



Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Equity Action Plan

Marketing and Regulatory Programs

(July 2023)



www.usda.gov/equity/action-plan



Contents

- Message from the Under Secretary 1**
- Message from the Acting Administrator..... 2**
- Introduction..... 3**
- Accomplishments..... 4**
 - Lowering Barriers to Access for Tribal Communities..... 4
 - Reaching Out to Underserved Communities: Feral Swine Program..... 4
 - Eliminating Offensive Terminology..... 5
 - Investing in Minority Serving Institutions and Future Agricultural Workers..... 5
- Equity Actions 6**
 - 1) APHIS will improve delivery of animal health programs and provide equal access to all..... 6
 - 2) APHIS will raise awareness among minority and women stakeholders of its wildlife damage management program services and provide those services to a broader community of stakeholders. 6
 - 3) APHIS will expand consultation with, training for, and delivery of services to tribal nations while enhancing understanding of tribal responsibilities among APHIS employees. 6
 - 4) APHIS will conduct stakeholder barrier analysis..... 7
- Selected Equity Resources and Information 8**
 - USDA Equity-Related Summary Reports and Guidance..... 8
 - Selected Equity-Related Executive Orders and White House Resources 8
 - APHIS Equity-Related Resources..... 8
- USDA Mission Statement 9**
- Department Equity Action Plan Goals 9**

Message from the Under Secretary



Under Secretary Jenny Lester Moffitt

At USDA, we take pride in supporting the farmers, farmworkers, ranchers, growers, and foresters who manage our natural resources and provide our country with its food, feed, fuel, fiber, and flora. Our programs provide these agricultural leaders with the resources they need to offer our country and the world a diverse supply of crops and commodities. Within the Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) mission area, we fulfill a range of functions, from securing America’s plant and animal health to creating more, new, and better marketing opportunities for producers. We even ensure the quality and availability of wholesome, nutritious food for consumers, school students, and our underserved communities. Our work touches every corner of this country every day and we take seriously the task of delivering our programs equitably, efficiently, and effectively.

Our Equity Action Plan outlines the ways our agencies—the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)—are working to ensure that true diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility continue to be the foundation everything we do at the “People’s Department.” That is important not only for our employees and customers, but for all whose lives and livelihoods are impacted by the work that they do. By reducing barriers that prevent individuals from entering and flourishing in the agricultural sector and at USDA and by promoting an agricultural industry that is robust, resilient, and fair, MRP can play a vital role in the continued leadership of rural and agricultural communities.

This is ongoing work that requires us to constantly and meaningfully engage with our stakeholders, employees, and other partners. Feedback is the heartbeat of collaboration, and it is crucial that the development of our programs and our workforce be informed by and composed of a diverse set of voices that reflect our nation. As a mission area and as a Department, we remain committed to centering equity in everything we do. I look forward to continuing to engage in these important conversations and actions.

– Jenny Lester Moffitt
Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs

Message from the Acting Administrator



Acting Administrator Dr. Michael Watson

We who work at USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) are driven by a noble mission: to safeguard the health of U.S. agriculture and natural resources from invasive pests and diseases; ensure new technologies get to producers faster, without creating new risks; administer the Animal Welfare Act; and foster coexistence between people and wildlife. With a legacy spanning over 50 years, our success is due to our hard-working and dedicated employees, as well as our ability to adapt to the needs of the diverse communities we serve.

We firmly believe that promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion is crucial to achieving our mission. Our commitment to equity underlies our policies and practices, ensuring equal access for all individuals, particularly those historically marginalized based on race/ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, socioeconomic status, immigration status, educational background, or religion. We strive to create a world

where everyone has equal access to healthy and profitable agriculture and natural resources.

APHIS recognizes the importance of embracing equity for several reasons: First, as our society undergoes demographic shifts, the face of agriculture is also changing. We understand the need to be aware of and welcome new and diverse stakeholders, as their perspectives and experiences contribute to the effectiveness of our work and the security of our Nation’s food supply.

Second, we value the diverse talents and leadership among APHIS employees who reflect the composition of our local communities. By cultivating a diverse workforce, we not only serve our stakeholders and communities better, but we foster innovation and creativity throughout the organization.

Finally, we are committed to collaborating with a broad range of communities, giving them a voice in securing the effectiveness and inclusiveness of our agricultural safeguarding efforts. Through these collaborations, we create opportunities for people to understand and experience our shared goals and values.

By working together as APHIS employees, embracing our stakeholders’ expertise, and upholding mutual respect and shared responsibility, we can achieve equity in our service delivery. APHIS remains dedicated to its mission, striving to build a future where diversity is celebrated, equity is upheld, and everyone has equal access to the benefits of healthy and thriving agriculture and natural resources.

– Dr. Michael Watson
Acting APHIS Administrator

Introduction

For over 50 years, APHIS has protected the health and value of America’s agriculture and natural resources. That mission provides food and clothing for countless people worldwide and is a mainstay of the U.S. economy.

APHIS may not be a household name, but millions of people benefit every day from our programs and services. As our name suggests, the Agency’s work involves animal and plant health. Our programs also address animal welfare, biotechnology, wildlife damage management, and global trade. We ensure an ample and affordable food supply, protect air travel from wildlife-related accidents, shelter household pets during disasters, and protect the trees in our forests and communities.

APHIS’ strong commitment to equitably serving the American people guides all that we do. Seeking excellence and value, we continue to update the way we work to better meet the needs of today’s agriculture and commerce. We harness new technology to allow industry to move at the speed of commerce and keep up with the demand for agricultural products. We develop better, faster processes, and we streamline operations to improve our customers’ experience and deliver services more effectively. We continue to look for new, nonregulatory solutions to make sure agriculture stays healthy while we maintain the swift flow of trade. These actions—and many others—save both time and money as APHIS strives to better serve its stakeholders and the American public.

APHIS strives to support a workforce that reflects the diversity of the American public it serves. But we do not focus only on the workforce of today: We are dedicated to finding and training those who will serve the agriculture needs of the future. We do this through targeted outreach and education opportunities, and through partnerships with such institutions as 1890 Land-Grant universities and Tribal colleges.



“The work we do touches people’s lives in many ways.”

Accomplishments

Lowering Barriers to Access for Tribal Communities

APHIS is collaborating with Native American agriculture and natural resources groups to host regional **Emergency Preparedness and Response Training**. These workshops are designed to open lines of communication between APHIS and Native American communities, share information about the Agency’s role and its programs, and help Native American communities plan for responding to animal and plant health emergencies. Since fiscal year (FY) 2022, 175 tribal officials representing 62 tribal nations have participated in this training, receiving technical assistance to develop animal and plant health emergency response plans, initiating memorandum of understanding discussions, coordinating logistical exercises, and identifying response vulnerabilities.

APHIS has also made available funding to assist tribal partners with detecting and managing animal diseases. In FY 2022, we awarded approximately \$500,000 for surveillance, testing, and response activities to control chronic wasting disease in wild cervids (deer and elk) on tribal lands. In FY 2023, APHIS supported four new cooperative agreements with tribal partners under its **National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program**. These projects will enhance these tribes’—and our Nation’s—animal disease response capabilities and strengthen APHIS’s relationships with these partners.



Reaching Out to Underserved Communities: Feral Swine Program

APHIS is working to incorporate feedback from underserved stakeholders into its policy and planning processes. Ongoing improvements to the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program demonstrate the benefits that can result. Feral swine are descendants of escaped or released pigs and have been reported in at least 35 States. Wild boar, razorback, feral hog, and wild pig cause tremendous damage—up to \$2.5 billion annually—to crops, forestry, livestock, and pastures. To combat these threats, APHIS established the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program in 2014, to protect agriculture (crops and livestock), natural resources, property, and human and animal health. Where underserved farmers are not aware of the program, they are left to independently eradicate feral swine

on their land or suffer property damage or loss of stock. Based on recent feedback received at the Black Farmers Association and Professional Agricultural Workers conferences, APHIS is improving outreach to make sure underserved farmers know how to access feral swine resources and assistance.

Eliminating Offensive Terminology

APHIS works across our programs and communications to ensure appropriate inclusivity and sensitivity to all groups. In December 2022, APHIS announced it would give some pests new common names because the previous names were considered offensive to certain groups. Specifically, APHIS replaced "gypsy moth" (*Lymantria dispar*) with "spongy moth" and "Asian gypsy moth" (*L. dispar asiatica*, *L. dispar japonica*, *L. albescens*, *L. postalba*, and *L. umbrosa*) with "flighted spongy moth complex." APHIS will continue to review other species' names for any cultural insensitivities and make changes if necessary.

Investing in Minority Serving Institutions and Future Agricultural Workers

APHIS is making investments in programs at Minority Serving Institutions to enlarge students' access to curriculum, internships, and training that support career opportunities in agriculture-related fields. In FY 2022, APHIS provided nearly \$1.9 million to universities and other non-governmental partner to support a variety of educational and outreach efforts. These partners include the National Black Farmers Association, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, the Tuskegee University School of Veterinary Science Annual Symposium, and Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences, among others.



APHIS also invests in the [AgDiscovery](#) program, a free summer 2-4-week program for teenagers to help them explore careers in agricultural sciences. In 2022, APHIS partnered with 22 universities, including 14 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and 2 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), to offer the program. In 2023, AgDiscovery will expand to include the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, the second largest HSI in the country and an important agricultural research institution. APHIS also supports the [Safeguarding Natural Heritage](#) program, a 2-week summer youth program that exposes youth to careers in agriculture, natural resources, and other science related fields, which was hosted by 6 Tribal Colleges and Universities and Native American Serving Institutions in FY 2022.

Equity Actions

1) APHIS will improve delivery of animal health programs and provide equal access to all.

Animal diseases can have a particularly devastating impact on underserved producers. APHIS strives to ensure that producers are treated equitably during all phases of an animal disease outbreak, including depopulation of animals and indemnity payments. After reviewing data collected during the 2022 highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak, APHIS Veterinary Services (VS) developed flat rates for the payouts program and started a pilot to serve a broader group of stakeholders.

During the pilot, VS is offering the flat rate payment option to any affected producer. We expect to finalize new guidance on payouts in September 2023.



2) APHIS will raise awareness among minority and women stakeholders of its wildlife damage management program services and provide those services to a broader community of stakeholders.

APHIS collaborates with many stakeholders—including States, tribes, other Federal agencies, universities, and the public—to raise awareness of all the wildlife damage management services it offers. However, despite previous outreach efforts, underserved farmers are not always aware that our services exist.

As described above, as part of our feral swine services, APHIS is enhancing feral-swine related communication at outreach events. More broadly, we are increasing outreach to underserved farmers, making Wildlife Services speakers available for in-person and online events, and seeking stakeholder feedback to identify additional educational needs related to our services.



Rooting feral swine (left), cornfield damaged by feral swine (right)



3) APHIS will expand consultation with, training for, and delivery of services to tribal nations while enhancing understanding of tribal responsibilities among APHIS employees. All APHIS programs impact tribal nations to some degree. APHIS will ensure that tribal nations have more input to APHIS program plans and receive equitable access to APHIS training, resources, and services. At the same time, we will seek to better educate APHIS employees about our trust and treaty responsibilities.

We will do this by increasing tribal consultations and listening sessions, continuing to develop and deliver internal and external trainings to benefit both tribal communities and APHIS employees, expanding our contacts to raise awareness regarding upcoming APHIS projects and funding opportunities, and increasing exposure for tribal youth to agriculture and natural resources careers within APHIS programs.

4) APHIS will conduct stakeholder barrier analysis

To better understand the needs of our stakeholders, APHIS will work with partners—such as the National Black Farmers Association, the Tuskegee University School of Veterinary Sciences, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS)—to gather feedback on potential obstacles to our programs or services. APHIS sponsors several agricultural conferences with such groups, and we will use those events to engage with community partners. In particular, APHIS will:

- (1) gather feedback on stakeholder access to APHIS resources to identify barriers,
- (2) work with various program offices on how to remove the barriers, and
- (3) participate in stakeholder meetings to report out on actions taken.

APHIS staff will also identify new minority agricultural businesses such as women-owned and minority family businesses (i.e., wineries, small farms, etc.), and will expand outreach on our services to these stakeholders and send them invitations to stakeholder meetings.

For more information on equity at APHIS and all of USDA, see [usda.gov/equity](https://www.usda.gov/equity).



Selected Equity Resources and Information

USDA Equity-Related Summary Reports and Guidance

- Programmatic Equity at USDA:
 - [Equity Website](#)
 - [Equity Accomplishments](#)
 - Equity Action Plan: [Full Plan | Summary](#) (February 2022)
- Equity Commission
 - [Equity Commission Website](#)
 - [2023 Interim Report | USDA Response \(English\)](#) (February 2023)
 - [Informe Interino 2023 | Respuesta al Informe Interino de la Comisión de Equidad del USDA | \(En Español\)](#) (Febrero 2023)
- [USDA Environmental Justice Scorecard](#)
- [USDA Advisory Committees](#)
- [Get Started! A Guide to USDA Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers](#) (July 2022)

Selected Equity-Related Executive Orders and White House Resources

- [White House Equity Page](#)
- [Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#) (January 2021)
- [Executive Order 14091, Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#) (February 2023)
- [Executive Order 14096, Revitalizing our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All](#) (April 2023)
- [Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments](#) (November 2000)
- [Presidential Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships](#)
- [The Path to Achieving Justice40](#)

APHIS Equity-Related Resources

- [APHIS Tribal Relations](#)
- [APHIS Office of Civil Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion](#)
- [Wildlife Damage Management](#)



USDA Mission Statement

“To serve all Americans by providing effective, innovative, science-based public policy leadership in agriculture, food and nutrition, natural resource protection and management, rural development, and related issues with a commitment to delivering equitable and climate-smart opportunities that inspire and help America thrive.”

Department Equity Action Plan Goals

1. Reducing Barriers to USDA Programs

USDA is reducing barriers to programs and improving support to underserved farmers, ranchers, landowners, businesses, and communities, including by providing ways for stakeholders to share their experiences, insights, and needs and by incorporating that input into policy development and implementation improvement.

2. Partnering with Trusted Technical Assistance Providers

USDA is partnering with trusted technical assistance providers to ensure that underserved producers and communities have the support they need to access USDA programs.

3. Directing USDA Programs to Those Who Need Them the Most

USDA programs are targeting those who need them the most, including by increasing infrastructure investments that benefit underserved communities.

4. Expanding Equitable Access to USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs

USDA is expanding equitable access to USDA nutrition assistance programs to ensure that those who qualify are able to participate, those who participate get benefits that are meaningful, and those who receive those benefits can use them conveniently and in ways that promote improvements in their health and well-being.

5. Advancing Equity in Federal Procurement

USDA is advancing equity in Federal procurement, by providing underserved and disadvantaged businesses, tools and resources to increase access to funding opportunities and expand their network to develop critical local, State, regional, and National relationships.

6. Upholding Federal Trust and Treaty Responsibilities to Indian Tribes

USDA is upholding general Federal trust and treaty responsibilities to Indian Tribes, removing barriers to access USDA programs, embracing Tribal self-determination principles, and incorporating indigenous values and perspectives in program design and delivery.

7. Committing Unwaveringly to Civil Rights

USDA has committed unwaveringly to civil rights, working to equip its civil rights offices with the tools, skills, capacity, and processes essential to enforce and uphold civil rights effectively and efficiently.

8. Operating with Transparency and Accountability

USDA is operating transparently and accountably, providing information on Department programs that Congress, stakeholders, and the general public need to hold us to account on our equity agenda, and working systematically to collect and take account of public feedback.



USDA

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.