

Departments

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Agricultural Services
Deputy Under Secretaries

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Administrator, Foreign Agricultural Service
Administrator, Risk Management Agency

Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and
Consumer Services

Deputy Under Secretary

Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service
Under Secretary for Food Safety
Administrator, Food Safety and Inspection
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Under Secretary for Research, Education, and
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Administrator, Rural Housing Service

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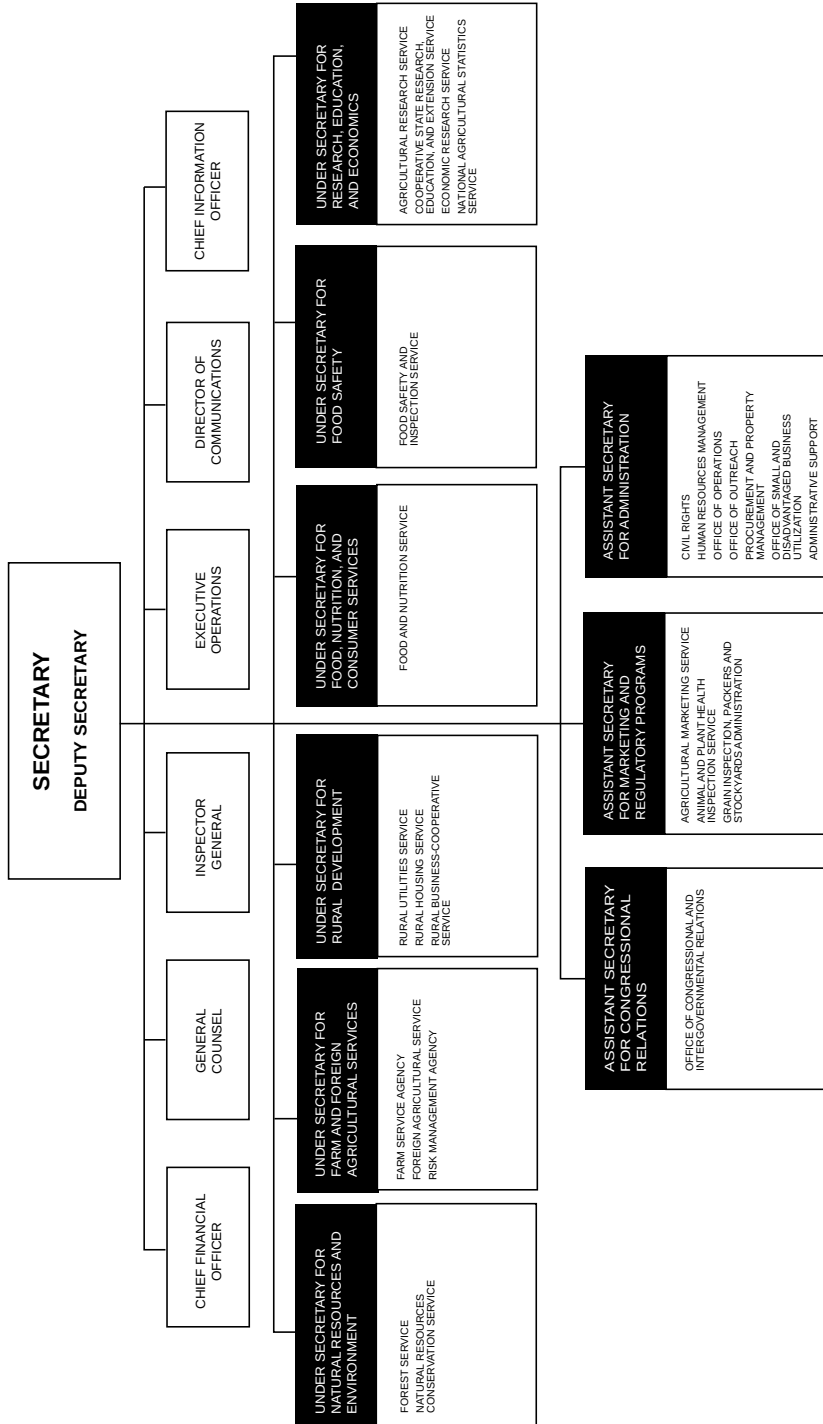
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[For the Department of Agriculture statement of organization, see the *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 7, Part 2]

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

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) U.S.C. 2201), and was administered by a
was created by act of May 15, 1862 (7 Commissioner of Agriculture until 1889

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(5 U.S.C. 511, 514, 516). By act of February 9, 1889 (7 U.S.C. 2202, 2208, 2212), the powers and duties of the Department were enlarged. The Department was made the eighth executive department in the Federal Government, and the Commissioner became the Secretary of Agriculture. The Department was reorganized under the Federal Crop Insurance Reform and Department of Agriculture

Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6901 note).

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

Rural Development

The rural development mission of USDA is to assist rural Americans in using their abilities to improve their quality of life. To accomplish this, USDA works to foster new cooperative relationships among Government, industry, and communities. The mission is carried out by the Rural Housing Service, which includes rural housing and rural community facility loan and grant programs; the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, which includes business and cooperative development programs; and the Rural Utilities Service, which includes telephone, electric, water, and sewer programs. Approximately 900 rural development field offices provide frontline delivery of all rural development loan and grant programs at the local level.

The Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community Initiative Office provides technical assistance, training, monitoring, and support to USDA field staff and communities participating in the initiative. Focusing on communities of greatest need, with severe problems of long-term endemic poverty, the program works with other USDA agencies, Federal agencies, State and local governments, and private organizations and universities in a combined effort to develop and promote comprehensive community and economic development in rural America.

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

The mission of the Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) is to enhance the quality of life for all rural Americans by providing leadership in building competitive businesses and sustainable cooperatives that can prosper in the global marketplace. To meet business credit needs in under-served areas, RBS business programs are usually leveraged with commercial, cooperative, or other private sector lenders. RBS business programs include:

Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans

This program helps create jobs and stimulates rural economies by providing financial backing for rural businesses. The program guarantees up to 80 percent of a loan made by a commercial lender. Loan proceeds may be used for working capital, machinery and equipment, buildings and real estate, and certain types of debt refinancing. Loan guarantees can be extended to loans made by commercial or other authorized lenders in rural areas (all areas other than cities and unincorporated areas of more than 50,000 people and their immediately adjacent urbanized areas).

Assistance under the Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program is available to virtually any legally organized entity, including a cooperative, corporation, partnership, trust, or other profit or nonprofit entity, Indian tribe or federally recognized tribal group, municipality, county, or other

political subdivision of a State. Applicants need not have been denied credit elsewhere to apply for this program. The maximum aggregate guaranteed loan(s) amount that can be offered to any one borrower under this program is \$25 million.

Business and Industry Direct Loans

This program provides loans to public entities and private parties who cannot obtain credit from other sources. Loans to private parties can be made for improving, developing, or financing business and industry, creating jobs, and improving the economic and environmental climate in rural communities, including pollution abatement. Assistance is available in rural areas (all areas other than cities or unincorporated areas of more than 50,000 people and their immediately adjacent urbanized areas).

Eligible applicants include any legally organized entity, including a cooperative, corporation, partnership, trust, or other profit or nonprofit entity, Indian tribe or federally recognized tribal group, municipality, county, any other political subdivision of a State, or individuals. Loans are available to those who cannot obtain credit elsewhere and for public bodies. The maximum aggregate loan amount that can be offered to any one borrower is \$10 million.

Intermediary Relending Program Loans

These loans finance business facilities and community development projects in rural areas, including cities with populations of less than 25,000. The Service lends these funds to intermediaries, which in turn provide loans to recipients who are developing business facilities or community development projects. Eligible intermediaries include public bodies, nonprofit corporations, Indian tribes, and cooperatives.

Rural Venture Capital Demonstration

Program To demonstrate the usefulness of guarantees to attract increased investment in private business enterprises in rural areas, this program designates up to 10 community development venture capital organizations to establish a rural

business private investment pool to make equity investments in rural private business enterprises. The program is available in rural areas (all areas other than cities or unincorporated areas of more than 50,000 people and their immediately adjacent urbanized areas).

Rural Business Enterprise Grants These grants help public bodies, nonprofit corporations, and federally recognized Indian tribal groups finance and facilitate development of small and emerging private business enterprises located in rural areas (all areas other than cities or unincorporated areas of more than 50,000 people and their immediately adjacent urbanized areas). Grant funds can pay for the acquisition and development of land and the construction of buildings, plants, equipment, access streets and roads, parking areas, utility and service extensions, refinancing, and fees for professional services, as well as technical assistance and related training, startup costs and working capital, financial assistance to a third party, production of television programs targeted to rural residents, and rural distance learning networks.

Rural Business Opportunity Grants

This program promotes sustainable economic development in rural communities with exceptional needs. Funds are provided for technical assistance, training, and planning activities that improve economic conditions. Applicants must be located in rural areas (all areas other than cities or unincorporated areas of more than 50,000 people and their immediately adjacent urbanized areas). Nonprofit corporations and public bodies, Indian tribes, and cooperatives are eligible for a maximum of \$1.5 million per grant.

Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants

These loans and grants finance economic development and job creation projects based on sound economic plans in rural areas having a population of less than 2,500 residents. Loans and grants are available to any Rural Utilities Service electric or telecommunications borrower to assist in developing rural areas from an economic standpoint, to

create new job opportunities, and to help retain existing employment. Loans at zero interest are made primarily to finance business startup ventures and business expansion projects. Grants are made to telephone and electric utilities to establish revolving loan programs operated at the local level. The revolving loan program provides capital to nonprofit entities and municipal organizations to finance community facilities which promote job creation in rural areas; for facilities which extend or improve medical care to rural residents; and for facilities which promote education and training to enhance marketable job skills for rural residents.

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

Rural Cooperative Development Grants

These grants finance the establishment and operation of centers for cooperative development. The primary purpose of this program is to enhance the economic condition of rural areas through the development of new cooperatives and improving operations of existing cooperatives. Eligible applicants are nonprofit organizations, including institutions of higher education.

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

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

For further information, contact Rural Development, Office of Communication, Public Affairs, Room 5037-S, Department of Agriculture, Fourteenth Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250-0320. Phone, 202-720-6903.

Rural Housing Service

The Rural Housing Service (RHS) provides loans to rural residents and communities unable to obtain credit from commercial sources at reasonable rates and terms. These borrowers must have a reasonable chance for success. The Service guarantees loans made by commercial lenders for modest rural housing. It also makes direct loans to low-income rural residents. Rural residents and communities may apply for these loans at approximately 900 local Rural Development offices.

The Service operates under Title V of the Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1471) and the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1921). It seeks to do business as the lender of first opportunity rather than the lender of last resort.

The Service provides financial and management assistance through the following types of loans:

Guaranteed Single-Family Housing (SFH) Loan Programs The Service guarantees loans made by commercial lenders to moderate-income (up to 115 percent median income for an area) rural residents. Eligible applicants must have sufficient income and acceptable credit but lack the downpayment to secure a loan without assistance. The Service provides up to 100 percent financing for eligible borrowers and guarantees participating lenders against most losses.

Direct Single-Family Housing Loan Program Section 502 loans are made to very low (under 50 percent median income for the area) and low (under 80 percent median income for the area) income families for housing in rural areas. Loans can be made to build, purchase, repair, and refinance homes. The maximum term is 38 years. Loans may be made for 100 percent of the appraised value. The basic interest rate is determined periodically, based on the cost of money. Borrowers may qualify for annual subsidy on the loan, which can reduce the interest rate to as low as 1 percent. Cosigners on promissory notes may be permitted for applicants who may lack repayment ability.

Builders may obtain "conditional commitments" as assurances to a builder or seller that if their houses meet RHS lending requirements, RHS may make loans to qualified applicants.

Home Improvement and Repair Loans and Grants An owner-occupant may obtain a section 504 loan of up to \$15,000, or in the case of senior citizens 62 years of age or older, a grant of up to \$7,500, to remove health and safety hazards from a home. These loans, available to very low income families, are made at 1 percent interest.

Self-Help Housing Loans Self-help direct SFH loans assist groups of six to eight very low and low income families to build their own home by providing "sweat equity" which reduces the families' mortgage. The families must agree to work together on each other's homes until they are complete. In most

cases, self-help participants use the Section 502 Direct program for mortgage financing.

Rural Housing Site Loans Loans are also available to private or public nonprofit organizations to purchase sites for the development of housing for very low and low income families. Loans are repayable in 2 years.

Direct and Guaranteed Multi-Family Housing Loans Loans are made to private, nonprofit corporations, consumer cooperatives, State or local public agencies, and individuals or organizations operating on a profit or limited profit basis to provide rental or cooperative housing in rural areas for persons of very low, low, and moderate income. For direct loans, no downpayment is required from nonprofit organizations. A 3 or 5 percent downpayment is required from other applicants. The maximum term is 50 years, with a 30-year repayment option, and the interest rate may be reduced to 1 percent to make rents affordable to very low and low income families. Rental assistance may be available to defray rent paid by very low income families. Guaranteed loans bear an interest rate negotiated by the lender and borrower. Interest credit is available on a small number of loans to assist with affordability to very low income families.

Farm Labor Housing Loans and Grants Farm labor housing loans and grants enable farmers, public or private nonprofit organizations, or units of local government to build, buy, or rehabilitate farm labor housing. The interest rate is 1 percent and is repaid over 33 years. Grants may be made in connection with a loan to a public/private nonprofit organization or unit of government to ensure affordability of the units to farm workers.

Housing Preservation Grants These grants are made to a public body or public/private nonprofit organization to provide assistance to homeowners and landlords to repair and rehabilitate housing for very low and low income families in rural areas. Financial assistance provided by grantees may include loans, grants, interest reduction

on loans, or similar assistance. Up to 20 percent of the grant may be used for program administration.

Housing the Homeless The Service offers SFH real-estate-owned property to nonprofit organizations or public bodies for transitional housing for the homeless. Qualifying organizations may lease nonprogram property if they can show a documented need in the community for the type of housing use proposed and the financial ability to meet proposed housing costs.

Community Program Loans Direct and guaranteed loans and grants are authorized to public and quasi-public bodies, nonprofit associations, and certain Indian tribes for essential community facilities such as health care, public safety, and public services. Necessary related equipment may also be purchased. The interest rate is set quarterly for direct loans and is based on yields of municipal bonds. Guaranteed loans bear an interest rate negotiated by the lender and the borrower. The Service guarantees a lender against losses up to 90 percent of principal and interest. Community facility assistance may be provided to towns populated up to 50,000. Nondiscrimination in employment and occupancy is required.

For further information, contact Rural Development, Office of Communication, Public Affairs, Room 5037-S, Department of Agriculture, Fourteenth Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250-0320. Phone, 202-720-6903.

Rural Utilities Service

The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is a credit agency that assists rural electric and telephone utilities in obtaining financing and administers a nationwide water and waste loan and grant program to improve the quality of life and promote economic development in rural America. A total of 890 rural electric and 900 rural telephone utilities in 47 States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia have received financial assistance. Approximately 7,200 rural communities are currently served through financial

assistance received from water and waste loans and grants.

Electric Program The Rural Electrification Act of 1936, as amended (7 U.S.C. 901-950b), authorizes RUS to provide loans for improving electric service to persons in rural areas, as defined by the Bureau of the Census. Preference is given to nonprofit and cooperative associations and to public bodies. With RUS assistance, rural electric utilities have obtained financing to construct electric generating plants and transmission and distribution lines to provide reliable electric service.

Telecommunications Program In 1949, RUS (then the Rural Electrification Administration) was authorized to make loans to provide telephone service in rural areas. Congress directed that the rural telephone program be conducted to "assure the availability of adequate telephone service to the widest practicable number of rural users of such service." About 75 percent of the telephone systems financed by the agency are commercial companies, and about 25 percent are subscriber-owned cooperatives.

Loans Loans are made in accordance with the Act and are subject to the provisions of the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1991. By law, RUS direct loans are made or insured at a municipal rate, but not greater than 7 percent. In cases of hardship, the Administrator may approve loans at an interest rate of 5 percent.

The Service also obtains funds from the Department of the Treasury's Federal Financing Bank (FFB), which it lends to borrowers, primarily for large-scale electric and telecommunication facilities, at an interest rate equal to the cost of money paid by FFB, plus one-eighth of 1 percent.

Supplemental Financing A 1973 statement of congressional policy—not part of the law—said, in part, ". . . that rural electric and telephone systems should be encouraged and assisted in developing their resources and ability to achieve the financial strength needed to enable them to satisfy their credit needs from their own financial organizations

and other sources at reasonable rates and terms consistent with the loan applicant's ability to pay and achievement of the act's objectives."

When RUS approves electric loans, it requires most borrowers to obtain 30 percent of their loan needs from nonagency sources without an agency guarantee. These nonagency sources include the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, which is owned by electric cooperatives, and the National Bank for Cooperatives.

Telecommunications borrowers obtain supplemental financing from the Rural Telephone Bank (RTB), a U.S. agency established in 1971. Loans are made to telecommunications systems able to meet RTB requirements. Bank loans are made for the same purposes as loans made to RUS but bear interest at a rate consistent with the Bank's cost of money.

The Rural Telephone Bank is managed by a 13-member board of directors. The Administrator of RUS serves as Governor of the Bank until conversion to private ownership, control, and operation. This will take place when 51 percent of the class A stock issued to the United States and outstanding at any time after September 30, 1995, has been fully redeemed and retired. The Bank board holds at least four regularly scheduled meetings a year. Activities of RTB are carried out by RUS employees and the Department's Office of the General Counsel.

Water and Waste Direct and Guaranteed Loan Program Direct loans may be made to develop water and wastewater systems, including solid waste disposal and storm drainage, in rural areas, cities, and towns with a population of 10,000 or less.

Funds are available to public entities, such as municipalities, counties, special-purpose districts, and Indian tribes. In addition, funds may be made available to nonprofit corporations. Priority is given to public entities in areas with less than 5,500 people to restore a deteriorating water supply or to improve, enlarge, or modify a water facility or an inadequate waste facility. Preference is given to requests which involve the

merging of small facilities and those serving low-income communities. Applicants must be unable to obtain funds from other sources at reasonable rates and terms. The maximum term for all loans is 40 years. However, no repayment period will exceed State statutes or the useful life of the facility. Interest rates may be obtained from USDA Rural Development field offices.

Guaranteed loans may be made for the same purpose as direct loans. They are made and serviced by lenders such as banks and savings and loan associations. Normally, guarantees will not exceed 80 percent on any loss of interest or principal on the loan.

Water and Waste Disposal Grants

Grants may be made to reduce water and waste disposal costs to a reasonable level for users of the system. Grants may be made, in some instances, up to 75 percent of eligible project costs. Requirements for applicants are the same as for loans.

Emergency Community Water

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

Technical Assistance and Training

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

Solid Waste Management Grants

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

and improve planning and management of solid waste facilities.

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

Distance Learning and Medical Link Grant Program The 1990 farm bill authorized the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program to provide grants to rural schools and health care providers. The 1996 farm bill reauthorized the grant program and established a new loan component. The program helps rural schools and health care providers invest in telecommunications facilities and equipment to bring to rural areas educational and medical resources that otherwise might be unavailable.

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

Alternative Agricultural Research and Commercialization Corporation

As an independent entity within USDA, the Alternative Agricultural Research and Commercialization Corporation (AARCC) provides and monitors financial assistance for the development and commercialization of new nonfood and nonfeed products made from agricultural/forestry commodities. By law, AARCC is administered by an 11-member board comprising representatives for processing, financial, producer, and scientific interests.

The Corporation's mission is to assist the private sector in closing the gap between research results and commercialization of industrial nonfood and nonfeed products made from farm and forestry materials. It also seeks to expand market opportunities through development of value-added industrial products and promotion of environmentally friendly products. Any private individual or firm may apply for assistance. While most of the Corporation's clients are small firms, nonprofit organizations and large businesses have also been successful

applicants. Universities and similar institutions may participate as well.

The Corporation can supply financial assistance at the precommercialization stage of a project—that point in a project when the costs are the greatest and the ability to obtain lending from traditional sources is the most difficult. Financial assistance is in the form of a repayable cooperative agreement and includes a repayment portion that recognizes the investment risk taken by AARCC. Applicants are expected to provide at least a 1:1 match when seeking funding from AARCC. The Corporation receives an annual appropriation from Congress and operates under a revolving fund. As Corporation-funded projects become profitable and reimburse AARCC, the money will be returned to the fund to help finance future projects.

For further information, contact the Alternative Agricultural Research and Commercialization Corporation, Room 0156, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250-0401. Phone, 202-690-1633.

Marketing and Regulatory Programs

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

Agricultural Marketing Service

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

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

Standardization, Grading, and Classing Grade standards have been established for about 230 agricultural commodities to help buyers and sellers trade on agreed-upon quality levels. Standards are developed with the benefit of views from those in the industries directly affected and others interested. The Service also participates in developing international standards to facilitate trade.

Grading and classing services are provided to certify the grade and quality of products. These grading services are provided to buyers and sellers of live cattle, swine, sheep, meat, poultry, eggs, rabbits, fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, peanuts, dairy products, and tobacco. Classing services are provided to buyers and sellers of cotton and cotton products. These services are mainly voluntary and are provided upon request and for a fee. The Service also is responsible for the certification of

turpentine and other naval stores products, and the testing of seed.

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

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

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

Section 32 Programs Under section 32 of the act of August 24, 1935, as amended (7 U.S.C. 612c), 30 percent of customs receipts collected during each calendar year are automatically appropriated for expanding outlets for various commodities. Portions of these funds are transferred to the Food and Nutrition Service of USDA and to the Department of Commerce. Remaining funds are used to purchase commodities for the National School Lunch Program and other feeding programs, for diversion to other outlets, and for

administering agreement and order programs.

Regulatory Programs The Service administers several regulatory programs designed collectively to protect producers, handlers, and consumers of agricultural commodities from financial loss or personal injury resulting from careless, deceptive, or fraudulent marketing practices. Such regulatory programs encourage fair trading practices in the marketing of fruits and vegetables, require truth in seed labeling and in advertising.

Under the Egg Products Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 1031–1056), the Service provides voluntary laboratory analyses of egg products, and monitors the disposition of restricted shell eggs—eggs that are a potential health hazard.

Marketing Agreements and Orders

These programs, under authority of the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937 (7 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*), help to establish and maintain orderly marketing conditions for certain commodities. Milk marketing orders establish minimum prices that handlers or distributors are required to pay producers. Programs for fruits, vegetables, and related specialty crops like nuts and spearmint oil help stabilize supplies and market prices. In some cases, they also authorize research and market development activities, including advertising supported by assessments that handlers pay. Through orderly marketing, adjusting the supply to demand, and avoiding unreasonable fluctuations during the marketing season, the income of producers is increased by normal market forces, and consumer interests are protected through quality and quantity control.

Federal marketing orders originate with a request from a producer group to the Secretary of Agriculture. The Secretary can conduct hearings and referenda based on the producer group's proposal for a marketing order. Producer and handler assessments finance their operations.

In carrying out the Government role, the Service ensures that persons interested in the development and operation of the programs have a fair hearing and that each marketing order

works according to Federal law and established rules and guidelines.

Plant Variety Protection Program

Under authority of the Plant Variety Protection Act (7 U.S.C. 2321 *et seq.*), the Service administers a program that provides for the issuance of "certificates of plant variety protection." These certificates afford developers of novel varieties of sexually reproduced plants exclusive rights to sell, reproduce, import, or export such varieties, or use them in the production of hybrids or different varieties for a period of 20 years for non-woody plants and 25 years for woody plants.

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

Transportation Programs The Service is also responsible for the development of an efficient transportation system for rural America that begins at the farm gate and moves agricultural and other rural products through the Nation's highways, railroads, airports, and waterways, and into the domestic and international marketplace. To accomplish this, AMS conducts economic studies and analyses of these systems, and represents agricultural and rural transportation interests in policy and regulatory forums. To provide direct assistance to the transportation community, AMS supplies research and technical information to producers, producer groups, shippers, exporters, rural communities, carriers, governmental agencies, and universities.

The Service carries out responsibilities of USDA's former Office of Transportation under the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 (7 U.S.C. 1281), the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C. 1621), the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of

1954 (7 U.S.C. 1691), the Rural Development Act of 1972 (7 U.S.C. 1921 note), the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs Act (7 U.S.C. 4401), and the Cooperative Marketing Act of 1926 (7 U.S.C. 451–457).

Organic Standards Under the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 501–522), the Service assists a National Organic Standards Board in developing national organic standards.

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

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

Field Organization Programs and activities in the field are carried out through a variety of different types of organizations reporting to their respective Washington components.

For further information, contact the Information Staff, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202-720-8999.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

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

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) was reestablished by the Secretary of Agriculture on March 14, 1977, pursuant to authority contained in

5 U.S.C. 301 and Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (5 U.S.C. app.).

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

Plant Protection and Quarantine

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

Agricultural quarantine inspection officials administer Federal regulations that prohibit or restrict the entry of foreign pests and plants, plant products, animal products and byproducts, and other materials that may harbor pests or diseases. Inspection service is maintained at all major sea, air, border, and interior ports of entry in the continental United States and in Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Bahamas, and Bermuda. Services also are provided on a regular or on-call basis at some 500 outlying ports and military installations throughout the country.

Other responsibilities include the inspection and certification of domestic commodities for export; regulation of the import and export of endangered plant species and of genetically engineered organisms and products that present a plant pest risk; and ensuring that imported seed is free of noxious weeds.

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

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

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

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

International Services Service activities in the international arena include conducting cooperative plant and animal pest and disease control, eradication, and surveillance programs in foreign countries. These programs provide a first

line of defense for the United States against threats such as screwworm, medfly, foot-and-mouth disease, and other exotic diseases and pests. The Service also provides international representation concerning sanitary and phytosanitary technical trade issues, and manages programs for overseas preclearance of commodities, passengers, and U.S. military activities.

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

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

Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration

The Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) comprises the former Federal Grain Inspection Service and the former Packers and Stockyards Administration.

The primary task of GIPSA is to carry out the provisions of the United States Grain Standards Act (7 U.S.C. 71 *et seq.*), the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921, as amended (7 U.S.C. 181-229), the Truth in Lending and Fair Credit Billing Acts (15 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*), and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (15 U.S.C. 1691 *et seq.*) with respect to firms

subject to GIPSA. The Administration also manages the provisions of section 1324 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (7 U.S.C. 1631), certifying State central filing systems for notification of liens against farm products and ensures integrity in the inspection, weighing, and handling of U.S. grain.

The Administration is responsible for establishing official U.S. standards for grain and other assigned commodities, and for administering a nationwide official inspection and weighing system. It may, in response to formal application, authorize private and State agencies to perform official services under the authority contained in the act.

Two of GIPSA's three grain inspection divisions are located in Washington, DC; the third is located in Kansas City, MO. Most employees work in field offices around the Nation.

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

To ensure that the official U.S. grain standards are applied uniformly nationwide, GIPSA's field offices provide oversight, guidance, and assistance to non-Federal agencies performing inspection activities, both at export and inland inspection points.

Buyers and sellers may request appeal inspections of original inspection results, first from a field office and then, if desired, from GIPSA's Board of Appeals and Review. The Administration maintains a quality control program to monitor the national inspection system and to ensure that all field locations accurately and uniformly apply the U.S. grain standards.

Weighing Official weighing of U.S. export grain is performed at port locations by GIPSA or by State agencies

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

As with inspection activities, GIPSA field offices provide oversight, guidance, and assistance to non-Federal agencies performing official weighing services. With the support of the Association of American Railroads and user fees, it conducts a railroad track scale-testing program which includes an annual testing service for all State and railroad company-owned master scales. The Administration is the only entity, public or private, which connects all railroad track scales to the national standards.

Standardization The Administration is responsible for establishing, maintaining, and, as needed, revising official U.S. standards. Such standards exist for corn, wheat, rye, oats, barley, flaxseed, sorghum, soybeans, triticale, sunflower seed, canola, and mixed grain. It is authorized to perform applied research to develop methods of improving accuracy and uniformity in grading grain.

It is also responsible for standardization and inspection activities for rice, dry beans, peas, lentils, hay, straw, hops, and related processed grain commodities under the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended (7 U.S.C. 1621). Although standards no longer exist for hay, straw, and hops, GIPSA maintains inspection procedures for and retains authority to inspect these commodities.

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

quality in wheat. Included in this program area are also the development of a new wheat classification system, evaluation of prototype wheat hardness meters, and adapting measurement techniques for pesticides, mycotoxins, heavy metals, vitamins, and grain odor for use in the official grain inspection system.

Compliance The Administration's compliance activities ensure accurate and uniform implementation of the act, applicable provisions of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, and related regulations—including designating States and private agencies to carry out official inspection and weighing functions and monitoring, and overseeing and reviewing the operations of such agencies to ensure adequate performance.

The agency administers a registration program for all firms that export grain from the United States. In conjunction with the Office of the Inspector General, it carries out a program for investigating reported violations, and initiates followup and corrective actions when appropriate. The total compliance program ensures the integrity of the national inspection and weighing system.

Packers and Stockyards Activities The Packers and Stockyards Act is an

antitrust, trade practice, and financial protection law. Its principal purpose is to maintain effective competition and fair trade practices in the marketing of livestock, meat, and poultry for the protection of livestock and poultry producers. Members of the livestock, poultry, and meat industries are also protected against unfair or monopolistic practices of competitors. The act also protects consumers against unfair business practices in the marketing of meats and poultry and against restrictions of competition that could unduly affect meat and poultry prices.

The provisions of the Packers and Stockyards Act are enforced by investigations of violations of the act with emphasis on payment protection; detecting instances of commercial bribery, fraud in livestock marketing, and false weighing; requiring adequate bond coverage for commission firms, dealers, and packers; and the surveillance of marketing methods at public markets and in geographical market areas of the country.

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

Food Safety

Food Safety and Inspection Service

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) was established by the Secretary of Agriculture on June 17, 1981, pursuant to authority contained in 5 U.S.C. 301 and Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (5 U.S.C. app.). At that time, the Service was delegated authority for regulating the meat and poultry industry to ensure that meat and poultry, and meat and poultry products moving in interstate and foreign commerce were safe, wholesome, unadulterated, and accurately labeled. Under the Secretary's Memorandum No. 1010-1, dated October 23, 1994, the Service's

authority was extended to include the inspection of egg products.

Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products

Inspection Federal meat and poultry inspection is mandatory for the following animals and birds used for human food: cattle, calves, swine, goats, sheep, lambs, horses (and other equines), chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, and guineas. The work includes inspection of each animal or bird at slaughter, and inspection of processed products during various stages of production. Under the Egg Products Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 1031-1056), the Service conducts mandatory, continuous inspection of the production of liquid, dried, and frozen

egg products, to ensure that egg products are safe, wholesome, unadulterated, and accurately labeled. The Service tests samples of egg products, and meat and poultry products for microbial and chemical contaminants to monitor trends for enforcement purposes.

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

The Service monitors livestock upon arrival at federally inspected facilities to ensure compliance with the Humane Slaughter Act (7 U.S.C. 1901–1906); conducts voluntary reimbursed inspection for rabbits, other domestic

food animals, bison, other exotic food animals (9 U.S.C. 3521), ratites, and certain egg products not covered by the inspection law (7 U.S.C. 1621–1627); and ensures that inedible egg products and inedible products from meat or poultry, such as offal rendered for animal feed, are properly identified and isolated from edible products (21 U.S.C. 1031–1056 and 7 U.S.C. 1624, respectively).

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

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

Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

In order to reduce hunger, the Food and Nutrition Service, in partnership with cooperative organizations, provides children and needy families access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence.

Food and Nutrition Service

[For the Food and Nutrition Service statement of organization, see the *Federal Register* of June 6, 1970, 35 FR 8835]

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the USDA food assistance programs. These programs, which serve one in six Americans, provide a Federal safety net to people in need and represent our Nation's commitment to the principle that no one in this country should fear hunger or experience want. The goals of the programs are to provide needy persons with access to a more

nutritious diet, to improve the eating habits of the Nation's children, and to help America's farmers by providing an outlet for distribution of foods purchased under farmer assistance authorities.

Many of the food programs administered by FNS originated long before the agency was established in 1969. The Food Stamp Program, now the cornerstone of USDA food assistance, began in its modern form in 1961, but it originated as the Food Stamp Plan to help those in need in the 1930's. The National School Lunch Program also has its roots in Depression-era efforts to help low-income children. Today, its mission encompasses teaching children about nutrition and improving the nutrition standards of school meals. The Needy Family Program, which has evolved into the Food Distribution Program on Indian reservations, was the primary means of food assistance during the Great Depression.

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

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

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

- The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides WIC participants with increased access to fresh produce at farmers' markets, which promotes the local farm economy. Participants receive coupons to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from authorized farmers.

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

- The National School Lunch Program supports nonprofit food services in elementary and secondary schools and in residential child-care institutions to improve the health and nutrition of the Nation's children. More than half the meals served through these institutions are free or at reduced cost.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- The Nutrition Assistance Program, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is a block grant program that provides cash and coupons to participants in three territories.

- The Homeless Children Nutrition Program reimburses providers for nutritious meals served to homeless preschool children in emergency shelters.

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

No person may be discriminated against because of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, or handicap in the programs administered by the Food and Consumer Service.

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

Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

The Center coordinates nutrition policy in USDA and provides overall leadership

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

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

Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

Through the Farm Service Agency (FSA), this mission area administers farm commodity, crop insurance, and resource conservation programs for farmers, and makes loans through a network of State and county offices. Agency programs are directed at agricultural producers or, in the case of loans, at those with farming experience.

Farm Service Agency

The Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (110 Stat. 888) significantly changed U.S. agricultural policy by removing the link between income support payments and farm prices. The law provided that farmers who participated in the wheat, feed grains, cotton, and rice programs in any one of the previous 5 years could enter into 7-year production flexibility contracts and receive a series of fixed payments. These payments are independent of farm prices and specific crop production, in contrast to the past, when deficiency payments were based on farm prices and the production of specific crops. The Federal Government no longer requires land to be idled or denies payments if farmers switch from their historical crop. The contract, however, requires participating producers to comply with existing conservation plans for the farm, wetland provisions, and planting flexibility

provisions, as well as to keep the land in agricultural uses.

The law provided for a one-time signup which ended August 1, 1996. There will be no additional signups except for land coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs are described below.

Commodity Loan Programs The Agency administers commodity loan programs for wheat, rice, corn, grain sorghum, barley, oats, oilseeds, tobacco, peanuts, upland and extra-long-staple cotton, and sugar. It provides operating personnel for the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), which supports the prices of some agricultural commodities through loans and purchases. This provides farmers with interim financing and helps maintain balanced and adequate supplies of farm commodities, and their orderly distribution, throughout the year and during times of surplus and scarcity. Instead of immediately selling the crop after harvest, a farmer who grows one or more of most field crops can store the produce and take out a "nonrecourse" loan for its value, pledging the crop itself as collateral. "Nonrecourse" means that the producer can discharge debts in full by forfeiting or delivering the commodity to the Government.

A producer must have entered into a production flexibility contract to be eligible for nonrecourse marketing assistance loans for wheat, feed grains, rice, and upland cotton. Any production of a contract commodity by a producer who has entered into a production flexibility contract is eligible for loans.

Nonrecourse loans are also available for oilseeds, tobacco, peanuts, extra-long-staple cotton, raw cane sugar, and refined beet sugar, regardless of whether the producer has entered into a production flexibility contract. Price support for the marketing quota crops—tobacco and peanuts—is made available through producer loan associations. By law, these programs must operate at no net cost to the U.S. Treasury, and no-net cost and marketing assessments are applied to both producers and purchasers.

Commodity Purchase Programs Under the dairy price support program, CCC buys surplus butter, cheese, and nonfat dry milk from processors at announced prices to support the price of milk. These purchases help maintain market prices at the legislated support level, and the commodities are used for hunger relief both in the United States and in foreign countries.

Emergency Assistance In the aftermath of a natural disaster, FSA makes available a variety of emergency assistance programs to farmers in counties that have been designated or declared disaster areas, including cost-share assistance to producers who do not have enough feed to maintain livestock because of a loss of a substantial amount of their normal feed production. Emergency loans are also available. In the event of a national emergency, FSA is responsible for ensuring adequate food production and distribution, as well as the continued availability of feed, seed, fertilizer, and farm machinery.

Farm Loans The Agency offers direct and guaranteed farm ownership and operating loan programs to farmers who are temporarily unable to obtain private commercial credit. Often, these are beginning farmers who can't qualify for

conventional loans because they have insufficient net worth. The Agency also helps established farmers who have suffered financial setbacks from natural disasters or whose resources are too limited to maintain profitable farming operations.

Under the guaranteed loan program, the Agency guarantees qualifying loans made by conventional agricultural lenders for up to 90 percent of principal. Farmers must apply to a conventional lender, who then arranges for the guarantee.

For those unable to qualify for a guaranteed loan, FSA also lends directly to borrowers. To qualify for a direct farm ownership or operating loan, the applicant must be able to show sufficient repayment ability and pledge enough collateral to fully secure the loan. Funding authorities for direct loans are limited, and applicants may have to wait until funds become available.

Conservation Programs The Conservation Reserve Program protects the Nation's most fragile farmland by encouraging farmers to stop growing crops on highly erodible and other environmentally sensitive acreage. In return for planting a protective cover of grass or trees on vulnerable property, the owner receives a rental payment each year of a multi-year contract. Cost-share payments are also available to help establish permanent areas of grass, legumes, trees, windbreaks, or plants that improve water quality and give shelter and food to wildlife.

The Agency also works with other USDA agencies to deliver conservation programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which helps farmers and ranchers improve their property to protect the environment and conserve soil and water resources.

For further information, contact the Public Affairs Staff, Farm Service Agency, Department of Agriculture, Stop 0506, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202-720-5237. Internet, <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/>.

Commodity Credit Corporation

The Commodity Credit Corporation was organized October 17, 1933, pursuant to Executive Order 6340 of October 16,

1933, under the laws of the State of Delaware, as an agency of the United States. From October 17, 1933, to July 1, 1939, the Corporation was managed and operated in close affiliation with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. On July 1, 1939, the agency was transferred to the Department of Agriculture by the President's Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 1939 (5 U.S.C. app.). Approval of the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act on June 29, 1948 (15 U.S.C. 714), subsequently amended, established the Corporation, effective July 1, 1948, as an agency and instrumentality of the United States under a permanent Federal charter.

The Corporation stabilizes, supports, and protects farm income and prices, assists in maintaining balanced and adequate supplies of agricultural commodities and their products, and facilitates the orderly distribution of commodities.

The Corporation is managed by a Board of Directors, subject to the general supervision and direction of the Secretary of Agriculture, who is an *ex officio* Director and Chairman of the Board. The Board consists of seven members (in addition to the Secretary of Agriculture), who are appointed by the President of the United States.

The Corporation is capitalized at \$100 million and has statutory authority to borrow up to \$30 billion from the U.S. Treasury. It utilizes the personnel and facilities of the Farm Service Agency and, in certain foreign assistance operations, the Foreign Agricultural Service to carry out its activities.

A commodity office in Kansas City, MO, has specific responsibilities for the acquisition, handling, storage, and disposal of commodities and products held by the Corporation.

Foreign Assistance Under Public Law 480, the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954, as amended (7 U.S.C. 1691), the Corporation carries out assigned foreign assistance activities, such as guaranteeing the credit sale of U.S. agricultural commodities abroad. Major emphasis is also being directed toward meeting the needs of developing nations under the Food for Peace Act of

1966 (7 U.S.C. 1691), which further amends the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954. Under these authorities, agricultural commodities are supplied and exported to combat hunger and malnutrition and to encourage economic development in developing countries. In addition, the Corporation supplies commodities under the Food for Progress Program to provide assistance to developing democracies.

The Corporation encourages U.S. financial institutions to provide financing to developing countries under the Export Credit Guarantee Programs administered by the Foreign Agricultural Service.

For further information, contact the Public Affairs Staff, Farm Service Agency, Department of Agriculture, Stop 0506, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202-720-5237. Internet, <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/>. For information about Commodity Credit Corporation export programs, contact the Information Division, Foreign Agricultural Service, Department of Agriculture. Phone, 202-720-3448.

Risk Management Agency

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) helps to stabilize the agricultural economy by providing a sound system of crop insurance. Mandated by the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act (7 U.S.C. 6933), RMA administers the programs of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC), authorized by the Federal Crop Insurance Act (7 U.S.C. 1501 *et seq.*), and has oversight for other programs related to the risk management of U.S. crops and commodities.

The Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services serves as Chairman of the seven-member FCIC Board of Directors. Other members of the Board are the Under Secretary for Research Education and Economics, the RMA Administrator, and four non-Government members: three active farmers and one expert on crop insurance. The Board's primary purpose is to oversee the administration of the Federal crop insurance program.

FCIC reinsures 18 insurance companies and a program in Puerto Rico. RMA's national offices are located in Washington, DC, and Kansas City,

MO. Field offices include 10 Regional Service Offices and 6 Compliance Field Offices.

Coverage is now available on over 75 percent of the value of total U.S. crop production. Generally, multiple peril crop insurance (MPCI) policies insure farmers and ranchers against unexpected production losses from natural causes, including drought, excessive moisture, hail, wind, flooding, hurricanes, tornadoes, and lightning. Policies do not cover losses resulting from neglect, poor farming practices, or theft. Standard MPCI policies are based on the producers' actual production history. To make coverage affordable, premiums are subsidized.

RMA also reinsures several revenue based plans of insurance. Generally, revenue insurance provides protection against loss of income due to low yields, prices, or both. One plan, Crop Revenue Coverage, is widely available on corn, grain sorghum, cotton, soybeans, and wheat. Producers must purchase crop insurance by the sales closing date established for the crop they wish to insure. Policies are sold and serviced by private crop insurance agents and companies.

For further information, contact the Office of the Administrator, Risk Management Agency, Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202-690-2803. For information about Federal crop insurance programs, contact the Research and Development Division, 9435 Holmes Road, Kansas City, MO 64131. Phone, 816-926-7394. Internet, <http://act.fcic.usda.gov/>. For information about the Risk Management Education outreach initiative, contact the Risk Management Education Division, Risk Management Agency, Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202-690-2957. Internet, <http://www.usda.gov/rma/rme>.

Foreign Agricultural Service

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

analysts, marketing specialists, negotiators, and other professionals.

The Foreign Agricultural Service maintains a worldwide agricultural intelligence and reporting system through its attaché service with staff posted in more than 75 countries around the world. They represent the Department of Agriculture and provide information and data on foreign government agricultural policies, analyses of supply and demand conditions, commercial trade relationships, and market opportunities. They report on more than 100 farm commodities, weather, economic factors, and related subjects that affect agriculture and agricultural trade.

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

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

To follow foreign governmental actions that affect the market for U.S. agricultural commodities, FAS relies on its agricultural counselors and attachés. In Washington, a staff of international trade specialists analyzes the trade policies and practices of foreign governments to ensure conduct in conformance with international treaty obligations. During international negotiations, FAS provides staff and support for U.S. agricultural representation.

The Service has a continuing market development program to create, maintain, and expand commercial export markets for U.S. agricultural products. It carries out programs with nonprofit commodity groups, trade associations, and State agriculture departments and

their regional associations. It manages market opportunity referral services and organizes trade fairs and sales teams.

The Service's Office of the General Sales Manager also oversees agricultural functions under the Public Law 480 Food for Peace Program, title I (7 U.S.C. 1701); section 416(b) of the Agricultural Act of 1949 (7 U.S.C. 1431); the Food for Progress Program authorized by the Food for Progress Act of 1985; and the Commodity Credit Corporation's (CCC) Export Credit Guarantee Program, Intermediate Export Credit Guarantee Program, Supplier Credit Guarantee Program, Facility Guarantee Program, and Emerging Markets Program.

The Export Credit Guarantee Program (GSM-102) and the Intermediate Export Credit Guarantee Program (GSM-103) encourage the development or expansion of overseas markets for U.S. agricultural commodities by providing guarantees on private financing of U.S. exports to foreign buyers purchasing on credit terms. The foreign buyer contracts for the purchase of U.S. commodities on a deferred-payment basis of 3 years or fewer under GSM-102, or between 3 and 7 years under GSM-103. The foreign buyer's bank issues a letter of credit to guarantee payment to the U.S. exporter or an assignee U.S. lending institution. To receive the payment guarantee, the exporter registers the sale with CCC prior to export and pays a guarantee fee. The payment guarantee is implemented only if the foreign bank fails to pay the exporter or the assignee U.S. lending institution.

The CCC considers coverage on sales of any U.S. agricultural commodity that has the potential of expanding U.S. export markets. A U.S. exporter, private foreign buyer, or foreign government may submit requests that may result in authorized guarantee coverage.

Under the Supplier Credit Guarantee Program, CCC guarantees a portion of a payment due from an importer under short-term financing (up to 180 days) that an exporter has extended directly to the importer for the purchase of U.S. agricultural commodities and products. This direct credit must be secured by a promissory note signed by the importer.

Regulations for this program are found in 7 CFR part 1493, subpart D.

Under the Facility Guarantee Program, CCC guarantees to facilitate the financing of manufactured goods and services exported from the United States to improve or establish agriculture-related facilities in emerging markets. The Facility Guarantee Program is designed to enhance sales of U.S. agricultural commodities and products to emerging markets where the demand for such commodities and products may be constricted due to inadequate storage, processing, or handling capabilities. Facility Guarantee Program regulations are a subpart of the GSM-102 and GSM-103 regulations (7 CFR part 1493).

The Emerging Markets Program was authorized by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 and amended by the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 to promote agricultural exports to emerging markets through the sharing of U.S. agricultural expertise by technical assistance. Technical assistance must develop, maintain, or expand markets for U.S. agricultural exports in emerging markets; improve the effectiveness of food and rural business systems in emerging markets, including potential reductions in trade barriers; and increase prospects for U.S. trade and investment in these countries.

Several export assistance programs are designed to counter or offset the adverse effects from competitors' unfair trade practices on U.S. agriculture. These programs include the Export Enhancement Program (EEP) and the Dairy Export Incentive Program (DEIP).

Under EEP, USDA provides CCC-owned commodities or cash as export bonuses to make U.S. commodities more competitive in the world marketplace. The DEIP and EEP programs are similar, but DEIP is restricted to dairy products.

The Foreign Agricultural Service is also responsible for sales of CCC-owned surplus commodities to private traders, foreign governments, and nonprofit organizations. However, surplus commodities have not been available since fiscal year 1995.

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

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

The Service's programs enhance U.S. agriculture's competitiveness by providing U.S. agriculturalists and scientists with linkages to world resources. These linkages often produce new germplasm and technologies that can be vital to improving our current agricultural base and producing new and alternative products. They also foster relationships and understandings that result in trade opportunities and strengthened strategic and political ties.

The Service is a link between the technical expertise of the U.S. agricultural community and Third World nations. By sharing agricultural knowledge with less-developed nations, the United States provides tools to help build stable economies and a more

prosperous world. In the process, less-developed nations overcome the barriers of hunger and poverty and gain the economic means to buy needed goods and services in the world marketplace.

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

These activities serve the needs of other USDA agencies, the Agency for International Development, other public and private institutions, foreign nations, development banks, and the U.S. university and agricultural communities.

For further information, contact the Information Division, Foreign Agricultural Service, Ag Stop 1004, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250-1004. Phone, 202-720-7115. Fax, 202-720-1727. Internet, <http://www.fas.usda.gov/>.

Research, Education, and Economics

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

Agricultural Research Service

The Agricultural Research Service conducts research to develop and transfer solutions to agricultural problems of high national priority. It provides information access and dissemination to ensure high-quality,

safe food and other agricultural products; assess the nutritional needs of Americans; sustain a competitive agricultural economy; enhance the natural resource base and the environment; and provide economic opportunities for rural citizens, communities, and society as a whole.

All administrative and management responsibilities of the four Research, Education, and Economic agencies—Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), Economic Research Service (ERS), and National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)—are administered by the ARS Administrative and Financial

Management Unit headquartered in Washington, DC.

Research activities are carried out at 105 domestic locations (including Puerto Rico) and 3 overseas locations. Much of this research is conducted in cooperation with partners in State universities and experiment stations, other Federal

agencies, and private organizations. A national program staff, headquartered in Beltsville, MD, is the focal point in the overall planning and coordination of ARS' research programs. Day-to-day management of the respective programs for specific field locations is assigned to eight area offices.

Area Offices—Agricultural Research Service

Office	Address
BELTSVILLE AREA—Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, National Arboretum, Washington, DC	Bldg. 003, Beltsville Agricultural Research Ctr. W., Beltsville, MD 20705
MIDSOUTH AREA—AL, KY, LA, MS, TN	P.O. Box 225, Stoneville, MS 38776
MIDWEST AREA—IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI	1815 N. University St., Peoria, IL 61804
NORTHERN PLAINS AREA—CO, KS, MT, ND, NE, SD, UT, WY	Suite 150, 1201 Oakridge Rd., Fort Collins, CO 80525-5562
NORTH ATLANTIC AREA—CT, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, WV	600 E. Mermaid Ln., Philadelphia, PA 19118
PACIFIC WEST AREA—AK, AZ, CA, HI, ID, NV, OR, WA	800 Buchanan St., Albany, CA 94710
SOUTH ATLANTIC AREA—FL, GA, NC, PR, SC, VI, VA	P.O. Box 5677, Athens, GA 30613
SOUTHERN PLAINS AREA—AR, NM, OK, TX	Suite 230, 7607 Eastmark Dr., College Station, TX 77840

The National Agricultural Library (NAL), administered by ARS, provides information services over a broad range of agricultural interests to a wide cross-section of users, from research scientists to the general public. The Library assists its users through a variety of specialized information centers. Its staff uses advanced information technologies to generate new information products, creating an electronic library as it improves access to the knowledge stored in its multimedia collection of more than 2 million items.

Information is made available through loans, photocopies, reference services, and literature searches. A subject profiling system for selective searches of agricultural data bases is available for USDA scientists. Citations to the agricultural literature are stored in the Agricultural Online Access (AGRICOLA) data base, available through online computer systems and on compact disc. The Library also distributes in the United States the AGRIS data base of citations to the agricultural literature prepared by centers in various parts of the world and coordinated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

For further information, contact the Information Staff, Agricultural Research Service, Department of Agriculture, 6303 Ivy Lane, Room 450, Greenbelt, MD 20770. Phone, 301-344-2340.

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) expands the research and higher education functions of the former Cooperative State Research Service and the education and outreach functions of the former Extension Service. The result is better customer service and an enhanced ability to respond to national priorities.

The Service links the research and education resources and activities of USDA and works with the following institutions: land-grant institutions in each State, territory, and the District of Columbia; more than 130 colleges of agriculture; 59 agricultural experiment stations; 57 cooperative extension services; 63 schools of forestry; sixteen 1890 historically Black land-grant institutions and Tuskegee University; 27 colleges of veterinary medicine; 42 schools and colleges of family and consumer services; twenty-nine 1994 Native American land-grant institutions; and 127 Hispanic-serving institutions, including 81 members and 45 associate

members of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.

In cooperation with its partners and customers, CSREES provides the focus to advance a global system of research, extension, and higher education in the food and agricultural sciences and related environmental and human sciences to benefit people, communities, and the Nation.

The Service's mission emphasizes partnerships with the public and private sectors to maximize the effectiveness of limited resources. Its programs increase and provide access to scientific knowledge; strengthen the capabilities of land-grant and other institutions in research, extension, and higher education; increase access to and use of improved communication and network systems; and promote informed decisionmaking by producers, families, and social conditions in the United States and globally. These conditions include improved agricultural and other economic enterprises; safer, cleaner water, food, and air; enhanced stewardship and management of natural resources; healthier, more responsible and more productive individuals, families, and communities; and a stable, secure, diverse, and affordable national food supply.

The Service provides research, extension, and education leadership through programs in Plant and Animal Systems; Natural Resources and Environment; Economic and Community Systems; Families, 4-H, and Nutrition; Partnerships; Competitive Research Grants and Awards Management; Science and Education Resources Development; and Communications, Technology, Distance Education, and Special Programs.

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

As a recognized leader in the design, organization, and application of advanced communication technologies and in meeting the growing demand for enhanced distance education

capabilities, CSREES provides essential community access to research and education knowledge and connects the private citizen to other Federal Government information.

For further information, contact the Communications, Technology, and Distance Education Office, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250-0906. Phone, 202-720-4651. Fax, 202-690-0289. TDD, 202-690-1899. E-mail, CSREES@reusda.gov. Internet, <http://www.reusda.gov/>.

Economic Research Service

The mission of the Economic Research Service (ERS) is to provide economic and other social science information and analysis for public and private decisions on agriculture, food, natural resources, and rural America. The Service produces such information for use by the general public and to help the executive and legislative branches develop, administer, and evaluate agricultural and rural policies and programs.

The Service produces economic information through a program of research and analysis on: domestic and international agricultural developments; statistical indicators of food and consumer issues and concerns, including nutrition education and food assistance, food safety regulation, determinants of consumer demand for quality and safety, and food marketing trends and developments; agricultural resource and environmental issues; and the effect of public and private actions and policies on national rural and agricultural conditions, including the transformation of the rural economy, the financial performance of the farm sector, and the implications of changing farm credit and financial market structures.

For further information, contact the Information Services Division, Economics Research Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20036-5831. Phone, 202-694-5050.

Office of Energy The Office of Energy serves as the focal point for all energy-related matters within the Department. The Office is responsible for developing and coordinating all USDA energy policies; reviewing and evaluating all USDA energy and energy-related

programs; evaluating the economics of new nonfood uses for agricultural crops; serving as economic liaison on new uses issues; and providing liaison with the Department of Energy and other Federal agencies and departments on energy activities that may affect agriculture and rural America. A major component of this is the responsibility for the coordination and evaluation of the departmental Biofuels Program.

The Office also represents the Department in meetings with agriculture, industry, and consumer groups to discuss effects of departmental energy policies, programs, and proposals on the agricultural sector and rural economy.

For further information, contact the Information Services Division, Economic Research Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20036-5831. Phone, 202-694-5050.

National Agricultural Statistics Service

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

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

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

Beginning in fiscal year 1997 NASS is responsible for conducting the census of agriculture, formerly conducted by the Bureau of the Census, Commerce Department. The census of agriculture is taken every 5 years and provides comprehensive data on the agricultural economy down to the county level. Periodic reports are also issued on irrigation and horticultural specialties.

The 45 State-Federal offices, serving all 50 States, and the national office prepare weekly, monthly, annual, and other periodic reports for free distribution to the news media, Congress, and survey respondents. The reports are available to others free on the Internet, or on a subscription basis. Information on crop and livestock products appears in about 400 reports issued annually. Cooperative agreements with State agencies also permit preparation and publication of estimates of individual crops and livestock by counties in most States.

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

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

Natural Resources and Environment

This mission area is responsible for fostering sound stewardship of 75 percent of the Nation's total land area. Ecosystems are the underpinning for the Department's operating philosophy in this area, in order to maximize stewardship of our natural resources.

This approach ensures that products, values, services, and uses desired by people are produced in ways that sustain healthy, productive ecosystems.

Forest Service

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

The Forest Service was created by the Transfer Act of February 1, 1905 (16 U.S.C. 472), which transferred the Federal forest reserves and the responsibility for their management from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture. The forest reserves were established by the President from the public domain under authority of the Creative Act of March 3, 1891 (26 Stat. 1103). The protection and development of the reserves (which became the national forests in 1907) are governed by the Organic Act of June 4, 1897, as amended (16 U.S.C. 473–478); the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of June 12, 1960 (16 U.S.C. 528–531); the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1601–1610); and the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (90 Stat. 2947). The Weeks Law of March 1, 1911, as amended (16 U.S.C. 480), allowed the Government to purchase and exchange land for national forests.

Objectives The Forest Service has the Federal responsibility for national leadership in forestry. As set forth in law, its mission is to achieve quality land management under the sustainable, multiple-use management concept to meet the diverse needs of people. To accomplish this goal, it has adopted objectives which include:

- advocating a conservation ethic in promoting the health, productivity, diversity, and beauty of forests and associated lands;
- listening to people and responding to their diverse needs in making decisions;
- protecting and managing the national forests and grasslands to best demonstrate the sustainable, multiple-use management concept;
- providing technical and financial assistance to State and private forest landowners, encouraging them toward active stewardship and quality land management in meeting their specific objectives;

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

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

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

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

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

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

These lands are protected as much as possible from wildfire, epidemics of disease and insect pests, erosion, floods, and water and air pollution. Burned areas get emergency seeding treatment to prevent massive erosion and stream siltation. Roads and trails are built where needed to allow for closely regulated timber harvesting and to give the public access to outdoor recreation areas and provide scenic drives and hikes. Picnic, camping, water-sport, skiing, and other areas are provided with facilities for public convenience and enjoyment. Timber harvesting methods are used that will protect the land and streams, assure rapid renewal of the forest, provide food and cover for wildlife and fish, and have minimum impact on scenic and

recreation values. Local communities benefit from the logging and milling activities. These lands also provide needed oil, gas, and minerals. Rangelands are improved for millions of livestock and game animals. The national forests provide a refuge for many species of endangered birds, animals, and fish. Some 34.6 million acres are set aside as wilderness and 175,000 acres as primitive areas where timber will not be harvested.

Cooperation With the States The Service provides national leadership and financial and technical assistance to non-Federal forest landowners, operators, processors of forest products, and urban forestry interests. Through its cooperative State and private forestry programs, the Service protects and improves the quality of air, water, soil, and open space and encourages uses of natural resources on non-Federal lands that best meet the needs of the Nation, while protecting the environment.

Cooperative programs are carried out through the State foresters or equivalent State officials, who receive grant funding under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2101). Cooperators at the State and local levels provide the delivery system for most State and private forestry programs.

Grant funds and technical assistance are available for rural forestry assistance, forestry incentives, insect and disease control, urban forestry assistance, rural fire prevention and control, organization management assistance, State forest resource planning, and technology implementation.

The Service also cooperates with other USDA agencies in providing leadership and technical assistance for the forestry aspects of conservation programs.

The Service's State and private forestry program staff also ensure that the Service and its cooperators keep abreast of the best knowledge and technology in carrying out its programs, and they help to develop technology transfer plans for implementing research results for a broad range of potential users.

Forest Research The Service performs basic and applied research to develop the scientific information and technology

needed to protect, manage, use, and sustain the natural resources of the Nation's 1.6 billion acres of forests and rangelands. This research is conducted through a network of 7 forest experiment stations, a Forest Products Laboratory, and the International Institute of Tropical Forestry, including research work units at 77 project locations throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Pacific Trust Islands. Under the authority of the McSweeney-McNary Act of May 22, 1928, as amended and supplemented (45 Stat. 699), research is often performed in cooperation with many of the State agricultural colleges. The Forest Research Service's strategy focuses on three major program components: understanding the structure and functions of forest and range ecosystems; understanding how people perceive and value the protection, management, and use of natural resources; and determining which protection, management, and utilization practices are most suitable for sustainable production and use of the world's natural resources.

International Forestry In response to the U.S. commitment to support natural resource conservation around the world, Congress established the International Forestry Division within the USDA's Forest Service. Its mandate is to provide assistance that promotes sustainable development and global environmental stability, particularly in key countries important in global climate change. This mandate includes a national goal for sustainable management of all forests by the year 2000, investigating research topics with implications for global forest management, and sharing resource management experience with colleagues around the world.

Responsibility for global stewardship is shared by the entire Forest Service. The Forest Service's Office of International Forestry mobilizes support of all Forest Service units—Research, National Forest System, State and Private Forestry, Administration, and Programs and Legislation—to work with other governmental agencies, nongovernmental groups, and

international organizations in four major international areas: strategic planning and policy development, training and technical assistance, research and scientific exchange, and disaster relief.

Human Resource Programs The Service operates the Youth Conservation Corps and the Volunteers in the National Forests programs and participates with the Department of Labor on several human resource programs that involve

the Nation's citizens, both young and old, in forestry-related activities. Included in these programs are the Job Corps and the Senior Community Service Employment Program. These programs annually accomplish millions of dollars worth of conservation work, while providing participants with such benefits as training, paid employment, and meaningful outdoor experience.

Field Offices—Forest Service

Region/Station/Area	Address
National Forest System Regions¹—Regional Forester	
1. Northern	Federal Bldg. (P.O. Box 7669), Missoula, MT 59807
2. Rocky Mountain	740 Simms St. (P.O. Box 25127), Lakewood, CO 80225
3. Southwestern	517 Gold Ave. SW., Albuquerque, NM 87102
4. Intermountain	324 25th St., Ogden, UT 84401
5. Pacific Southwest	630 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94111
6. Pacific Northwest	333 SW. 1st Ave. (P.O. Box 3623), Portland, OR 97208
8. Southern	1720 Peachtree Rd. NW., Atlanta, GA 30367
9. Eastern	310 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53203
10. Alaska	Federal Office Bldg. (P.O. Box 21628), Juneau, AK 99802
Forest and Range Experiment Stations—Director	
Intermountain	324 25th St., Ogden, UT 84401
North Central	1992 Folwell Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108
Northeastern	Suite 200, 100 Matson Ford Rd. (P.O. Box 6775), Radnor, PA 19087–4585
Pacific Northwest	333 SW. 1st Ave. (P.O. Box 3890), Portland, OR 97208
Pacific Southwest	800 Buchanan St. (P.O. Box 245), Albany, CA 94710
Rocky Mountain	240 W. Prospect Ave., Fort Collins, CO 80526
Southern	200 Weaver Blvd. (P.O. Box 2860), Asheville, NC 28802
Forest Products Laboratory	One Gifford Pinchot Dr., Madison, WI 53705
State and Private Forestry Areas²—Director	
Northeastern	Suite 200, 100 Matson Ford Rd. (P.O. Box 6775), Radnor, PA 19087–4585
International Institute of Tropical Forestry	UPR Experimental Station Grounds, Botanical Garden (Call Box 25000), Rio Piedras, PR 00928

¹ There is no Region 7.
² In Regions 1 through 6, 8, and 10, State and private forestry activities are directed from regional headquarters.

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

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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

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

Conservation Technical Assistance This is the foundation program of NRCS. Under this program, NRCS provides technical assistance to land users and units of government for the purpose of sustaining agricultural productivity and protecting and enhancing the natural resource base. This assistance is based on the voluntary cooperation of private landowners and involves comprehensive approaches to reduce soil erosion, improve soil and water quantity and quality, improve and conserve wetlands, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve air quality, improve pasture and range condition, reduce upstream flooding, and improve woodlands. Every year, more than 1 million land users receive these technical services, which are channeled through nearly 3,000

conservation districts across the United States and its territories.

Natural Resources Inventory The Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) is a report issued every 5 years on how well the Nation is sustaining natural resources on non-Federal land. This report contains the most comprehensive and statistically reliable data of its kind in the world. The Inventory provides data on the kind and amount of soil, water, vegetation, and related resources; the effects of current land use and management practices on the present and future supply and condition of soil, water, and vegetation; and the changes and trends in the use, extent, and condition of these resources. Inventory data and analytical software are available to the public on CD-ROM.

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

Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program This program collects snowpack moisture data and forecasts seasonal water supplies for streams that derive most of their water from snowmelt. It helps farm operators, rural communities, and municipalities manage water resources through water supply forecasts. It also provides hydrometeorological data for regulating reservoir storage and managing streamflow. The Snow Supply Program is conducted in 11 Western States and Alaska.

Plant Materials Program At 26 plant materials centers across the country, NRCS tests, selects, and ensures the

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

River Basin Surveys and Investigations

This program involves NRCS with Federal, State, and local agencies in river basin surveys and investigations, flood hazard analysis, and floodplain management assistance. It addresses a variety of natural resource concerns: water quality, water conservation, wetlands protection, agricultural drought, rural development, municipal and industrial water needs, and fish and wildlife habitat.

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

Flood Prevention Program This program applies to 11 specific flood prevention projects covering about 35 million acres in 11 States. It provides help in flood prevention, water management, and reduction of erosion sedimentation. It also can help in developing recreational facilities and improving fish and wildlife habitat.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program This program provides emergency assistance to safeguard lives and property in jeopardy due to sudden watershed impairment by natural disasters. Emergency work includes

quickly establishing a protective plant cover on denuded land and stream banks; opening dangerously restricted channels; and repairing diversions and levees. An emergency area need not be declared a national disaster area to be eligible for help under this program.

Great Plains Conservation Program

This program (GPCP) helps bring about long-term solutions to natural resource problems in the 10 Great Plains States. It is aimed at total conservation treatment of entire farms or ranches. Participation in GPCP is voluntary and provides technical assistance and a long-term cost-share contract between the participant and NRCS. The program has been effective in addressing the needs of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and the needs of American Indian farmers and ranchers. In addition to providing significant erosion and sediment reduction benefits, it addresses problems related to water quality, wildlife habitat protection, and other environmental concerns.

Resource Conservation and

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

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

Wetlands Reserve Program Under this program, USDA purchases easements from agricultural land owners who voluntarily agree to restore and protect

wetlands. Service employees help these owners develop plans to retire critical wetland habitat from crop production. The primary objectives are to preserve and restore wetlands, improve wildlife habitat, and protect migratory waterfowl.

Water Bank Program The Service helps landowners protect, improve, or restore wetlands by identifying eligible lands, helping owners develop conservation plans, and implementing necessary land treatments. Through 10-year rental agreements between USDA and landowners, the Water Bank Program protects important nesting, breeding, and feeding areas for migratory waterfowl. Other benefits of the program include water conservation, erosion control, flood control, and landscape beautification.

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control

Program This voluntary incentive program supports the Nation's commitment to water quality in the Colorado River, which provides water to more than 18 million people in parts of seven Western States and Mexico. The Service provides financial and technical assistance to control salt loading to the Colorado River from both natural and human-caused sources. Among the remedies used are management practices to prevent irrigation-induced erosion.

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

Farmland Protection Program (FPP)

This new program protects soil by encouraging landowners to limit conversion of their farmland to nonagricultural uses. States, Indian tribes, or local governments administer all aspects of acquiring lands that are in FPP except when it is more effective and efficient for the Federal Government to do so. Funds for FPP come from the Commodity Credit Corporation. The Program is authorized by the Federal

Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 to protect between 170,000 and 340,000 acres of farmland.

Environmental Quality Incentive

Program (EQIP) This Program assists producers with environmental and natural resource conservation improvements on their agricultural lands. One-half of the available funds are for conservation activities related to livestock production. Technical assistance, cost-share payments, incentive payments, and education focus on priority areas and natural resource concerns identified in cooperation with State technical committees. The program uses 5- to 10-year contracts based on conservation plans, as well as a priority evaluation process to maximize environmental benefits per dollar expended. The Secretary of Agriculture, through the rulemaking process, establishes criteria for EQIP assistance, including determining standards for large livestock operations which will be ineligible for cost sharing to construct animal waste management facilities.

Conservation Farm Option This pilot program for producers of wheat, feed grains, cotton, and rice is open to owners or operators of farms that have a production flexibility contract. Under the program, producers may receive one consolidated USDA program payment in lieu of a list of specified payments. The producers must implement a conservation plan that addresses soil, water, and related resources; water quality; wetlands; and wildlife habitat. Participation is voluntary and is based on a 10-year contract.

Farms-for-the-Future Program This program guarantees USDA loans and subsidizes interest on State loans to purchase agricultural land or development rights to preserve vital farmland resources for future generations. The money also can be reinvested by the States to generate earnings for future farmland protection efforts.

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

Graduate School, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Fourteenth Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250
Phone, 202-314-3300

Director
Deputy Director
Associate Director
Program Director, Center for Applied Technology
Program Director, Correspondence Study
Program Director, Evening and Saturday
Program Director, Government Audit Training Institute
Program Director, International Institute
Director of Communications
Director of Administration
Director, Career Development Programs
Director, Technology Enabled Learning
Director, National Independent Study Center
Director, Regional Training Centers
Director, Midwest Training Center
Director, National Capital Training Center
Director, Northeast Training Center
Director, Southeast Training Center

PHILIP H. HUDSON
LYNN EDWARDS
ROBERT BROWN
NAT HOPKINS

NORMA HARWOOD
RONALD MACNAB
DONALD SMULAND

JACK MAYKOSKI, *Acting*
(VACANCY)
ROBERT KIES
LEW TAYLOR
DAVID LAMP
MIKE ALLEN
TONY GUTIERREZ
CYNTHIA RUDMANN
NANCY RANDA
FRANK BAUER
DAVID HITT

Director, Southwest Training Center
 Director, Western Training Center
 Registrar

JOE MATA, *Acting*
 MAUREEN HETZEL
 CAROLYN NELSON

The Graduate School, U.S. Department of Agriculture, is a continuing education school offering career-related training to adults. It is self-supporting and does not receive direct appropriated funds from Congress or the Department of Agriculture. Fees charged individuals and Government agencies are nominal. Courses are planned with the assistance of Government professionals and specialists.

The faculty is mostly part-time and is drawn from throughout Government and the community at large. They are selected because of their professional and specialized knowledge and experience and thus bring a practicality and experience to their classrooms. Faculty holding regular Government positions take annual leave or leave without pay when teaching during their normal work hours.

The school does not grant degrees but does provide planned sequences of courses leading to certificates of accomplishment in a number of occupational and career fields important

to government. Training areas include management, auditing, computer science, communications, foreign language, procurement, financial management, and others.

The Graduate School's objective is to improve Government services by providing needed continuing education and training opportunities for Government employees and agencies.

The Graduate School, administered by a Director and governed by a General Administration Board appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture, was established by the Secretary of Agriculture on September 2, 1921, pursuant to act of May 15, 1862 (7 U.S.C. 2201); joint resolution of April 12, 1892 (27 Stat. 395); and the Deficiencies Appropriation Act of March 3, 1901 (20 U.S.C. 91).

In July 1995, through a memorandum of understanding between the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and the Department of Agriculture, the Graduate School acquired many of the training offices formerly operated by the Office of Personnel Management.

For further information, contact the Communications Office, Graduate School, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 160, 600 Maryland Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20024. Phone, 202-401-9129.

Sources of Information

Consumer Activities Educational, organizational, and financial assistance is offered to consumers and their families in such fields as rural housing and farm operating programs, improved nutrition, family living and recreation, food stamp, school lunch, donated foods, and other food programs. Contact the Office of Public Affairs, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202-720-2791.

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

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

Employment Most jobs in the Department are in the competitive service and are filled by applicants who have established eligibility under an appropriate examination administered by the Office of Personnel Management or Department Special Examining Units.

General employment inquiries should be directed to the agencies.

Persons interested in employment in the Food and Consumer Service should

contact the regional offices located in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, San Francisco, and Robbinsville, NJ, or the national headquarters in Alexandria, VA. Phone, 703-305-2351.

Persons interested in employment in the Office of the Inspector General should contact the USDA Office of Personnel, Room 31-W, Jamie L. Whitten Building, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202-720-5781.

In addition, all Forest Service field offices (addresses indicated in the preceding text) accept employment applications.

Environment Educational, organizational, technical, and financial assistance is offered to local citizens, organizations, and communities in such fields as watershed protection, flood prevention, soil and water conservation practices to reduce erosion and sedimentation, community water and waste disposal systems, safe use of pesticides, and the development of pesticide alternatives.

Contact the nearest county extension agent or USDA office, or write to the Office of Communications, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202-720-2791.

Films Motion pictures on a variety of agricultural subjects are available for loan through various State Extension

Service film libraries. Contact the Video, Teleconference, and Radio Center, Office of Communications, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, for a listing of cooperating film libraries. Phone, 202-720-6072.

Color filmstrips and slide sets on a variety of subjects are available for purchase. For a listing of titles and prices, contact the Photography Center, Office of Communications, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202-720-6633.

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

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

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

For further information concerning the Department of Agriculture, contact the Office of Communications, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202-720-2791. Internet, <http://www.usda.gov/>.