DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

Civil Rights Policy Statement

President Abraham Lincoln founded the United States Department of Agriculture in 1862 to serve the people of this Nation. Today, nearly 150 years later, USDA employees are among the finest public servants, committed to ensuring that every customer and colleague is treated with fairness, equality, and respect.

As your Secretary, I am firmly committed to ensuring USDA's compliance with civil rights and equal employment opportunity for everyone regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital or family status, political beliefs, parental status, or protected genetic information.

There is no principle more important. We must comply with every aspect of our Nation's civil rights laws. To do otherwise is simply not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

As public servants, we cannot be effective without being fair. We cannot be responsive without being respectful. We cannot deliver programs and services without being sensitive to the human issues that are so much a part of our work.

Our adherence to these principles also requires a swift, reasonable, and credible process for addressing and remedying deficiencies. It must also include consistent education and outreach to ensure civil rights are protected, our laws are enforced, and discrimination in any form is prevented.

This must be our passion and our vision. We must continue to strive for a workplace and society that are inclusive and respectful of differences, while working toward unity and harmony. Our actions must always speak louder than words.

With your help and commitment, and using our collective best efforts across every agency and every office, we can reach new heights. Together, we can create a better workplace for all employees, and a Department that delivers programs and services to all people fairly and with integrity and equality.

I look forward to fulfilling this vision – our goals – together.

Ann M. Veneman
Secretary