



United States Department of Agriculture



AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

FY 2014-2018 Strategic Plan





MISSION

Facilitate the strategic marketing of U.S. agricultural products in domestic and international markets, while ensuring fair trading practices and promoting a competitive and efficient marketplace to the benefit of producers, traders, and consumers of U.S. food and fiber products.

VISION

A marketing system that quickly and efficiently moves wholesome, affordable agricultural products from producers and traders to markets.

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MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

AMS has a long, rich tradition of providing excellent programs and services to agricultural producers and industry. Our work has expanded to involve many segments of agriculture, which greatly increases the number of individuals and organizations we serve. To continue operating at a high level, AMS must find more effective ways to communicate and market the vital work that we do. This will enable us to attract and collaborate with new strategic partners and to expand our alliances with domestic and international organizations as we face increased competition for budgetary and other resources. Shining a light on AMS and helping internal and external stakeholders to better understand our work will help our Agency continue to play an integral role in providing wholesome, healthy food to the American people. The way in which we carry out our mission directly impacts the success of American agriculture – our Nation’s most important resource.

Our AMS FY 2014-2018 Strategic Plan serves as a roadmap to guide us to the next level, and directly supports the Secretary’s 2014-2018 Strategic Plan, Whiteboard Priorities, Signature Process Improvements, Cultural Transformation, Blueprint for Stronger Service, and other key USDA initiatives. The Plan will focus our efforts toward implementation of the 2014 Farm Bill and illustrates our efforts to enhance our core services and programs to assist producers, traders, and consumers of American agricultural products. We will continue to capitalize on opportunities to create greater efficiencies through streamlining our operations and to use all of our available resources to meet our mission.

Our working relationships are essential in defining our organization. Providing a workplace that is free from discrimination and embraces diversity continues to be one of our core strengths. This is reflected in the professionalism, character, and commitment of our employees. Our Agency and programs will continue to promote an environment in which everyone has value and opportunities for professional growth and development.

Anne Alonzo
Administrator



Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace consolidated several bureaus and programs in 1939 to create a single agency to carry out a comprehensive mission. The new Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) was charged with the facilitation of the efficient and fair marketing of American agricultural products, including food, fiber, and specialty crops. Today, AMS continues to administer programs that facilitate marketing and provide the agriculture industry with valuable services that help ensure the quality and availability of wholesome food for consumers throughout the United

States and the world. AMS works to support rural economies, the agricultural industry, and local agriculture through several organizations. From individual farmers to international businesses, the AMS mission supports American agriculture and helps to ensure that the U.S. remains competitive in the global marketplace.

AMS has six strategic goals that describe the major areas of emphasis and will enable the Agency to accomplish its mission, achieve its vision, and uphold its values. These goals support the USDA FY 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and are directly tied to the

USDA Strategic Plan's Goal 1 (Assist Rural Communities to Create Prosperity so they are Self-sustaining, Repopulating, and Economically Thriving, specifically Objective 1.2 – Increase Agricultural Opportunities by Ensuring a Robust Safety Net, Creating New Markets, and Supporting a Competitive Agricultural System), Goal 4 (Ensure that all of America's Children have Access to Safe, Nutritious, and Balanced Meals), and Goal 5 (Create a USDA for the 21st Century that is High-performing, Efficient, and Adaptable). The AMS strategic goals for FY 2014-2018 are:

- GOAL 1:** Enhance Communication between Stakeholders and AMS Programs (COMMUNICATION)
- GOAL 2:** Provide Market Information and Intelligence and Support the Development of New Markets (MARKET INFORMATION and MARKETING INNOVATION)
- GOAL 3:** Provide Quality Claims and Analyses to Facilitate Agricultural Marketing (GRADING, AUDIT VERIFICATION, TESTING, and EXAMINING)
- GOAL 4:** Provide Effective Oversight of Markets and Entities (REGULATORY OVERSIGHT)
- GOAL 5:** Provide Premier Procurement and Technical Solutions to Identify and Fulfill the Needs for Agricultural, Food Assistance, and Other Programs (COMMODITY PROCUREMENT)
- GOAL 6:** Sustain and Enrich a Diverse, Progressive, and Dynamic Organizational Environment (ORGANIZATION)

MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

MISSION

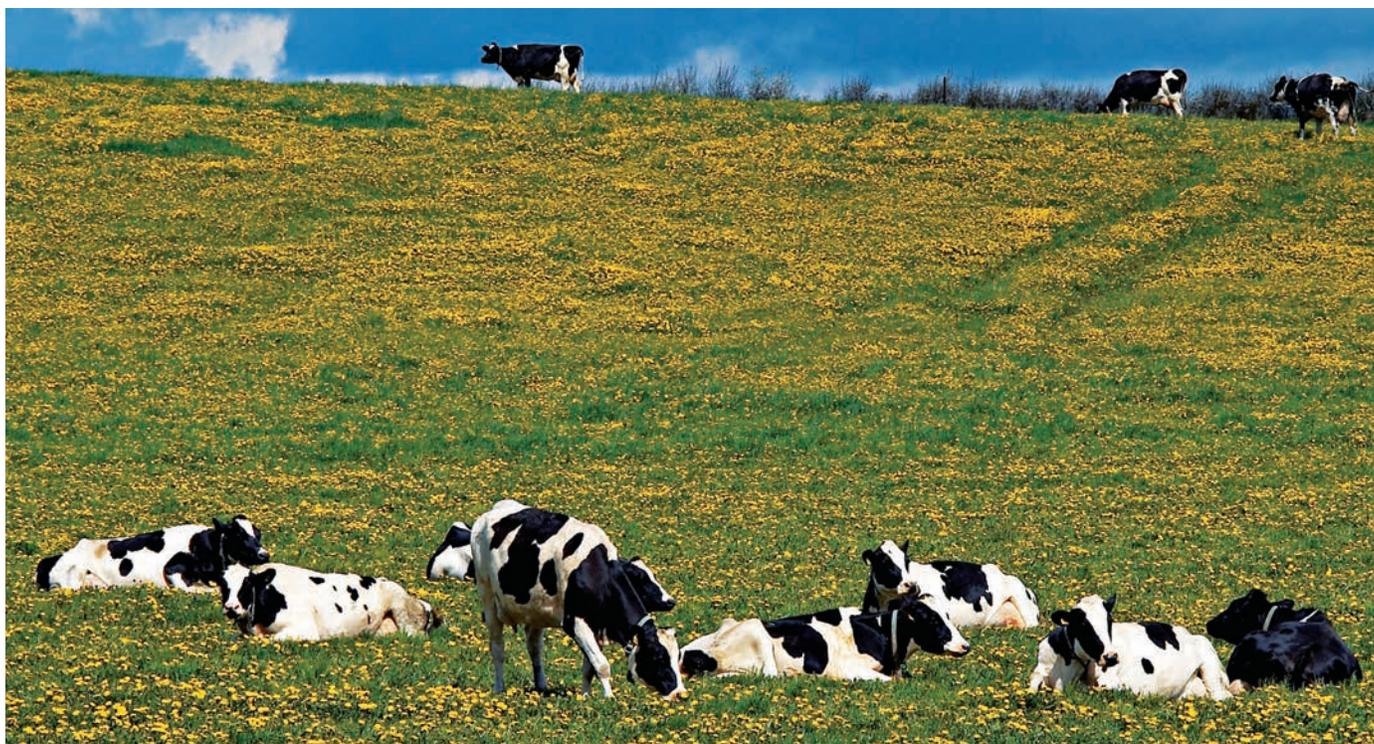
Facilitate the strategic marketing of U.S. agricultural products in domestic and international markets, while ensuring fair trading practices and promoting a competitive and efficient marketplace to the benefit of producers, traders, and consumers of U.S. food and fiber products.

VISION

A marketing system that quickly and efficiently moves wholesome, affordable agricultural products from producers and traders to markets.

VALUES

- **Independence and Objectivity:** we act independently and objectively to create trust in our programs and services for individuals and businesses throughout the agricultural marketing system.
- **Customer Service:** we provide prompt, accurate, and technically competent services to our customers.
- **Accountability:** we are accountable to our customers.
- **Honesty and Integrity:** we maintain honesty and integrity in our programs and ourselves.
- **Diversity:** we value and honor all aspects of diversity.



AGENCY OVERVIEW

AMS facilitates marketing by providing the agriculture industry with valuable services that help ensure the quality and availability of wholesome food for consumers throughout the U.S. The Agency supports agriculture through a variety of programs and organizations, which include the Office of the Administrator and Staffs; Cotton and Tobacco Program; Dairy Program; Fruit and Vegetable Program; Livestock, Poultry and Seed Program; National Organic Program; Science and Technology Program; Transportation and Marketing Program; Commodity Procurement Staff; Compliance and Analysis Program; and, Information Technology Service.

AMS programs and activities provide the basic infrastructure to improve market competitiveness to benefit consumers and producers of American agriculture. American agriculture is incredibly diverse and includes urban and rural operations of every size. It supports 1 in 12 U.S. jobs and provides safe, affordable food to consumers across the globe. The last four years represent the strongest in U.S. history, with U.S. agricultural product exports exceeding \$478 billion. Economic vitality and quality of life in rural America and the U.S. economy at large depend on a competitive, efficient, and productive agricultural system. Agricultural producers

encompass farmers, growers, ranchers, and small business owners who support rural communities in a challenging global, technologically advanced, and competitive business environment. In an era of market consolidation and intense competition, these producers rely on fair and open access to markets and information that AMS provides.

AMS has an annual budget of approximately \$3.1 billion. Nearly 2/3 of the funding for the Agency's workforce is derived through voluntary user-fee services. Much of the Agency's overall funding is directed toward commodity purchases in support of Federal food assistance programs.



AGENCY OVERVIEW

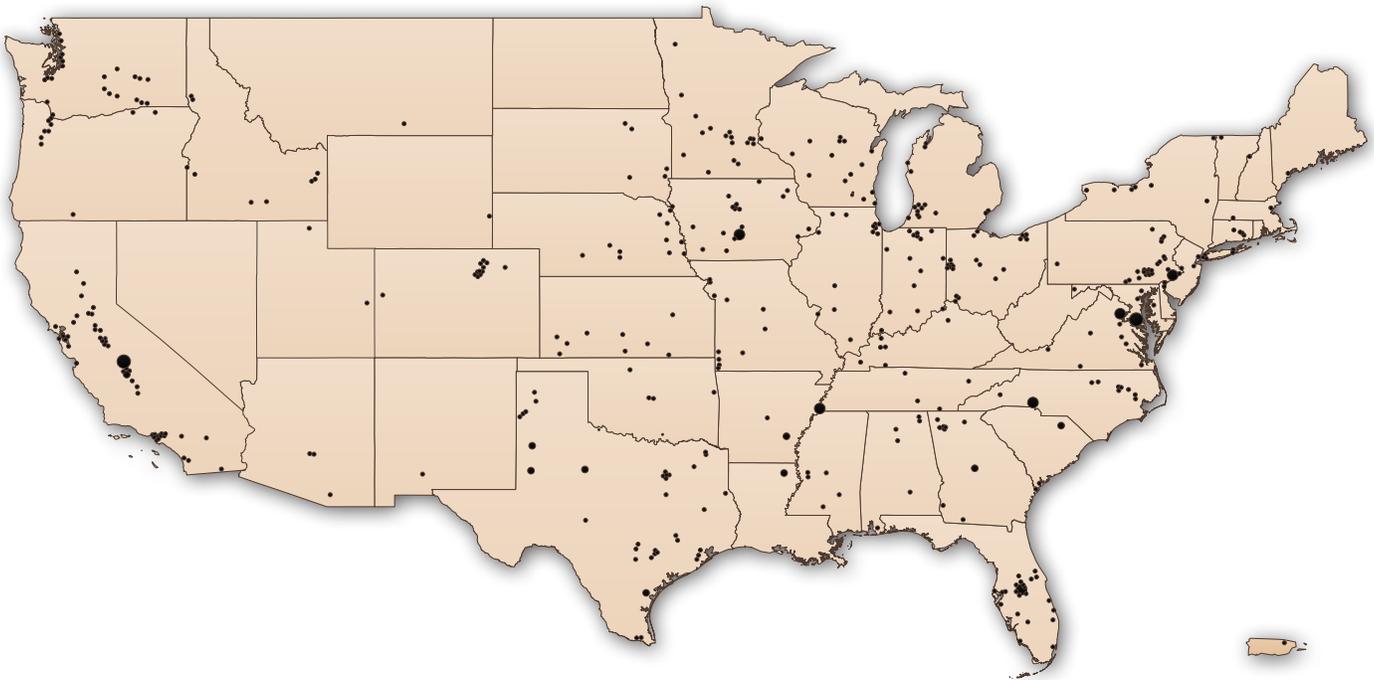
The demand for specialty crops, livestock, dairy, poultry, eggs, cotton, seeds, and their processed products accounts for over \$226 billion in annual farm sales value and almost 1/2 of the U.S. export value. Higher prices and increased demand from developing countries helps explain the recent growth in U.S. agricultural exports.¹

The AMS workforce is comprised of approximately 4,000 employees and is supplemented by Federal-State employees working under cooperative agreements. Headquarters management and staff are principally located in Washington, D.C. The workforce includes marketing specialists, commodity graders, economists, market news re-

porters, scientists, and analysts who support the marketing of American agricultural products and work in industry-specific processing plants, terminal and shipping point markets, production facilities, and office environments. The map below depicts the dispersal of the AMS workforce throughout the United States.

Agricultural Marketing Service

Nearly 4,000 employees
Nearly 430 work locations



¹ USDA Agricultural Projections to 2022, February 2013, pp. 78, 80, 96

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK



STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: Enhance Communication between Stakeholders and AMS Programs (COMMUNICATION)

Program Activities: All

Objective 1.1: Strengthen Stakeholder Relationships and Understanding of the Agency's Role in Facilitating Marketing

The Agency's mission to "facilitate the strategic marketing of agricultural products...to the benefit of producers, traders, and consumers of U.S. food and fiber products" emphasizes the need to continually develop and deliver educational programs about the benefits and effective use of Agency services to domestic and international stakeholders. AMS will work with internal and external key partners to identify common goals and educate stakeholders about the critical role the Agency plays to enhance the overall effectiveness of the food marketing system and provide better quality products to the consumer at a reasonable cost.

Objective 1.2: Increase Outreach Efforts by Building and Maintaining Effective Partnerships

AMS outreach efforts emphasize two-way communication that involves listening to stakeholders, the public, and other interested groups, recognizing concerns, and addressing those concerns by enhancing the way the Agency provides services. AMS will

implement a new Agency outreach strategy to target specific audiences to learn about their needs and identify services to meet those needs. AMS will coordinate efforts internally and with external partners to highlight the Agency's services and increase national knowledge.

Objective 1.3: Encourage Board and Committee Teamwork and Diversity

AMS will take steps to reach under-represented customers who produce, handle, manufacture, or import a variety of agricultural commodities. The Agency will take steps to thoroughly disseminate information about leadership opportunities and encourage interested individuals to serve on boards

and committees that administer marketing orders, research and promotion programs, and Federal Advisory Committees.

AMS oversees various boards and committees that regulate or promote specific fruits, vegetables, specialty crops, livestock, poultry, dairy, and cotton. Diversification is key to the performance of these boards and committees, and AMS will encourage representation in accordance with the Secretary's Whiteboard Priorities. By serving on these boards and committees, individuals can contribute to the governance of organizations dedicated to improving commodity marketing, research, development, and promotion and to help affect change in their respective agricultural community.



STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 2: Provide Market Information and Intelligence and Support the Development of New Markets (MARKET INFORMATION and MARKETING INNOVATION)

Program Activities: Market News, Local Food & Market Development, Grant Programs, Standards Development, Pesticide Data Program, Transportation

Objective 2.1: Increase Market Opportunities for American Agriculture through Analysis of Domestic and International Market Information and Data

AMS analyzes current and developing market trends and provides tools to help producers identify domestic and international market opportunities. For nearly 100 years, AMS has provided unbiased statistics, price, and sales information to assist in the orderly marketing and distribution of agricultural commodities. AMS reports encompass a wide variety of domestic and international market data that enable producers to respond to changing market conditions. Data is disseminated within hours of collection and made available through distribution channels with a high degree of transparency. AMS will enhance and expand the information products that it provides to the public and improve the ways in which information and data products are stored and delivered. The Agency will complete the development of a digital database to provide large sets of multi-year market news data to users in a common format. Coverage of local and regional

markets will be expanded, and coverage of the organic sectors and other specialized systems, such as grass fed beef, will be included. AMS will harmonize and merge several market news information systems into one unified database and data capture system, and simplify public access to and maintenance of market news information. The Agency will partner with institutions through the Market Information Organization of the Americas to improve agricultural market information systems.

Developing and maintaining vital market data will require new innovations in the way information is captured and disseminated. AMS will implement new strategies to collect and report information and explore ways to repackage its current data to be even more useful to industry partners. Finding ways to identify and illustrate the manner in which AMS helps create long-term successes for its stakeholders will help stimulate market expansion.

The Agency will partner with other key USDA data agencies, as well as with key stakeholders and secondary disseminators, to identify ways to more efficiently

and reliably capture data and make this data publically available in the manner that best meets the needs of customers. Cooperative agreements with states and other institutions will be used to capture local, farm gate, and retail data and make this data available to the public on a regional and national level. AMS will review and adapt emerging tools to capture market information “on the ground” (e.g., via hand-held devices at wholesale markets and auctions). The increased usage of mobile devices to better meet customers’ information needs will be explored. The Agency will develop the most effective means to collect data at the lowest level (e.g., “crowd sourcing”) for small direct marketers and to make this data publically available.

AMS also serves as an expert source for economic analysis on agricultural transportation from farm to markets, which helps agricultural shippers and government policymakers make informed decisions. By providing relevant, current market data, AMS will ensure equal access to domestic and international markets, build financial sustainability for producers, and enhance global food security.

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In cooperation with State Agriculture Departments and other Federal agencies, AMS manages the collection, analysis, and reporting of pesticide residues on agricultural commodities in the U.S. food supply, with an emphasis on commodities consumed by infants and children. AMS will work on the global marketing of U.S. products, and pesticide data results will be used in promoting exports of U.S. commodities.

Objective 2.2: Improve Access to Healthy, Locally Produced Foods while Developing Market Opportunities

AMS promotes producer access to local and regional markets, including direct-to-consumer and other emerging opportunities, and plays a crucial role in bringing locally sourced agricultural products to communities in need. Each year, AMS helps hundreds of agricultural food businesses including farmers markets, food hubs, wholesale markets, retailers, state agencies, community planning organizations, and other agri-food focused groups enhance their local food marketing efforts. Through the National Farmers Market Directory, AMS connects consumers to producers at over 8,000 farmers markets, providing location and operation information. Farmers markets and

direct-to-consumer marketing conduct regular data collection and analysis to help stakeholders better understand evolving influences on market performance and profitability. Food hubs and other aggregation models support, monitor, and study retail, commercial, and institutional customers that desire to source local and regional food products. Wholesale markets and facility design provide targeted site assessment and design services for food market planners, managers and community stakeholders to improve the efficiency of permanent food market facilities.

The Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program provides matching funds to state agencies to explore new food and agricultural product market opportunities. Specialty crop block grants enhance the competitiveness of fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops. Farmers market and local food promotion program grants improve and expand domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs and other direct producer-to-consumer opportunities, and organic certification cost share provides assistance through participating states to certified organic producers and handlers.

An increased emphasis on regional food systems supports economic growth for tribal, state,

county, community, non-profit, and private sector partners. These new market opportunities develop and revitalize the infrastructure necessary for vibrant regional food systems and support innovation and proven business approaches such as cooperatives. AMS will improve access to healthy, locally produced foods that focuses on food production and distribution at traditional and non-traditional retail options. Increased access to locally grown fruits, vegetables, and other nutritious food through electronic benefit transfer and other technology will enable greater assistance to communities in need. Through these means, local producers will be better equipped to distribute and market healthy foods and the development of additional farmers markets will promote healthier communities.

Objective 2.3: Develop International and Domestic Commodity Standards to Facilitate Global Trade and Economic Growth

Access to international markets helps build financial sustainability for producers, and AMS analyzes market trends and provides tools to help producers identify market opportunities. AMS connects agricultural exporters to customers and helps to ensure fair trade. The Agency supports the

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development of international standards to facilitate safe trade of agricultural and food products. AMS develops, reviews, and maintains agricultural commodity standards that describe product quality attributes for trade purposes. These standards provide a common language for commodity buyers and sellers and are widely used by the agricultural industry in trading, futures market contracts, and in

purchase specifications in most private contracts. AMS continually reviews the effectiveness of these standards and programs to ensure that its grading and auditing activities are based on Federal standards and support truth in labeling claims. AMS provides technical guidance on standards to several international organizations, and its efforts protect the interests of American agricultural producers.

The Agency will harmonize certification procedures for agricultural commodities and processed food products to enhance export markets, and work collaboratively with partners to develop and implement electronic transmission of export certificate data. AMS will develop international equivalency agreements with other countries and draft standards for global trading in collaboration with industry.



STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 3: Provide Quality Claims and Analyses to Facilitate Agricultural Marketing (GRADING, AUDIT VERIFICATION, TESTING, and EXAMINING)

Program Activities: Grading & Classing, Audit Verification, Laboratory Approval & Testing, Plant Variety Protection

Objective 3.1: Improve Voluntary User-Fee Services

The Agency's grading, inspection, certification, audit verification, and laboratory analysis are voluntary services that meat and poultry establishments, fruit and vegetable handlers and processors, egg processing plants, dairy processors, cotton producers, Federal agencies, and other parts of the agriculture sector can use to facilitate marketing and communicate quality and wholesomeness to consumers. Annually, AMS grades, audits, certifies and/or inspects over \$150 billion worth of agricultural products, ensuring the quality of domestic goods and helping American farms and businesses export goods to over 100 different countries. To better serve the fee-paying industry, AMS will continue to pursue increased avenues of efficiency and effectiveness.

The Agency's wide range of fee schedules and lengthy regulatory process to make fee adjustments impact fiscal planning and full cost recovery for services rendered. As such, AMS will develop and publish a consistent Agency-wide fee schedule.

As a user fee-funded organization with the authority to set fees by

regulation, AMS is committed to cost-effective and transparent operations and processes. The Agency continues to strive to serve as a good financial steward through maximized cost efficiency and transparency. Given the trust Congress and stakeholders place in AMS through the user-fee authority and the means to have an operating reserve, the Agency must demonstrate that it will sustain cost-efficient operations. The Agency will continue to assess, modernize, and restructure to provide a preeminent level of user-fee services that meet industry needs during an era of increased fiscal constraints. AMS will capitalize on opportunities to achieve greater efficiencies through streamlined processes and cross-leveraged internal resources. On an AMS-wide basis, the viability of the Conformance Assessment Management System to track expense and volume will be assessed with respect to all user-fee services performed for the agricultural commodities industry.

Objective 3.2: Facilitate Exports of American Agricultural Products

AMS provides export certificates to interested suppliers to expedite

the entry of commodities into foreign countries. AMS has 27 different export certificates in both paper and electronic form, and will refine how it administers certificates through Agency-wide technological solutions, cross-cutting capabilities, and interdependencies to promote greater efficiencies to U.S. exporters. AMS will continue to work with other Federal agencies in pursuit of international trade partnerships, including organic equivalency agreements.

Objective 3.3: Expand Plant Variety Protection Services

AMS will explore domestic and international opportunities to protect breeders of new plant varieties that are sexually reproduced by seed or tuber-propagated to assist with the marketing and movement of quality seed throughout the world, and work toward international acceptance of the U.S. plant variety protection system. Since 1970, AMS has issued more than 8,700 certificates of protection. The Agency dramatically reduced its plant variety protection application backlog through the examination of a record number of applications in one year, and now has its lowest application inven-

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tory since 2009. AMS will work with the Plant Variety Protection Board, American Seed Trade Association, and other entities to more effectively disseminate guidance regarding plant variety protection basics and protection rights for new, untapped, and global markets.



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GOAL 4: Provide Effective Oversight of Markets and Entities (REGULATORY OVERSIGHT)

Program Activities: Research & Promotion Programs, Marketing Orders & Agreements, Federal Seed Act, Country of Origin Labeling, National Organic Program, Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act Program, Shell Egg Surveillance

Objective 4.1: Ensure Research and Promotion Programs Operate in Compliance with Acts, Orders, and Guidelines

Within the Scope of the respective Acts and Orders, AMS provides administrative oversight to more than 20 industry-funded commodity research and promotion programs with over \$677 million in annual revenue. The various research and promotion acts authorize the collection of an assessment from identified segments of the marketing chain that is used to broaden and enhance national and international commodity markets. Assessments on producers are most common. However, assessments are sometimes placed on processors, feeders, packers, handlers, importers, exporters, or other entities. AMS reviews and approves the budgets and projects proposed by the research and promotion boards to ensure that proposals comply with regulations and statutes. Each research and promotion board reimburses AMS for the cost of implementing and overseeing its program. Recent highlights include the cotton Life Cycle Analysis, Fuel Up to Play

60, Good Egg Project, and a feasibility assessment regarding a composite building system that relies primarily on softwood lumber for mid- and high-rise buildings. AMS will continue to strengthen its oversight of the research and promotion boards to help ensure that funding is used appropriately.

Objective 4.2: Safeguard the Quality and Wholesomeness of Agricultural Products

Increasingly, USDA and stakeholders request that AMS ensures accuracy in agricultural product labeling, beyond the Agency's historical quality verification role. AMS will continue to be an integral partner with other Federal agencies to help mitigate threats to agriculture. Through targeted enforcement, regulation, and inspection activities, AMS will help to protect vulnerable populations and critical agriculture markets. The audit-based Country of Origin Labeling compliance program ensures that the public receives credible, accurate information regarding the source of specific foods to enable more informed choices. AMS ensures the integrity of organic agricultural products through consistent compli-

ance enforcement and increased transparency. With accredited certifying agents worldwide, organic producers and processors can maintain their compliance with organic regulations. AMS evaluates and establishes recognition and equivalency agreements with foreign governments. U.S. standards for shell eggs limit the number of restricted eggs that are permitted in consumer channels and regulate the mandatory procedures for the disposition of restricted eggs. These programs help ensure truthfulness in labeling, uniformity among State laws, and fair competition within agricultural marketplaces.

AMS continues to influence the expansion and development of international markets and partners with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), and other Federal agencies to carry out their respective missions. In response to industry needs, AMS will expand the acceptance of sampling strategies and testing on an international level, develop a fee-for-service certificate program for the issuance of export documents, and adjust testing to effective-

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



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ly address international trade issues. AMS is the designated authority for the U.S. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Seed Schemes Program to facilitate U.S. seed trade into foreign markets. AMS will continue to serve in leadership roles for both domestic and international seed organizations and lead the adoption of new rules for shipping certified seed in international commerce.

Objective 4.3: Stabilize and Protect Markets

Marketing orders and agreements enable farmers, milk producers, and handlers to collectively work to stabilize market conditions and improve the returns for fluid milk and fruit and vegetable producers. There are 32 active specialty crop marketing agreement and order programs, which cover 27 commodities and 10 milk marketing orders. AMS oversees these activities to ensure that they operate within legal parameters. Marketing orders and agreements establish minimum prices that handlers pay to dairy producers; regulate the quality and quantity of fruits and vegetables sold in commercial channels; and, provide for market development and promotion. Most of the active Federal marketing order programs for fruits and vegetables include minimum grade requirements and the

standards used include characteristic qualities as well as criteria related to food safety (e.g., lack of mold, insects, and foreign material). AMS uses Section 32 funds to administer the marketing orders and agreements program at the national level and to conduct public hearings and referenda to determine producer sentiment concerning new programs and proposed revisions of existing marketing orders already in effect. Program activities and administration at the local level are financed through handler assessments. Highlights of recent achievements include dairy handler competitive equity, new regulations regarding pistachio exports, and cherry marketing order revisions. AMS will continue to work to increase compliance with Section 8e of the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937 (AMAA) to help ensure the integrity of these marketing programs.

Objective 4.4: Create Jobs and Expand Opportunities for Farms and Businesses by Supporting Organic Agriculture

AMS oversees national standards for the production and handling of agricultural products labeled as organic. The USDA Organic seal is well-known by consumers and AMS works diligently to uphold the seal's

integrity. Organic agriculture creates jobs and expands opportunities for farms and businesses, and domestic consumer sales of organic products continue to exponentially increase. Today, the industry encompasses over 17,000 certified organic businesses and has grown to \$35 billion in annual U.S. retail sales. As such, AMS continues to expand market access for organic farms and businesses.

To increase the number of certified organic operations, USDA supports research and education to enable organic production, reduce overlapping requirements, and eliminate other obstacles. AMS will collaborate with certifying agents and other USDA agencies to make organic certification more accessible, attainable, and affordable. The Agency will provide greater assistance to small and new farmers and businesses with entry into the organic market. Clear standards, sound and sensible certification, and greater organic literacy will facilitate market access and reliable international trade partnerships.

Objective 4.5: Augment Perishable Commodity Services

AMS provides services to help ensure that produce dealers receive equitable trade for payment through enforcement of fair business practices and

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assistance to companies to resolve business disputes via its administration of the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA). The legacy PACA Oracle

database is an integral component of PACA execution and in the delivery of effective services to the fruit and vegetable industry. AMS will ensure that the

PACA database meets business needs and will explore requirements and best practices within AMS and USDA for a next generation system.



STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 5: Provide Premier Procurement and Technical Solutions to Identify and Fulfill the Needs for Agricultural, Food Assistance, and Other Programs (COMMODITY PROCUREMENT)

Program Activities: Commodity Purchases

Objective 5.1: Enhance the Procurement Business Model

The Agency's commodity procurement program purchases nutritious, wholesome, and safe American grown and processed food for Federal nutrition program recipients. These purchases help to stabilize prices in agricultural commodity markets by balancing supply and demand. Each year, AMS issues over 2,000 contracts annually to purchase about 1.5 billion pounds of food, with about half of the contracts supporting U.S. small businesses.

AMS will continue to build on the current successes from the recent consolidation of commodity procurement activities through the implementation of consistent, repeatable business processes and ensure that it has effective controls in place so that commodity purchases comply with Federal regulations and that the purchased products are inspected in an effective and timely manner. The Agency will review business processes and work with industry partners to identify and provide strategies and solutions to more effectively provide support and stabilize prices. Commodity procurement activities will refocus on more effective communication about Federal

nutrition programs to recipients and other stakeholders. AMS will partner with the Small Business Administration and USDA's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization to market the procurement program more effectively to small agricultural producers and processors. AMS will partner with FNS to more closely coordinate programmatic efforts to improve access to healthy food while creating economic opportunities for local farmers and ranchers. AMS will seek avenues to purchase more fresh and local produce by enabling schools to connect with local food producers and vendors and ensure that these efforts are integrated with USDA's Strikeforce initiative and the White House Rural Council.

Objective 5.2: Provide Greater Value and Additional Opportunities for Nutrition Assistance Program Recipients

The Agency's commodity procurement program provides nutritious, wholesome, and safe food to Federal nutrition program recipients. These domestic poultry, livestock, fish, fruit, and vegetable products are delivered to schools, food banks, soup kitchens, and tribal organizations.

AMS will partner with FNS and Farm Service Agency (FSA) to review and transform the USDA Foods business model through a business process transformation effort. The Agency will review procurement practices and evaluate purchases and programs to ensure that nutrition program recipients receive the best value for the products ordered through the USDA Foods Program. AMS will partner with FNS to more closely coordinate programmatic efforts to improve access to healthy food and meet nutrition program recipient needs and seek avenues to respond to the desire of nutrition program recipients for more fresh and local produce.

Objective 5.3: Ensure and Expand Optimal Web-Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) Service Delivery

In 2006, AMS partnered with FAS, FSA, FNS, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to create a modern Web Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) system to integrate commodity procurement, tracking, and ordering for the aforementioned organizations and customer, vendor, supplier, and transportation stakeholders. WB-

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

SCM supports domestic agriculture, nutrition assistance, and food security programs. All Federal food and commodity orders, solicitations, offers, awards, deliveries, and invoices occur in WBSCM. AMS will continue to lead the effort to build upon the WBSCM implementation successes with

FNS, FSA, and FAS, and USAID. The Agency will coordinate efforts to improve WBSCM functionality to provide better service delivery to domestic nutrition, international food assistance, and agricultural programs, and partner with other Federal agencies to expand the use and user base of WBSCM.

AMS will coordinate technical and functional upgrades to better utilize systems applications product out-of-the-box functionality, new capabilities, and improved business processes with a more current software version and partner with other USDA agencies to explore additional efficiencies.



STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 6: Sustain and Enrich a Diverse, Progressive, and Dynamic Organizational Environment (ORGANIZATION)

Program Activities: All

Objective 6.1: Implement a Human Capital Approach that Invests in the Diversification, Recruitment, Training, and Development of Leaders and Employees

AMS must continue to ensure that it has talented, high-performing leadership, management, supervisors, and employees to carry out its mission, particularly in light of

an aging Federal workforce, stiff competition from other public and private sector organizations, and declining budgetary resources. The workforce delivers an assortment of marketing services to the Agency's customer base and serves as representatives of not just AMS, but also USDA and the entire Federal government. It is absolutely vital that these individuals possess the requisite skills and

abilities, are adequately equipped with technology and resources, and continually seek more streamlined and effective means to carry out their work. AMS must work to further diversify its leadership and workforce to better serve its customers and represent their interests. In particular, the Agency must sufficiently invest in training and development programs to make certain that its employees



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are adequately prepared to assume prospective leadership roles and positions. AMS will strive to increase the retention and effectiveness of its employees through workplace enrichments such as telework.

Objective 6.2: Augment the Deployment and Alignment of Information Technology Assets in Support of Mission-Critical Programs and Activities

AMS must continue to ensure that its information technology efforts support and are aligned with program functions and activities. AMS heavily relies upon information technology to help achieve optimal mission effectiveness. As the Agency's business evolves, so does its demand for technology to address new business challenges. A key provision to this paradigm will be a focus on innovation and the establishment of norms in which employees are unencumbered by technological restraints so that they can be as effective as possible.

Objective 6.3: Continue to Strive for New Efficiencies, Improvements, and Cost-Savings in Key Functions and Processes

AMS continues to focus on cost-effective, value-added,

and customer-centric service delivery to producers, growers, farmers, consumers, industry, and rural communities in light of an increasingly challenging resource climate. As such, the Agency is working to create a holistic, robust infrastructure to efficiently support its programs and activities as it anticipates future variations in service delivery needs and requirements. AMS must continually reexamine its core functions and processes to improve the efficiency and efficacy of its activities and services. Economic consternation and declining budgets are expected to continue to pose challenges for the foreseeable future. AMS will seek out ways to maximize cost efficiency and effectiveness while ensuring stellar and uninterrupted delivery of key support to its stakeholders.

Objective 6.4: Encourage and Support Diversity

Diversity of views and opinions, background, race, and gender are all critical and important to the Agency's mission. The nearly 4,000 employees that make up the Agency deliver a wide array of industry and consumer focused programs that facilitate agricultural marketing throughout the United States and internationally. AMS will institute a new diversity and inclusion

strategy that values differences based on the various segments the Agency supports. The Agency's programs, with support from civil rights and human resources organizations, will strive to increase workforce diversity in recruitment, retention, and advancements through partnerships, focus groups, and other means.

Objective 6.5: Effectively Address Opportunities Identified in Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) Results

In the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2004 (Public Law 108-136), Congress established a requirement for departments and executive-level agencies to conduct an annual survey of their employees to assess employee satisfaction as well as leadership and management practices that contribute to agency performance. The Office of Personnel Management's FEVS is issued annually in compliance with this requirement. AMS will actively encourage its managers, supervisors, and employees to complete surveys each year. As the annual survey results are distributed, the Agency will work fervently to address any areas of concern, particularly in regards to employee engagement, development, and satisfaction.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES SUMMARY

GOAL 1: Enhance Communication between Stakeholders and AMS Programs (COMMUNICATION)

Objective 1.1: Strengthen Stakeholder Relationships and Understanding of the Agency's Role in Facilitating Marketing

Objective 1.2: Increase Outreach Efforts by Building and Maintaining Effective Partnerships

Objective 1.3: Encourage Board and Committee Teamwork and Diversity

GOAL 2: Provide Market Information and Intelligence and Support the Development of New Markets (MARKET INFORMATION and MARKETING INNOVATION)

Objective 2.1: Increase Market Opportunities for American Agriculture through Analysis of Domestic and International Market Information and Data

Objective 2.2: Improve Access to Healthy, Locally Produced Foods while Developing Market Opportunities

Objective 2.3: Develop International and Domestic Commodity Standards to Facilitate Global Trade and Economic Growth

GOAL 3: Provide Quality Claims and Analyses to Facilitate Agricultural Marketing (GRADING, AUDIT VERIFICATION, TESTING, and EXAMINING)

Objective 3.1: Improve Voluntary User-Fee Services

Objective 3.2: Facilitate Exports of American Agricultural Products

Objective 3.3: Expand Plant Variety Protection Services

GOAL 4: Provide Effective Oversight of Markets and Entities (REGULATORY OVERSIGHT)

Objective 4.1: Ensure Research and Promotion Programs Operate in Compliance with Acts, Orders, and Guidelines

Objective 4.2: Safeguard the Quality and Wholesomeness of Agricultural Products

Objective 4.3: Stabilize and Protect Markets

Objective 4.4: Create Jobs and Expand Opportunities for Farms and Businesses by Supporting Organic Agriculture

Objective 4.5: Augment Perishable Commodity Services

GOAL 5: Provide Premier Procurement and Technical Solutions to Identify and Fulfill the Needs for Agricultural, Food Assistance, and Other Programs (COMMODITY PROCUREMENT)

Objective 5.1: Enhance the Procurement Business Model

Objective 5.2: Provide Greater Value and Additional Opportunities for Nutrition Assistance Program Recipients

Objective 5.3: Ensure and Expand Optimal Web-Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) Service Delivery

GOAL 6: Sustain and Enrich a Diverse, Progressive, and Dynamic Organizational Environment (ORGANIZATION)

Objective 6.1: Implement a Human Capital Approach that Invests in the Diversification, Recruitment, Training, and Development of Leaders and Employees

Objective 6.2: Augment the Deployment and Alignment of Information Technology Assets in Support of Mission-Critical Programs and Activities

Objective 6.3: Continue to Strive for New Efficiencies, Improvements, and Cost-Savings in Key Functions and Processes

Objective 6.4: Encourage and Support Diversity

Objective 6.5: Effectively Address Opportunities Identified in Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) Results

APPENDIX A: CIVIL RIGHTS AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION COMMITMENTS

The following chart represents AMS' leadership commitment to improving civil rights, diversity, and inclusion within the Agency in alignment with USDA's Goals, Performance Objectives and Goal Indicators.

Civil Rights Performance Plan			
Goal	Performance Objectives		Goal Indicator
Commitment of Agency Leadership/Strategic Plan Integration	Leadership	Hold managers, supervisors and other employees accountable for ensuring that USDA/AMS' customers and employees are treated in accordance with USDA's civil rights policy and applicable legal requirements.	<p>AMS commitments to USDA civil rights goals and obligations are included in its Strategic plan. Our commitment includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All AMS employees are notified of the requirements of Departmental Regulation 4300-010, "Civil Rights Accountability Policy and Procedures," issued January 18, 2006 via the Agency's annual Civil Rights Statements. 2. AMS annual performance plans and appraisals for managers and supervisors include a standard and an evaluation of that standard of their contributions to USDA's commitment to civil rights and equal opportunity, and adherence to its civil rights policy. 3. A representative sampling of signed performance plans shows evidence of EEO elements and standards for all levels. 4. Managers and supervisors are held accountable for maintaining a civil rights program that accomplishes the strategic civil rights goals. 5. AMS maintains and provides a list identifying actual findings of each employee case where disciplinary action or corrective action was taken relating to civil rights or retaliation, and indicate the timeframe in which the disciplinary or corrective action was taken. 6. AMS maintains and provides a list by title of all CRIAs submitted to OASCR.

APPENDIX A: CIVIL RIGHTS AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION COMMITMENTS

Civil Rights Performance Plan			
Goal	Performance Objectives		Goal Indicator
Secretary's Commitment	Secretary's Commitment	Take the following affirmative steps to implement the Secretary's commitment of a successful transformation of AMS and USDA's culture.	<p>AMS commitment to and implementation of a successful transformation includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cultivating an inclusive workplace environment where there is equity of opportunity and all employees are empowered to reach their full potential. 2. Identifying ways to sustain and enhance employee morale and confidence in leadership. 3. Improving internal communication, and increasing dialogue between senior leadership and employees, and employee access to information. 4. A renewed commitment to creating diversity in the workforce and succession planning. 5. Evaluation and modernization of technology and business process/services that will enable us to provide the highest level of service. 6. Improving USDA's past and future record of civil rights, including expanding outreach efforts to socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.
Implementation of the Secretary's Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion	AMS' commitment to Diversity and Inclusion	Take affirmative steps to implement the six main components of USDA's Diversity and Inclusion Plan, and ensure that goals and timelines are accomplished accordingly.	<p>AMS implements the Diversity and Inclusion Plan to meet all requirements and timelines.</p> <p>USDA's Diversity and Inclusion Plan has specific goals, activities, and timelines, organized around the following 6 components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership Accountability and Commitment 2. Outreach and Partnership 3. Recruitment and Hiring 4. Retention and Promotion 5. Diversity Training and Awareness 6. Employee Development and Recognition

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