agencies outside USDA for emergency preparedness and rapid response	Describes current interagency activities that constitute homeland security.	Memorandums of Understanding will be developed among all appropriate USDA agencies and with independent agencies or agencies in other executive departments. Land-Grant Colleges and Universities and extension-based education programs will train “trainers” to identify and respond to suspected disease incidents.	September 2003
	Support the President's homeland security initiatives through science and action programs	Develop an integrated database to manage threats to the U.S. food system.	Complete the Security Analysis System, which will integrate analysis functions with data from other Federal agencies, and State, local, and private organizations, to create a decision support system for managing threats to the U.S. food system.	September 2004
	Veterinary Services State Emergency Management Standards Review	Verify statutes of States and territories in meeting emergency preparedness standards for animals.	2 phases: a self-assessment by the Federal/State veterinarians, then a follow-up review by regional emergency managers.	October 2003
	HACCP Evaluation	Evaluate the impact of the HACCP Final Rule.	Multi-year project; various components	October 2002
	National Academies of Science (NAS)	Review of the Agency draft risk assessment of E. Coli O157:H7 in ground beef.	Peer review	Began in February 2002 and ongoing
	National Academies of Science (NAS)	Study the role of scientifically determined criteria, such as microbiological criteria, in production and regulation of meat and poultry products.	Comprehensive study	To be completed by March 2003
Goal 4 <i>Nutrition and health</i>	Universal Free School Breakfast Pilot and Study	Assess the effects of free school breakfasts for all children on academic performance, absenteeism, tardiness, behavior, and cognitive development	Demonstration project comparison of school systems that provide free breakfast for students vs. paid to determine impact on academic performance	FY 2004
Goal 5 <i>Natural resources</i>	Evaluation of Wetlands Reserve Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Farmland Protection Program, and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	Determine effectiveness in meeting the intent of Congress and effectiveness and efficiency of management of the programs	Oversight and Evaluation Quick Response Review	FY 2003

Future Program Evaluations and Other Analyses				
Goal	Evaluations/Analyses	General Scope	Methodology	Timetable
Goal 5 <i>Natural resources</i> (continued)	Reform and Assessment of Conservation Programs, called for by the 2002 FSRIA	Coordinate land retirement and agricultural working lands conservation programs to eliminate redundancy, streamline delivery, and improve services to agricultural producers	To be determined by 2003	Report delivered to Congress by December 2005
	Evaluation of the Conservation Technical Assistance Program	Perform the evaluations nationally	Program Evaluation	FY 2003
	National Conservation Appraisal and Program required by the Resources Conservation Act of 1977	Appraise the status, condition, and trend of soil, water, and related resources on non-Federal land Analyze costs and benefits of alternatives for USDA conservation programs	Analysis of NRI and other resources data bases; development of modeling tools as needed; projections of effects on the economy and the environment of alternative scenarios	Appraisal due December 2005, and program due December 2007 to Congress
	Evaluation of the Resources Conservation and Development Program, called for by the 2002 FSRIA	Nationwide evaluation in consultation with RC&D councils to determine effectiveness of the program and develop recommendations.	To be determined by 2003	Report delivered to Congress by June 2005
All Goals except 2	Peer Review of Research Projects Maintaining the core scientific capability of all ARS research programs and projects	Agriculture Research Service (ARS) gets input from customers/ stakeholders to establish relevancy, then develops an Action Plan. The outside Peer Panel evaluates each project in the National Program (NP).	ARS revamped its quality control program several years ago to meet the requirements in the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998. The Office of Scientific Quality Review (OSQR) was established. All research is prospectively reviewed to ensure quality.	Every 5 years
	Peer Review of Individual Scientists Maintain the core capability of the ARS scientific workforce by periodically reviewing the work of each scientist	A highly qualified peer panel reviews the case write-up for each ARS scientist on a regular basis against standards established by OPM.	The Research Position Evaluation System (RPES) applies OMB's Research Grade-Evaluation Guide (RGEG) to determine the grade level of research positions.	Every 3 to 5 years
All Goals except 2	National Research Council (NRC) Study of Opportunities in Agriculture	NRC established a multi-disciplinary committee, held public forums, and formed subcommittees to evaluate aspects of research being conducted by REE.	The National Research Council is completing a Congressionally mandated study of Opportunities in Agriculture. The NRC Committee evaluated the quality of research conducted by the USDA REE mission area.	By the end of CY 2002
	2002 Farm Bill Review of ARS	The 2002 FSRIA mandates a Review of the Agricultural Research Service by an 8-member Task Force appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture.	The Task Force will review ARS and "evaluate the merits of establishing one or more National Institutes focused on disciplines important to the progress of food and agricultural science."	To be determined by the Task Force

Future Program Evaluations and Other Analyses				
Goal	Evaluations/ Analyses	General Scope	Methodology	Timetable
All Goals	OMB's PART	PART is used to assess the management and results of selected programs	Department and OMB staff develop responses to a series of questions assessing program management and performance	Annually

APPENDIX B: CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMS

Our work often cuts across jurisdictional lines—within USDA, with other Federal agencies, and with State, local, and private partners. This table lists the primary partnerships that will enable USDA to reach the outcomes in this Strategic Plan. Please note that for the purposes of this table, it is assumed that all USDA Departmental Offices support all strategic goals and management initiatives.

Cross-cutting Programs		
Goal	USDA Primary Agencies	External Organizations
Goal 1	Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Risk Management Agency (RMA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Grain Inspection, Packers & Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), Economic Research Service (ERS), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS), ARS, CSREES	Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Department of Commerce, State Department, Department of the Treasury, Export-Import Bank, Overseas Private Investment Corporation, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, regional development banks, private industry trade groups, cooperators, State Departments of Agriculture, Department of Energy, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, land grant colleges and universities, commercial warehouse operators, commercial lenders, cooperative marketing associations and private sector insurance companies
Goal 2	Rural Development (RD)	Commercial lenders and cooperative marketing associations
Goal 3	APHIS	U.S. Customs Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Food and Drug Administration, U.S. Animal Health Association, National Plant Board
	Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Food and Drug Administration, State Governments, Partnership for Food Safety Education, <i>Codex Alimentarius</i> Commission
	ERS, ARS, CSREES, NASS	Research community, Colleges, Department of Energy, National Science Foundation, Department of Health and Human Resources
Goal 4	CSREES, ERS, ARS, Food & Nutrition Service (FNS), Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP)	State, territorial, Tribal and local agencies involved in nutrition assistance program delivery, private sector firms and organizations, private non-profit voluntary organizations, Department of Health and Human Services, Dietary Guidelines Alliance, professional organizations, health and public interest organizations EPA, State Department, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, World Bank, regional development banks, private voluntary organizations, State Department of Agriculture, Food and Drug Administration, academic institutions, research community
Goal 5	Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Forest Service (FS), FSA, ERS, ARS, CSREES, NASS, Hazardous Materials Management Group (HMMG)	Soil Conservation Districts, Resource Conservation and Development Councils, State agencies, Tribal governments, EPA, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Geological Survey, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Fish and Wildlife Service, Corps of Engineers, National Park Service

APPENDIX C: STRATEGIC CONSULTATIONS

We regularly consult with external groups—customers, policy experts, industry and consumer groups—about the effectiveness of our programs. While many of the consultations were not conducted expressly for this Strategic Plan, they have had a deep influence on strategic goals, objectives, strategies, and targets.

Strategic Consultations				
Goal	Date	Who	Purpose	
Goal 1 <i>Economic opportunities</i>	Annual/ semiannual bilateral meetings	Official representatives of various foreign countries	Discuss agricultural trade issues, to reduce or eliminate trade barriers.	
	Monthly con- ference calls/ Quarterly meetings	Animal Agriculture Coalition; American Veterinary Medical Association; U.S. Animal Health Association; FSIS, and ARS.	Guide development of the National Animal Health Emergency Management System.	
	Ongoing	Various grain, livestock, meat, poultry, bioenergy and bioproduct trade groups and associations	Discuss matters of mutual concern, and expand market opportunities for U.S. agricultural producers.	
	Annual		Public forum for data users	Provide updates on pending changes in statistical and informational programs. Seek feedback from data users.
			Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics	Advise the Secretary of Agriculture on the scope, timing, and content of the censuses and surveys of agriculture. Make recommendations regarding the content of agriculture reports. Presents the views of major suppliers and users of statistics.
			Land-Grant University Agricultural Economists	Identify topics requiring management, marketing, policy research, education and extension outreach.
			USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum	Discuss developments in global agricultural markets and exchange information with customers.
	Quarterly		Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee (APAC) and Agricultural Technical Advisory Committees (ATACs)	Provide advice on U.S. trade negotiations, strategy and goals.
	Ongoing		Producers and producer groups	Discuss any proposed new crop insurance program or evaluations of existing programs.
			Crop Insurance Companies	Discuss operations and plan, and implement program improvement.
			University Risk Management Specialists and Economists	Review proposed new crop insurance tools or programs; conduct research and education.
			State and Local Governments and other Federal Agencies	Coordinate risk management initiatives.
Producers, producer groups and associations, commercial lenders, land grant colleges and universities			Share information and provide input on program delivery and outreach.	
Goal 2 <i>Rural opportunities</i>	Ongoing	National Association of Homebuilders	Share information.	
		Council for Affordable and Rural Housing		
		National Association of Government Guaranteed Lenders	Share information and provide input on program delivery and outreach.	
		National Association of Development Organizations		

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Strategic Consultations			
Goal	Date	Who	Purpose
Goal 3 <i>Protect agriculture</i>	Ongoing since 9/11/01	Department of Homeland Security	Develop strategies to protect our Nation.
	Annual	National Wildlife Service Advisory Committee	Provide input to Wildlife Services on resolving issues related to conflicts between humans and wildlife.
	Quarterly	National Animal Health Emergency Management Steering Committee	Provide input to Veterinary Services around program policy related to animal health emergencies.
	3 times per year	National Plant Board	Provide input to Plant Protection & Quarantine around program policy related to plant health issues.
		National Advisory Committee on 1) Meat and Poultry Inspection and 2) Microbiological Criteria for Foods	Provide input to Food Safety and Inspection Service policy.
	Periodic	Public Meetings to include Industry, public health officials, academia, consumers, Federal and State officials, and other interested parties	Communicate information and seek input to Agency initiatives or proposed regulations.
	Ongoing	State and local governments, foreign countries	Ensure food safety inspection and issues are addressed.
		<i>Codex Alimentarius</i> Commission, and subcommittees	Develop strategies for strengthening international food safety.
		Outside organizations	Maintains numerous partnerships with outside entities, covering a range of topics, to ensure a safer food supply.
	Annual	National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges	Seek input of University leadership to improve science, information, and technology development and distribution.
		Board on Agriculture Assembly	Provide to Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service leadership in agricultural administration, teaching, research, extension, forestry, international programs, human sciences, and veterinary medicine.
	Quarterly	National Agriculture, Research, Education, Economics, and Extension Advisory Board	Advise the USDA and its land-grant university partners on research, extension, education, and economic policies, priorities, and on the effectiveness of those policies and priorities.
Goal 4 <i>Nutrition and health</i>	May–June 1999	FNS Regional Stakeholder Outreach Meetings: open to Federal, State and local partners and others interested in domestic nutrition assistance programs	Seek public reaction to proposed strategic plan for nutrition assistance programs. Written comments were accepted from persons unable to attend.
	September 1998–February 2000	Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee	Review 2000 Dietary Guidelines for Americans in light of current scientific and medical knowledge. Recommend changes.
Goal 5 <i>Natural resources</i>	April 2002	Farmers and ranchers, organizations, persons interested in acting as third-party vendors for conservation technical assistance	Hold listening sessions in each State to gather input on implementation of the third-party strategy, and determine how to make the effort user-friendly for farmers and ranchers receiving the service and for those providing the service
	April and June 2002	Commodity groups, environmental groups, conservation groups	Hold national listening session to obtain input for implementing the third-party vendor strategy
	June 2002	Coalition of environmental and conservation groups	Provide continuing input to the third-party vendor initiative
	June 2002	Federal agencies and national and field personnel in USDA	Discuss CRP policy and environmental index issues related to the 2002 FSRIA.