

About USDA – A Quick Reference Guide

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) works to support the American agricultural economy to strengthen rural communities; to protect and conserve our natural resources; and to provide a safe, sufficient, and nutritious food supply for the American people. The Department's wide range of programs and responsibilities touches the lives of every American every day. This factsheet provides information about some of our agencies and offices, their missions, responsibilities, and services they provide.

Agricultural Marketing Service

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) administers programs that facilitate efficient, fair marketing of U.S. agricultural products, including food, fiber, and specialty crops. AMS identifies and promotes the development of marketing opportunities for the agricultural community by conducting and supporting research and providing information on farmer direct marketing activities. AMS programs promote a strategic marketing perspective that adapts product and marketing practices and technologies to the issues of today and the challenges of tomorrow. AMS Information: www.ams.usda.gov Telephone: (202) 720-8998

Agricultural Research Service

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is the principal in-house research agency of the USDA. ARS is charged with extending the Nation's scientific knowledge through the administration of its national programs, as well as by conducting research projects in animal and crop production and protection, human nutrition, food safety, bioenergy, the environment, and other topics that affect the American people on a daily basis. ARS Information: www.ars.usda.gov Telephone: (301) 504-1636

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) makes a significant contribution to the value of the Nation's food supply by protecting U.S. agricultural resources from pests and diseases, managing wildlife damage, regulating genetically engineered organisms, and administering the Animal Welfare Act. APHIS programs integrate plant and animal disease surveillance, epidemiology, emergency response, and information delivery to ensure the marketability of U.S. agricultural products. APHIS also works to resolve and manage trade issues related to animal or plant health. APHIS Information: www.aphis.usda.gov Telephone: (301) 851-4049

Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) establishes Federal nutrition policy through the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, sets priorities for nutrition research, sets nutrition standards, and disseminates dietary guidance. It maintains the MyPlate food guidance system. CNPP Information: www.cnpp.usda.gov Telephone: (703) 305-7600

Economic Research Service

The Economic Research Service (ERS) is a primary source of economic information and research in USDA. ERS conducts its research program to inform public and private decision making on economic and policy issues involving food, farming, natural resources, and rural development. ERS's economists and social scientists conduct research, analyze food and commodity markets, produce policy studies, and develop economic and statistical indicators. ERS staff disseminates economic information and research results through an array of outlets. ERS Information: www.ers.usda.gov Telephone: (202) 694-5000

Farm Service Agency

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) ensures the well-being of American agriculture, the environment, and the American public through the administration of farm commodity programs; farm ownership, operating, and emergency loans; conservation and environmental programs; emergency and disaster assistance; and domestic and international food assistance. FSA programs are delivered through an extensive network of field offices in 2,248 USDA County Service Centers and 51 State Offices. FSA Information: www.fsa.usda.gov Telephone: (202) 720-3467

Food and Nutrition Service

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the USDA nutrition assistance programs that provide children and low-income people access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education. Programs include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called the Food Stamp Program), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), School Lunch and Breakfast, among others. FNS Information: www.fns.usda.gov Telephone: (703) 305-2281

Food Safety and Inspection Service

Touching the lives of millions of people every day, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the public health agency responsible for ensuring that the Nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and processed egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. FSIS also manages the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline, which provides consumers with answers to their food safety questions. FSIS Information: www.fsis.usda.gov Telephone: (202) 720-9113

Foreign Agricultural Service

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) works to improve foreign market access for U.S. products and administers market development and export financing programs. FAS helps U.S. exporters develop and maintain markets overseas for U.S. food and agricultural products. FAS helps developing countries improve their agricultural systems and build their trade capacity. FAS Information: www.fas.usda.gov Telephone: (202) 720-7115

Forest Service

The Forest Service (FS) manages 193 million acres of public lands in 155 national forests and 20 grasslands and is the largest forestry research operation in the world. The Forest Service provides technical and financial assistance to help rural and urban citizens, including private landowners, care for forest, watersheds, and rangelands in their communities. FS Information: www.fs.fed.us
Telephone (202) 205-1680

Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

The Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) facilitates the marketing of livestock, poultry, meat, cereals, oilseeds, and related agricultural products. The agency promotes fair and competitive trading practices for the overall benefit of consumers and American agriculture. GIPSA Information: www.gipsa.usda.gov. Telephone: (202) 720-0219

National Agricultural Statistics Service

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is the official Federal statistical agency for agriculture. The agency serves U.S. agricultural and rural communities with accurate, timely, and useful statistical products and services that are vital information to monitor the ever-changing agricultural sector and carry out farm policy. Every 5 years NASS conducts the Census of Agriculture, which is the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the United States. NASS Information: www.nass.usda.gov
Telephone: NASS Hotline 1 (800) 727-9540

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) impacts the lives of millions of Americans each day by supporting exemplary research, education, and extension that address many challenges facing our Nation through collaboration with historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and Tribal colleges. You are connected to NIFA through your nearest Extension office, which provides answers to concerns through educational materials and Web-based information. NIFA Information: www.nifa.usda.gov
Telephone: (202) 720-7441

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps people help the land through scientifically based, locally led voluntary conservation efforts and improve natural resources on private lands. NRCS work results in productive lands and a healthy environment through reduced soil erosion; water and air quality; energy conservation; restored woodlands and wetlands; enhanced fish and wildlife habitat; and reduced upstream flooding. NRCS Information: www.nrcs.usda.gov Telephone: (202) 720-3210

Risk Management Agency

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) administers the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) programs and promotes national welfare by improving the economic stability of agriculture through a secure system of crop insurance and risk management tools. Through a network of public and private-sector partners, RMA creates crop insurance and risk management products, provides risk management education and outreach, and ensures program accessibility and integrity. RMA Information: www.rma.usda.gov
Telephone: (202) 690-2803

Rural Development

USDA Rural Development (RD) is composed of Rural Business-Cooperative Programs, Rural Housing and Community Facilities Programs, and Rural Utilities Programs. RD offers rural communities a broad array of financial, technical, and educational resources in order to establish and grow rural businesses and cooperatives. RD provides financing for single family homes and multi-family housing developments, and essential community facilities. RD helps to finance the development of electric, telephone, telecommunication, and water and wastewater infrastructures to create affordable utilities. RD Information: www.rurdev.usda.gov Telephone: 1 (800) 670-6553

National Appeals Division

The National Appeals Division (NAD) is responsible for providing hearings for program participants who receive adverse decisions from the Farm Service Agency, Risk Management Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development's Rural Business-Cooperative Development Service, Rural Housing Service, and Rural Utilities Service. Filing an appeal provides an opportunity to present the dispute, either face to face or on the telephone to a NAD Hearing Officer. NAD Information: www.nad.usda.gov
Telephone: 1 (877) 487-3262

Departmental Management

Departmental Management (DM) provides managerial leadership and integrated services to enable USDA to achieve its priorities and works to ensure through applicable laws, treaties, and regulations that all citizens are provided full access to USDA services and programs. DM Information: www.dm.osec.usda.gov Telephone: (202) 720-3291

To learn more about USDA and the many ways we serve the American people every day, please visit www.usda.gov

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, and audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.