FY 2025 Annual Performance Plan
FY 2023 Annual Performance Report

U.S. Department of Agriculture

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About the U.S. Department of Agriculture

On May 15, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed legislation to establish the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA or the Department). Two and a half years later in his final message to Congress, Lincoln called USDA "The People's Department." At that time, about half of all Americans lived on farms, compared with about two percent today. But through its work on food, agriculture, economic development, science, natural resource conservation, and a host of other issues, USDA continues to fulfill Lincoln's vision—serving millions of Americans every day.

The agriculture and food industry contributes $1.1 trillion to the U.S. gross domestic product and represents nearly 11 percent of total U.S. employment. Furthermore, USDA over the years has gained more authorities to expand its support not only in agriculture but the support infrastructure that give all producers better access to market and its surrounding communities and natural resources to also thrive.

Today, USDA is comprised of 29 agencies organized under eight Mission Areas and 16 Staff Offices. The Department employs nearly 100,000 persons who serve the American people at more than 6,000 locations across the country and abroad (see USDA Organization Chart).

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

USDA Mission: 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 deliverable equitable and climate-smart opportunities that inspire and help America thrive.

USDA Vision: An equitable and climate-smart food and agriculture economy that protects and improves the health, nutrition, and quality of life of all Americans; yields healthy land, forests, and clean water; helps rural America thrive; and feeds the world.

USDA Core Values

- *Respect and Dignity:* We treat all people with courtesy and respect, and we value the inherent dignity of every individual.
- *Equity and Inclusion:* We seek to end discrimination in all forms, wherever it exists, and expand services and opportunities to underserved people and communities across America, starting with our workforce.
- *Trust and Integrity:* We act in a manner that is deserving of the public's trust and with the utmost integrity in everything we do as public servants.
- *Service and Results:* We listen to our internal and external customers and actively incorporate their ideas on how to best reach our diverse customers and deliver service that significantly and positively impacts the lives of all Americans.
- *Science Leadership:* We base our decisions and policy on science and data that are reliable, timely, relevant, and free from political interference.

USDA Organization Chart

Secretary

Deputy Secretary

- Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
- Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations
- Assistant Secretary for Administration

Under the Secretary/Deputy Secretary:

- Inspector General
- General Counsel
- Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO)
- Office of the Chief Economist (OCE)
- Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA)
- Office of Communications
- Office of Tribal Relations
- Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement
- Office of Hearings and Appeals
- Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)

Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC)
- FPAC Business Center
- Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- Risk Management Agency (RMA)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
- Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

Under Secretary for Food Safety
- Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP)
- Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)
- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment
- Forest Service (FS)

Under Secretary for Rural Development (RD)
- Rural Housing Service
- Rural Utility Service
- Rural Business Cooperative Service

Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics (REE)
- Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS)
- Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
- National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS)
- National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)
- Economic Research Service (ERS)

Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs
- Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)
- U.S. Codex Office

Executive Summary

Background

In accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), as amended by the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA), USDA is pleased to present the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Annual Performance Plan and FY 2023 Annual Performance Report. This document provides an overview of the Department's FY 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan, performance progress for FY 2023, and achievements anticipated in FY 2025.

The Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA) leads USDA in Performance, Evaluation, Evidence, and Risk Management, and chairs the USDA Performance, Evidence, Evaluation, and Risk Committee. All Mission Areas and Departmental Administration are represented on the committee, as well as other key evaluation partners. The broad representation facilitates buy-in across the Department, augments technical expertise, and creates a greater diversity of perspectives. Additionally, OBPA has a close partnership with the Chief Data Officer and Statistical Official, which provides insight and advisement on data access, data quality, and statistical methods.

USDA applies a standardized methodology to collect and use data for program performance measurement. This methodology has been vetted by federally employed scientists and policymakers. With this, USDA attests to the completeness, reliability, and quality of the data.

Performance

The FY 2025 Annual Performance Plan and FY 2023 Annual Performance Report use the following terms in discussing past and future performance:

- *Strategic Goal:* The highest-level statement of aim or purpose that is included in the Strategic Plan. The strategic goals articulate the broad categories of action that the Department will take to advance its mission.

- *Strategic Objective:* This document's 21 strategic objectives are the primary unit for strategic analysis and decision-making. Strategic objectives state the outcomes or management impacts the Department is trying to achieve.

- *Key Performance Indicator (KPI):* A key performance measure used to track progress toward achieving a strategic objective. The Department measures and monitors the trend for these indicators. Performance indicator status results are determined by the following standard:
    - **Met/Blue:** Within 100% or more of target
    - **Needs Improvement/Pink:** Within 10% of target
    - **Unmet/Orange:** Greater than 10% below target

- *Target:* A quantifiable level of achievement that is planned for a measure of strategic objective progress.

- *Baseline:* A performance indicator's level over one or more time periods to assess the appropriate level for future performance targets.

In FY 2023, USDA met or exceeded the target for 19 out of 50 (38%) performance metrics. 3 of the 50 (6%) performance metrics were deemed to "need improvement," meaning they were within 10% range of meeting the set target. 19 of the 50 (38%) performance metrics were more than 10% below target,

designating them as "unmet." 9 of the 50 (18%) performance metrics do not have available data at the time of this report, due to lag times associated with data reporting and processing.
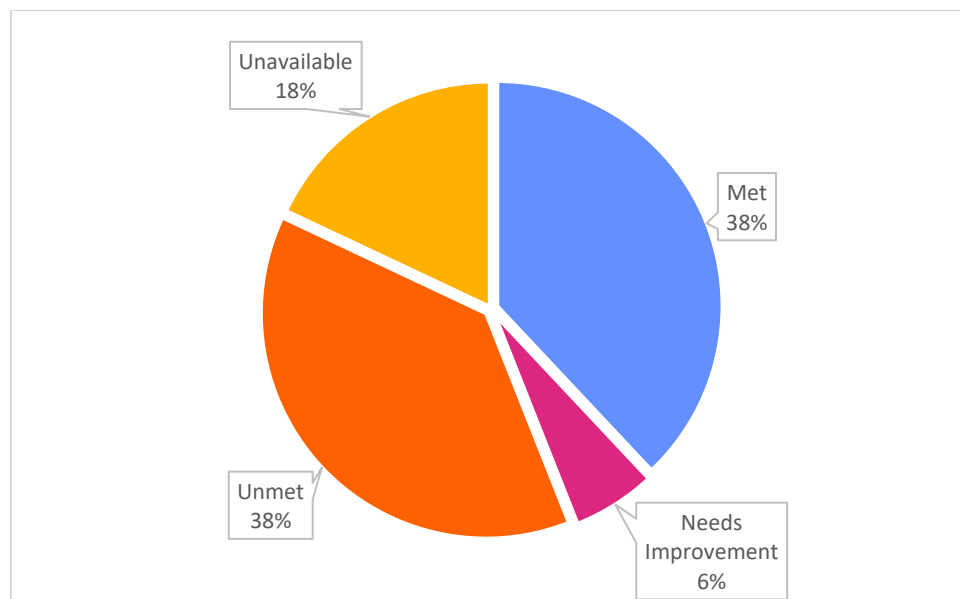
USDA will continue to pursue challenging and ambitious yet feasible target thresholds for its key performance measures aligned to and supported by the Department's Budget request. As precedent data become more readily available, staff will be able to make more informed decisions about manageable targets. USDA will continue to build on its success using the Quarterly Strategic Review process to maintain accountability, and to articulate resources necessary to successfully reach performance metric targets and strategic goals. In addition, the integration of Enterprise Risk Management, along with increased capacity for evidence building, will improve decision-making surrounding resources and program activities.

Supplemental Funding

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, legislation like the American Rescue Plan (ARP), and the transformational and historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) have provided critical investments to address the challenges of climate change to the nation's food and agriculture systems and rebuild the nation's foundational needs from the bottom up and the middle out. Through the ARP, USDA is helping producers get back on their feet; creating more and better markets for local and regional food producers; and supporting those most vulnerable to food insecurity. BIL has supported investments in climate, energy, and the environment in rural America through the expansion of high-speed broadband to create jobs, help farmers use precision agriculture technologies, expand access to health care and educational services, and create economic opportunities for millions across the country. IRA invests in new and existing USDA programs that help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners adopt climate-smart practices, support the transition to clean energy in rural America, and provide technical and financial assistance to underserved farmers, ranchers, and foresters. USDA delivers on these investments to confront challenges in the future of agriculture. Below is a table that lays out KPIs and other supplemental performance measures to track progress on strategic objectives in BIL and/or IRA.

Measure Text	BIL	IRA
Number of High-Priority Areas Where Treatments Have Occurred to Reduce Wildfire Risk to Communities	X	X

Number of UCF IRA Projects Delivered in CJEST 'Disadvantaged' Census Blocks/Tracts		X
Impacts of Investments to Improve National Baseline UTC and (Tree Planting) Based on 30-Year Canopy Growth Projections		X
Number of Landowners Assisted through the Landowner Support for Forest Resilience Program		X
Number of Projects Funded through the Landowner Support for Forest Resilience Program		X
Number of Acres Impacted through the Landowner Support for Forest Resilience Program		X
Number of Projects Funded to Establish, Reopen, Retrofit, Expand, or Improve a Sawmill or Other Wood-Processing Facility		X
Acreage of National Forest System Lands Where Final Treatment Effectively Mitigates Wildfire Risk	X	X
Haul Amount of Material Removed to Reduce Hazardous Fuels to Locations Where that Material can be Utilized	X	X
Reduction and Avoidance of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from RD investments (PACE and New ERA)		X
Reduction and Avoidance of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from RD investments (REAP)		X

Commitment to Customer Experience

USDA is committed to empowering, enabling, and engaging USDA customers and employees in a human-centered approach to innovation in order to deliver consistently exceptional service to customers. The need for improved customer experience in government is both mandated by policy and the need to provide customers with efficient and effective services.

The Office of Customer Experience (OCX) at USDA works to address complex challenges across programs and services that may impact the experiences of USDA customers and employees. A good customer experience will increase trust in government, the likelihood to use products and services, and improve service efficiency through decreased costs. In addition, OCX has and continues to collaborate with USDA's High Impact Service Providers (HISPs) on several initiatives to streamline program applications and enhance customer service. More information on OCX key initiatives can be found at Office of Customer Experience (OCX) | USDA.

USDA's commitment to providing high-quality customer experiences is also reflected in the three Agency Priority Goals and high-impact services provided by five of USDA's eight mission areas. More information on these programs can be found at USDA | Performance.gov.

Finally, USDA recognizes that meeting the needs of its customers also involves addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). USDA established an Equity Commission to ensure that none of its customers are ignored or left behind and that all have an equal chance of success and prosperity. Recognizing the role of a healthy and inclusive organizational culture and the need to build an organization that reflects the communities that the agencies and programs serve, USDA is looking inward to understand what it will take to build an organization that centers DEIA. More information on the equity commission and DEIA initiatives can be found at Equity | USDA.

FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan Overview

The [USDA FY 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan](#) guides the work of USDA to ensure that the Department's efforts best serve the American public. As part of its vision to make USDA the most efficient, most effective, and most customer-focused department in the Federal government, the Department has established six strategic goals for FY 2022 – 2026 and two FY 2024-2025 Agency Priority Goals.

In FY 2023, USDA completed three Agency Priority Goals (APG) and introduced two APGs for FY 2024-2025 to focus and monitor performance where the Department needed to drive significant progress and change. The means used to verify and validate measured values, the sources of data, the level of accuracy required for the intended use of the data, and limitations to the data at the required level of accuracy are described and documented for each Agency Priority Goal on http://www.performance.gov/.

Performance Management

The following chart demonstrates the Department's performance management lifecycle.

FY 2022-2026 USDA Strategic Plan
View Online

FY 2024-2025 Agency Priority Goals (APGs)
View Online

Annual Performance Plan/Report
View Online

Learning Agenda/Capacity Assessment
View Online

Annual Evaluation Plan
View Online

Quarterly APG/CAP Updates
View Online

Quarterly APG/CAP Performance Updates
Internal

Annual Financial Report (AFR)
View Online
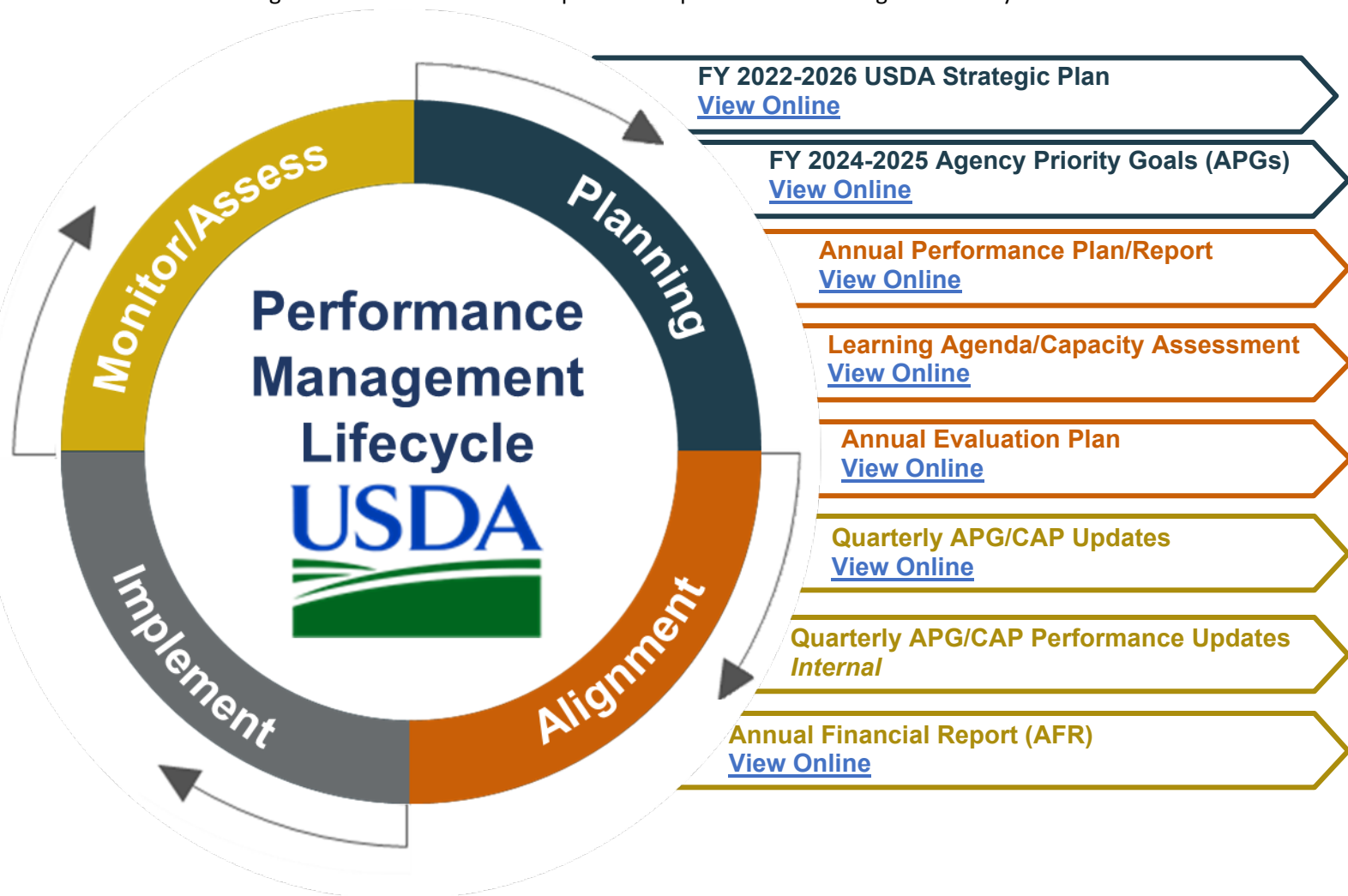
FY 2022 – 2026 Strategic Goals and Objectives

Strategic Goal 1: Combat Climate Change to Support America's Working Lands, Natural Resources and Communities	
Strategic Objective 1.1	Use Climate-Smart Management and Sound Science to Enhance the Health and Productivity of Agricultural Lands
Strategic Objective 1.2	Lead Efforts to Adapt to the Consequences of Climate Change in Agriculture and Forestry
Strategic Objective 1.3	Restore, Protect, and Conserve Watersheds to Ensure Clean, Abundant, and Continuous Provision of Water Resources
Strategic Objective 1.4	Increase Carbon Sequestration, Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Create Economic Opportunities (and Develop Low-Carbon Energy Solutions)

Strategic Goal 2: Ensure America's Agricultural System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous	
Strategic Objective 2.1	Protect Plant and Animal Health by Minimizing Major Diseases, Pests, and Wildlife Conflicts
Strategic Objective 2.2	Build Resilient Food Systems, Infrastructure, and Supply Chain
Strategic Objective 2.3	Foster Agricultural Innovation

Strategic Goal 3: Foster an Equitable and Competitive Marketplace for All Agricultural Producers	
Strategic Objective 3.1	Foster Sustainable Economic Growth by Promoting Innovation, Building Resilience to Climate Change, and Expanding Renewable Energy
Strategic Objective 3.2	Expand Markets for Emerging Technologies, Sustainable Products, and Novel Products
Strategic Objective 3.3	Expand All Producers' Access to Global Markets Through Negotiation and Enforcement of Trade Agreements
Strategic Objective 3.4	Expand International Marketing Opportunities and Build Demand in Developing Countries through Delivery of Technical Assistance and Capacity Building

Strategic Goal 4: Make Safe, Nutritious Food Available to All Americans	
Strategic Objective 4.1	Increase Food Security Through Assistance and Access to Nutritious and Affordable Food
Strategic Objective 4.2	Encourage Healthy Dietary Choices Through Data-Driven, Flexible, Customer-Focused Approaches
Strategic Objective 4.3	Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health

Strategic Goal 5: Expand Opportunities for Economic Development and Improve Quality of Life in Rural and Tribal Communities

Strategic Objective 5.1	Improve Rural and Tribal Community Infrastructure, Including Affordable E-Connectivity, Cornerstone Community Facilities, Sustainable and Reliable Power, and Clean and Safe Water and Sewer Systems
Agency Priority Goal	*Ensure All Americans have Access to High-speed, Affordable, and Reliable Broadband* By September 30, 2025, the Departments of Agriculture and Commerce will expand affordable and reliable access to broadband service by funding projects, which when completed, will provide at least 6,250,000 households and other locations with reliable and affordable access to high-quality internet service. This will be achieved through investment in broadband infrastructure and related activities, accompanied by outreach and technical assistance, and in coordination with applicable Federal agencies, to promote American household accessibility to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet service.
Strategic Objective 5.2	Boost the Financial Security of Rural and Tribal Communities Through Access to Affordable Housing
Strategic Objective 5.3	Increase Capacity, Sustainability, and Economic Vitality in Rural and Tribal Communities
Strategic Objective 5.4	Promote Environmental Justice by Maximizing Sustainable and Green Economic Development in Rural and Tribal Communities

Strategic Goal 6: Attract, Inspire, and Retain an Engaged and Motivated Workforce that's Proud to Represent USDA

Objective 6.1	Foster a Culture of Civil Rights, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, Transparency, and Accountability
Objective 6.2	Establish a Customer-Centric, Inclusive, High-Performing Workforce that is Representative of America and the Communities We Serve
Agency Priority Goal	*Cultivate a motivated and skilled workforce capable of accomplishing USDA's mission through effective recruitment and retention* Building upon the work of the previous two years, by September 30, 2025, improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and strategic alignment of recruitment and retention strategies and processes to attract, hire, and retain top talent. By September 30, 2025, USDA will decrease the total number of permanent employee separations by 1% per year, with concentration on the number of permanent employee separations having less than 1 year as well as 1-2 years of service as compared to the FY23 YTD baseline.
Objective 6.3	Promote USDA Operational Excellence Through Better Use of Technology and Shared Solutions

Cross-Agency Priority Goals

GPRAMA requires Cross-Agency Priority Goals to be addressed in the Annual Performance Report. Please refer to https://www.performance.gov for the Department's contributions and progress toward those goals, where applicable.

Lower-Priority Program Activities

The President's Budget identifies lower-priority program activities where applicable, as required under GPRAMA 31 U.S. Code § 1115(b)(10). The public can access the volume at https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget.

Key to Performance Measure Data Tables

	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	100	100	120	150	150	225	Units	Increase	
Actual	---	90	100	115	100	TBD	N/A			

"---" = No Data

Gray = Data and No Target

Met/Blue = Within 100% or more of target

Needs Improvement/Pink = Within 10% of target

Unmet/Orange = Greater than 10% below target

Yellow = Unavail-able

Actuals by Year (Bars)

Targets by Year (Line)

Goal 1: Combat Climate Change to Support America's Working Lands, Natural Resources, and Communities

Climate change poses a significant risk to agriculture, forests, and grasslands across the United States and the communities that support and depend on them. The Nation's agricultural lands, forests, and private working lands require conservation and restoration efforts to strengthen their resilience to drought, invasive species, and wildfire. The Department must lead with investments in science, research, and climate-smart solutions. These investments will mitigate the impacts of climate change, increase adaptation to climate change, generate new income opportunities, and build generational wealth in disadvantaged communities.

Agriculture can lead the fight on climate using climate-smart agriculture, forestry, and renewable energy practices that sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve adaptation and resilience, and increase market opportunities for all producers. USDA is working to develop and implement a comprehensive climate-smart strategy that is centered on incentives for voluntary participation and meeting the needs of its diverse producers, landowners, and communities. Additionally, it will provide a host of new tools to deploy important conservation practices and the research essential to inform them.

Objective 1.1: Use Climate-Smart Management and Sound Science to Enhance the Health and Productivity of Agricultural Lands

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
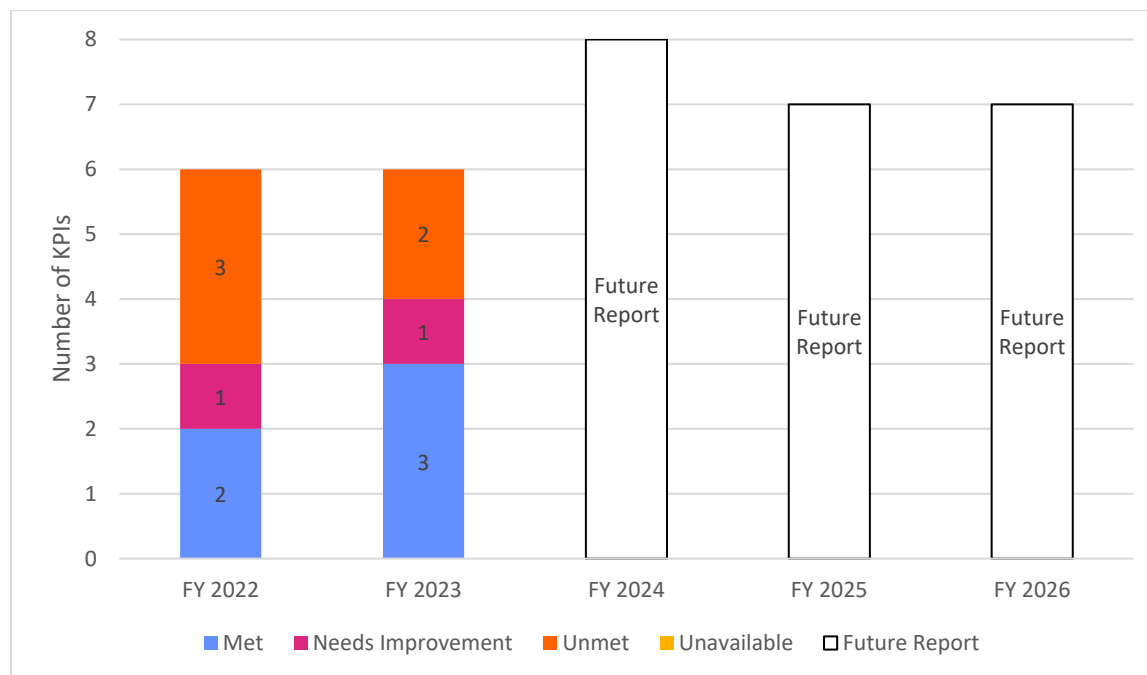
Accomplishments

- Identified program enhancements to increase demand and encourage use of Conservation Loans.
- Released the FY 2023 Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Sustainable Agricultural Systems (SAS) request for application (RFA) that includes a new $5M program to reduce enteric methane emission from ruminants.
- Monitoring, Assessment, and Evaluation (MAE) funding has been obligated to incorporate FSA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practices into the COMET tool, develop a tool to collect the soil carbon monitoring data, and expand the soil carbon project into grassland CRP. Sampling of the soil carbon MAE project is underway in perennial grasses, wetlands, and trees.

Challenges

- Continued high crop prices have impacted producer enrollment and re-enrollment.
- Landowners are backing out of NRCS agreements in some states potentially due to higher land values and/or better opportunities with other programs.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Farm Service Agency
- Forest Service
- Office of the Chief Economist

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Cropland with Applied Soil Health Management System Practices

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	225	225	225	225	N/A	Thousand Acres	Increase	
Actual	---	---	313	294	464	N/A	N/A			

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025 and replaced by a new soil health KPI.

Progress Made in FY 2023

This is an annual measure and was initiated in FY 2021. The required minimum practices are cover crops, reduced or no-till, and conservation crop rotation. The computation includes the EQIP, CSP, and CTA programs.

Cropland on Which at Least One Conservation Practice was Applied to Improve Soil Quality Under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	3.1	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	N/A	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	3.4	3.9	3.4	3.3	3.3	N/A	N/A			

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025 and replaced by a new soil health KPI.

Progress Made in FY 2023

This KPI has been a staple performance measure for many years and is used as a national level indicator of NRCS's progress on soil quality. Progress on soil quality under Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is still strong based on the expanded focus on soil health benefits.

Cropland with Conservation Applied to Improve Soil Quality through Conservation Technical Assistance

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	11.3	N/A	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025 and replaced by two new KPIs that represent how Conservation Technical Assistance translates into working with customers to create conservation plans which address resource concerns.

Progress Made in FY 2023

Leadership and subject matter experts (SME) are re-evaluating this measure. CTA is primarily used for conservation planning related to all practices. Soil Quality practices are primarily implemented as part of a supporting program.

Cropland with Conservation Applied to Reduce Soil Erosion and Improve Soil Quality through Environmental Quality Incentives

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	3.1	N/A	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025 and replaced by a new soil health KPI.

Progress Made in FY 2023

This KPI has been a staple performance measure for many years and is used as a national level indicator of NRCS's progress on soil quality. Leadership and SMEs are re-evaluating this measure. The agency is reevaluating this measure to included additional land uses to better reflect FPAC NRCS work.

Working Lands Protected by Conservation Easements

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	140	163	163	163	129	129	N/A	Thousand Acres	Increase	
Actual	178	167	145	167	193	N/A	N/A			

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025 and replaced by a new KPI which reflects the full inventory of acres under conservation protection.

Progress Made in FY 2023

Normal day-to-day issues such as boundary discrepancies, staffing, and weather can affect the timeline for closings, therefore most conservation easements close in Q3 and Q4.

Land Evaluated for Conservation Needs

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	---	52.1	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

New KPI Description

This KPI is being introduced in FY 2025. Conservation assessments completed during the fiscal year to treat resource concerns. This measure represents the acre footprint of all land units that have been assessed. All land uses are eligible.

Conservation planning support is a critical service NRCS provides to America's producers. This activity was previously reported as a KPI, but in a more limited scope focused on cropland land-use. This new KPI more fully represents the conservation planning activity that NRCS performs. Conservation planning acres represent the land quantity that NRCS is providing technical assistance to on a yearly basis.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

While this is a new KPI that will be reported starting in FY 2025, the information represented is not new to NRCS. The target for this KPI, which represents the acres of land that NRCS had performed conservation planning for, was informed by historic accomplishments. NRCS continues to prioritize conservation planning activities and does not anticipate any changes to this priority that would impact achieving the FY 2025 target.

Conservation Plans Developed

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	---	115,000	Plans	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

New KPI Description

This KPI is being introduced in FY 2025. Conservation assessments completed during the fiscal year to treat resource concerns. This measure represents the number of conservation plans that have been assessed. All land uses are eligible.

Conservation planning support is a critical service NRCS provides to America's producers. This activity was previously reported as a KPI, but in a more limited scope focused on cropland land-use. This new KPI more fully represents the conservation planning activity that NRCS performs. Conservation planning counts correlate with the number of operations that NRCS is providing technical assistance to on a yearly basis, regardless of the size of the operation.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

While this is a new KPI that will be reported starting in FY 2025, the information represented is not new to NRCS. The target for this KPI, which represents the quantity of conservation plans NRCS has developed, was informed by historic accomplishments. NRCS continues to prioritize conservation planning activities and does not anticipate any changes to this priority that would impact achieving the FY 2025 target.

Conservation Practice Applied to Reduce Soil Erosion or Improve Soil Health

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	---	15.9	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

New KPI Description

This KPI is being introduced in FY 2025. Land on which at least one conservation practice narrative was applied that improves soil health or reduces soil erosion during the fiscal year. Eligible conservation practice narratives per applicable land use. All land uses are eligible. All programs are eligible.

This new KPI expands on concepts previously reported for NRCS's support for improving Soil Health and reducing Soil Erosion, by incorporating additional land-uses and programs. Compared to previously reported KPIs, this new indicator tells a fuller picture of how NRCS funding translates to environmental benefits.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

This KPI was designed to be a more exhaustive measure of the outcomes NRCS produces with relation to reducing erosion and improving soil health. The target for this KPI was informed by historic accomplishments in these conservation areas. Reducing soil erosion and improving soil health are anticipated to continue being priority resource concerns on a national scale, and NRCS does not anticipate any changes to this priority that would impact reaching the FY 2025 target.

Land Under Protection by Conservation Easements

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	---	5.7	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

New KPI Information

This KPI is being introduced in FY 2025. Cumulative acres of closed conservation easements across all programs and land uses. This better represents the value and support NRCS provides via easement programs. This KPI captures the total closed easement inventory (a change from prior easement KPIs, which focused exclusively on anticipated new closed acreage). This number represents the agency's existing inventory plus future year projections, outlining the total acres NRCS expects to have under conservation protection by the target timeframe.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

Starting in FY 2025, NRCS will represent easement outcomes in terms of the total acres of land under protection from easement programs, rather than focusing exclusively on new land acres. This

representation better reflects the long-term commitment to land protection and stewardship that conservation easements provide. FY 2025 targets for this calculation reflect the existing inventory as of the end of FY 2022, plus anticipated new acres to be closed in the coming fiscal years.

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Acreage Enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program Riparian and Grass Buffers

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	1.43	1.41	1.46	1.56	1.56	1.61	1.23	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	1.43	1.36	1.42	1.37	1.28	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

Acres declined in the first quarter of FY23, and there was no significant change during the second, third and fourth quarter. Continued high crop prices have impacted producer enrollment and re-enrollment. High crop prices continue to impact enrollment across all areas of FPAC FSA CRP. Additionally, the 2018 Farm Bill decrease of enrollment authority and rental rates has also decreased the enrollment of these continuous signup practices. Earlier targets were based on historic enrollment when the statutory cap was significantly higher and rental rates and crop prices were lower. FPAC FSA experienced a decrease for FY23 and anticipates that enrollment in these practices will continue to lag.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

FSA will continue outreach for enrollment; however, due to farm bill changes and current farm economy it is difficult to forecast enrollment and progress. Furthermore, increasing crop prices reduces producer interest in CRP enrollment. Historically FSA factored 10 years of enrollment data to determine targets. However, considering these recent challenges FSA is adjusting to 5-year historical enrollment for FY 2025 targets. FSA believes this more accurately reflects the current trends.

FOREST SERVICE

Percentage of National Forest System Landscape Ecosystems Improved, Maintained, or Recovering Due to Management Actions

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	42%	42%	35%	38%	38%	39%	% Ecosys-tems	Increase	
Actual	---	32%	33%	29%	30%	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

The percentage of National Forest System landscape ecosystems improved, maintained, or recovering due to management actions increased slightly over 1% between FY 2022 and FY 2023. Improved reporting and

increases in prescribed fire were the two biggest contributors to this increase. Prescribed fire improves multiple measures contributing to ecological integrity in the Terrestrial Condition Assessment (TCA) model that underlies this KPI, including factors such as wildfire hazard potential and fire deficit. The TCA leverages these indicators of ecological integrity to project ecological outcomes of multiple management activities completed in the fiscal year. Significant reporting improvements to the Forest Service Activity Tracking System (FACTS) also helped improve this KPI's accomplishment level. In FY 2023, 10 percent more activities were correctly entered with their spatial information which allowed for an increase of 400,000 acres of work to be included in this KPI's calculation. Expanded training, filled FACTS coordinator positions, and improved communication with the field all contributed to this increased reporting. Although a greater number of acres of accomplishment were completed in FY 2023, the number of landscape ecosystems having management actions occur decreased slightly. This may indicate more coordinated and focused efforts to ensure improved outcomes from recent investments including those made in the Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscapes.

While not meeting the target this fiscal year, this still represents a significant amount of work improving ecological conditions across National Forest System lands. Challenges in FY 2023 include recently identified data gaps, decreases in invasive species treatments, staffing shortages, and contracting difficulties. A key part of restoration that USDA manages is returning the function of ecological processes to the landscapes. A major ecological process for restoration is fire. Returning appropriate fire to the landscape has a significant positive impact on the TCA KPI and the historic level of prescribed fire in FY 2023 was a positive step towards ecological restoration.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

In FY 2025 and following recent investments, the agency will continue with progress towards completing implementation of restoration projects that achieve the agency's focus on larger landscape restoration, as outlined in the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. This focus will also lead to increases in ecosystem health measured in the Terrestrial Condition Assessment KPI. Ongoing investments will also allow for staff in new roles to develop the skills, knowledge, and experience to expand the capacity of the agency. Restoration work, especially when done at scale, takes time to complete and see the investment outcomes as various activities move through planning, contracting, and implementation phases prior to being completed. Through focused work in priority areas and greater support for landscape-scale work through agency programs (e.g., selection and funding for the next group of Collaborative Forest Land Restoration Project projects), the percent of landscapes improved, maintained, and recovering should continue to improve.

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Percentage of UCF IRA Projects Delivered in CJEST 'Disadvantaged' Census Blocks/Tracts

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	100	100	Percent	Increase	**-**
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Impacts of Investments to Improve National Baseline UTC and (Tree Planting) Based on 30-year Canopy Growth Projections

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	TBD	TBD	TBD	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

IRA allocated $1.5 billion to the Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) program to provide multiyear, programmatic, competitive grants for tree planting and related activities, with a priority for projects that benefit underserved populations and areas through the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance program established under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (16U.S.C.2105(c)).

On April 12, 2023, USDA Under Secretary Dr. Homer Wilkes announced $250 million in UCF IRA funding to State and U.S. Territory Forestry agencies to support competitive sub-grant programs that provide equitable access to trees and associated benefits in disadvantaged communities. The Under Secretary also announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity providing $1 billion in competitive grant funding to community-based organizations, tribes, municipal governments, non-profit partners, universities, and other eligible entities to increase tree planting in urban areas and equitable access to nature.

The notice of funding opportunity generated over 800 applications totaling $6.4 billion in funding requests that were cleared for review, followed by a multi-step review process comprised of a USDA-wide Independent Review Team, and two additional rounds of technical reviews by the Washington Office Urban and Community Forestry team and Regional Program Managers.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

In FY 2025, the program goal will be to support all funded UCF IRA grants and cooperative agreements, delivering financial and technical assistance to dozens of partner organizations and agencies working to sustain and increase tree canopy, equitable access to the benefits of nature, and green industry jobs in communities across the country. UCF will establish baseline national urban tree canopy information to inform IRA investment impacts and future investment priorities and begin measuring progress toward urban tree canopy goals.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ECONOMIST

Percent Increase in Number of Stakeholders Supported through Climate Hubs Capacity-Building Activities

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	2.5	5.0	5.0	5.0	Percent	Maintain	
Actual	---	---	---	0.5	146	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

The USDA Climate Hubs develop and deliver science-based, region-specific tools and resources for climate-informed decision-making in agricultural food and fiber production, the management of forest and rangeland ecosystem services, and in support of community resilience. Through FY 2023, the USDA Climate Hubs engaged with existing and new stakeholders. With the growth in Hub staff numbers, primarily through additional Hub fellows, USDA was able to reach considerably more stakeholders over the course of FY 2023 compared to FY 2022 and FY 2021. In 2023, Climate Hubs hosted or participated in 288 workshops and webinars reaching an estimated 28,721 adult participants. Hub staff gave 234 presentations at meetings and had 32 engagements with Tribes. Climate Hubs also reached 34,664 youth participants, more than doubling the number of overall engagements. This level of outreach to youth participants is not expected to occur in FY 2024. In comparison, in FY 2022, Climate Hubs reached an estimated 24,186 adult participants and 1,719 youth participants. The International Climate Hub (supported by the Foreign Agricultural Service) was announced in May 2023 and since then has already made important contributions to the Hubs Program, including building international content on the Hubs' websites, and engaging with international stakeholders and partners.

Progress in FY 2023 includes the ongoing development of regional and sector-based vulnerability assessments and the production of adaptation resources and climate-smart solutions. FY 2023 has also seen continued Hub staff leadership and authorship of the Fifth National Climate Assessment. Climate Hubs create their own or support access to science-based agriculture, forestry, and land management tools and technologies for responding to impacts of a changing climate such as drought, extreme weather events, and changing growing seasons. Climate Hubs leverage partnerships with USDA and other government agencies, Cooperative Extension, and state agencies and non-profit organizations to generate information and decision-support resources. All these activities are synergistic with outreach and education, providing the content for stakeholder engagement and capacity building.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

As an interagency program, the USDA Climate Hubs continue to translate climate science into action for diverse internal and external audiences. Progress will be made through the Climate Hubs' three workstreams: science and data synthesis, tool and technology development, and outreach, convening, and training. The Climate Hubs aim to maintain a 5 percent increase from FY 2021 engagements (25,786 people) in the number of people supported through capacity-building activities. Capacity building in the context of the Climate Hubs includes sharing information that enhances climate literacy, climate change adaptation and mitigation practices, and builds climate resilience. These activities include in-person or

virtual workshops, demonstrations, trainings, online tutorials, webinars, and videos, as well as youth engagements and curriculum development. The work of the Climate Hubs will increase throughout the U.S. due to three new investments. The Agricultural Research Service and Forest Service have provided funding for increasing capacity through fellowships which will broaden the work of the Climate Hubs. Additionally, increased staff capacity due to IRA funding via NRCS will enhance USDA Climate Hub engagements on climate change mitigation practices. Lastly, new capacity through the NIFA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Climate Hubs-Extension partnership grants will support delivery of climate-smart, community-driven solutions, and reach underserved communities across the nation. Each new effort takes time to train new staff and establish projects prior to effective engagements. The Climate Hubs aim to maintain a 5 percent increase from FY 2021 numbers.

Objective 1.2: Lead Efforts to Adapt to the Consequences of Climate Change in Agriculture and Forestry

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
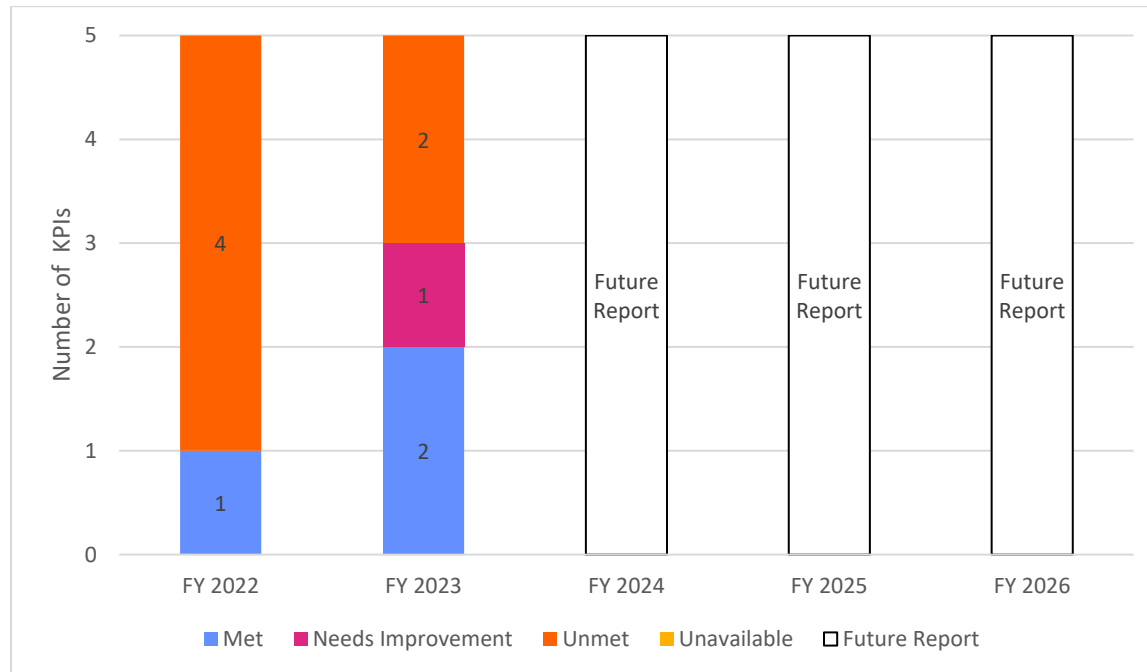
Accomplishments

- Virtual fencing technology helps grazing cattle reduce vegetation in fuel breaks to fight wildfires.
- Held training for the USDA Acquisition workforce in coordination with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).
- Facilitated and informed climate change adaptation training to USDA employees; incorporated climate change in project evaluation protocol for funding allocations and departmental manual.

Challenges

- Survey participation and analysis of resulting survey data.
- Acres treated from wildfires that met planned objectives were significantly lower for this fiscal year relative to previous years.
- Wildfires, on a nearly year-round basis, continue to divert resources from planning and timber sale preparation. Some markets are also indicating they are saturated with salvage timber sales or are dealing with ongoing litigation.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Forest Service

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FOREST SERVICE

Private Forest Acres Protected Through the Forest Legacy Program

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	69,000	64,000	64,000	64,000	Acres	Maintain	
Actual	---	---	---	54,378	46,772	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

Conservation across landscapes and ownerships is essential to addressing large-scale conservation issues, including watershed protection, wildfire risk mitigation, and protection of at-risk species. Intact working forests provide clean drinking water, sequester carbon, protect wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and offer recreation access. Conserving working lands supports local, regional, and national economies. To select projects for funding, the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) uses a two-tiered competitive process at both the State and national levels. To date, FLP has conserved over 3 million acres, including almost 47,000 acres in 2023. Historically, FLP leverages more than one dollar for every Federal dollar spent. Barriers to progress early in the fiscal year included the timing of grant awards and limited capacity of available review appraisers. However, the program was able to increase its staffing (including appraisal support) and state support to address project implementation challenges and to increase the pace of implementation.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

By FY 2025, the Forest Legacy program expects to be operating at full capacity and anticipates that increased staffing, combined with improved knowledge, skills, and abilities, will result in increased pace of successful project completions. Since Forest Legacy projects are Congressionally directed, grant awards are delayed until a final appropriations act is signed into law and this continues to be a challenge. The program provides administrative funds to states in addition to funding projects and the agency has increased project administration support to participating states. While some states have been able to quickly operationalize the availability of additional resources, other states face challenges in doing so. Forest Service program staff will continue to work with State partners to provide programmatic, educational, and financial support to ensure effective program implementation. Finally, additional funding made available by IRA will continue to increase capacity for the program including $250 million in FY 2024 and $125 million in FY 2025, which is also expected to increase accomplishments.

Number of High-Priority Areas Where Treatments Have Occurred to Reduce Wildfire Risk to Communities

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	3	1	N/A	N/A	Firesheds	Maintain	
Actual	---	---	---	3	1	N/A	N/A			

This KPI is being retired in FY 2024 and will be replaced with a new KPI in a future plan.

Progress Made in FY 2023

In FY 2022, the agency began using the analytic methodology of "firesheds" to help prioritize work in areas with the greatest wildfire risk exposure to communities. As of FY 2023, 21 landscapes encompassing 250 high priority firesheds were identified and an accelerated pace and scale of hazardous fuels treatments was started supported by the funding from BIL and IRA. This is part of the agency's work to execute the Wildfire Crisis Strategy, under the umbrella of the National Wildland Fire Cohesive Strategy. Along with the 21 landscapes, several of the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership projects are also being implemented within high priority firesheds."

Acreage Treated to Reduce or Maintain Fuel Conditions on National Forest System and Non-Federal Lands

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.7	4.0	4.2	4.0	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	2.9	2.7	3.7	3.2	4.4	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

The fuels management program treats acres to reduce the risk for uncharacteristic wildfire by prioritizing treatments in the vicinity of critical infrastructure, community drinking water sources, critical habitat, and traditional homelands. A trade-off analysis is conducted using scenario investment planning to distribute resources more efficiently to the highest priority areas. Working with community partners across boundaries allows the agency to leverage resources and work efficiently to reduce wildfire risk, while creating resilient landscapes and encouraging fire-adapted communities. In FY 2023, the Forest Service accomplished approximately 4.4 million acres of fuels treatments on National Forest System lands and adjacent areas to mitigate wildfire risk. Approximately 2.7 million of the treated acres were in high-risk wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas. The treated areas outside the WUI were also identified as high priority and included municipal watersheds, traditional homelands, critical habitat, and areas valued for subsistence and cultural opportunities, forest products, and ecosystem restoration. Approximately 1.6 million treated acres were categorized as having a high to very high hazard potential for a large wildfire that would be difficult to contain. Over 2 million acres of prescribed fire were accomplished, the highest number of acres in the agency's history; approximately 300,000 more than any other year. Approximately

620,000 acres of naturally occurring wildfire met natural resource objectives; about 100,000 acres above the five-year average.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

The Forest Service Washington Office staff will continue to work with each region to achieve the right level of support to maintain fire-adapted ecosystems, continue investments, and maximize opportunities to reduce wildfire risk in those key firesheds identified in the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. Specifically, the agency has set its FY 2024 national hazardous fuels goal at 4.2 million acres on National Forest System lands and adjacent lands and a FY 2025 goal of 4.0 million acres. Achieving these goals is dependent on a broad range of enabling conditions related to litigation, timber markets, increased costs due to inflation, unpredictable situations such as wildfire conditions and other natural disasters, and final budget appropriations from Congress. Any of these could impact the agency's ability to achieve these accomplishment goals. Further, the agency expects increased treatment costs as the focus work in areas that are more impactful in reducing wildfire risk, but that takes longer to complete and is more complex.

Although the agency was able to achieve 4.4 million acres in FY 2023 with historic investments from BIL and IRA, treatments continue to be focused in the right places, and at the right time, to mitigate wildfire risk to communities, infrastructure, and natural resources. This focus does not always result in more acres treated. The agency will continue to focus on outcomes, rather than acres treated, and is working on more effective ways to communicate this internally and externally.

Acreage of National Forest System Lands Where Final Treatment Effectively Mitigates Wildfire Risk

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.4	1.6	1.7	1.6	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	0.9	0.8	1.3	1.1	1.4	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

Mitigated accomplishments are approximately 35 percent of all hazardous fuels treatments, meaning about a third of all treatments are a final or maintenance treatment and are primarily accomplished through prescribed fire. These accomplishments reflect all funding sources including annual appropriations, BIL, Disaster Supplemental, permanent, trust, and reimbursable. Reducing vegetation density, improving heterogeneity, and implementing periodic prescribed fire assists in the fire-adaptation of our Nation's forests, sustaining them through time. By treating National Forest System lands, fire can burn at low to moderate intensities and the wildland fire workforce can effectively suppress unplanned ignitions and limit the impacts of fire and smoke to communities. This also reduces carbon emissions and provides for healthy forests with increased growth capacity to fix carbon. The Nation's forests provide for the livelihoods of many individuals, industries, and communities. Healthy, productive forests maintain current economic enterprises while encouraging additional opportunities.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

The Forest Service will continue to work closely with each region to achieve the right level of support to maintain current levels of risk, continue investments, and maximize opportunities to reduce wildfire risk.

Funding in BIL provides opportunities to treat high-risk and high-cost acres in FY 2023 and is anticipated to have a similar impact in FY 2024 and FY 2025. These treatments will allow the Forest Service to redesignate more than 1.5 million acres to a low risk of wildfire. Additional investments will be required to maintain these areas over time and avoid returning to a high risk of wildfire.

Timber Volume Sold

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	3.7	3.7	4.0	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.2	Billion Board Feet	Increase	
Actual	3.27	3.21	2.8	2.9	3.1	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

In 2023, the agency offered and sold approximately 3.1 billion board feet of timber through the treatment of 551,141 acres, which resulted in nearly $155 million in receipts. Sales included more than 700 contracts greater than $10,000, nearly 120,000 small timber contracts and permits, and over 23,000 special forest product permits. At the end of August 2023, a total of 8.022 billion board feet was under contract with industry. Additionally, the significant focus on the Wildfire Crisis Strategy (WCS) landscapes continued through FY 2023, with an emphasis on wildfire risk reduction resulting in increased removal of smaller diameter material for fuels reduction purposes. Partnerships through new national keystone agreements and other local and regional partners, in FY 2022 and FY 2023, have added capacity to the agency's focus within the WCS landscapes. Other forest management programs contributed to the volume increase including salvage sales and other permanent and trust funded sales. Of note, timber volume sold using Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program funding was over 87 million board feet (MMBF); Good Neighbor Authority, 230 MMBF; and stewardship contracting and agreements, 991 MMBF.

Investments in the WCS landscape projects are higher cost treatments and lower volume production, which require additional preparation and partnership coordination to maintain stability in the timber program. In 2022 and 2023, the closure of timber markets for lower value materials such as pulpwood, non-sawtimber and biomass have impacted the agency's ability to remove this material while receiving a financial benefit, especially in the Eastern Region (09).

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

The agency will continue to evolve this as an outcome-based indicator to measure success in combating climate change, and its support of America's working lands, natural resources, and communities. Agency field staff continue to look for new opportunities to work with partners, as well as the use of multiple contracting types and other authorities to get more work done at a larger scale. Additional support to provide training to employees and support options for efficiencies will be a key focus leading into FY 2025. The Agency will continue the development of a 5-year strategic plan of action that outlines expectations and outcomes for future planning, outcomes, and KPI accomplishments. These strategic investments will also support an emphasis on employee recruitment and position hiring will need to be a continued focus into FY 2025 to ensure a full work force is available to meet the agencies objectives.

Number of Peer-Reviewed Scholarly Publications

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	1,100	1,100	Publications	Increase	**-**
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

Forest Service Research and Development (R&D) prioritizes investments that produce research and science applications to inform Forest Service land management responsibilities and to advance national priorities. These investments are focused on increasing research and science delivery to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the wildland fire management mission; improving understanding of the effects of climate change on ecosystems; informing climate adaptation and resilience through nature-based climate solutions such as forest carbon restoration and management; sustaining and improving watershed resilience, risk assessment, and restoration; conducting forest inventory and trend analysis; and advancing wood product innovations and wood product markets. For more information, please refer to the Forest Service's database for all research products called "TreeSearch" https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/treesearch.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

Forest Service R&D will focus on research publications to inform Forest Service land management responsibilities and to advance the highest national priorities. R&D will support the agency's Wildfire Crisis Strategy, including fire prediction, planning, decision support, strategic reduction of hazardous fuels, impact assessment, and recovery; continue investments in watershed research to sustain and improve water security in the face of increasingly frequent and extreme hydrological events from droughts to floods; and invest in research and development of innovative wood uses, generating new products, supporting new and emerging markets, and facilitating implementation of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy.

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Number of Landowners Assisted through the Forest Landowner Support Program

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	0	5,000	Number of Landowners	Increase	**/**
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Number of Projects Funded through the Forest Landowner Support Program

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	30	50	Number of Projects	Increase	╱
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Number of Acres Impacted through the Forest Landowner Support Program

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	0	50,000	Number of Acres	Increase	╱
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

IRA provides funding and direction for multiyear, programmatic, competitive grants through the authorities of the Landscape Scale Restoration Program. Focus areas include cost share payments for climate mitigation or forest resilience practices; support for participation of underserved and smaller-acreage landowners in emerging private markets for climate mitigation and forest resilience; and payments for forestry practices resulting in measurable increases in carbon sequestration and storage.

In FY 2023, the agency created a new team to design and implement these new programs and released an initial competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity with the expectation of awarding up to $150 million in FY 2024 from this first opportunity. The agency conducted extensive outreach to attract a diverse set of applicants and anticipates a balanced and robust portfolio of funded projects that will result in significant outcomes.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

In FY 2025, the agency will continue program delivery including through additional funding opportunities to support cost share payments for climate mitigation or forest resilience and practice payments for carbon sequestration and storage. The program anticipates announcing approximately $30 million in new opportunities and obligating over $200 million into awards from competitive opportunities announced in FY 2024 and FY 2025.

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Number of Projects Funded to Establish, Reopen, Retrofit, Expand, or Improve a Sawmill or Other Wood-Processing Facility

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	116	90	Number of Projects	Increase	＼
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Haul Amount of Material Removed to Reduce Hazardous Fuels to Locations Where That Material can be Utilized

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	150,000	60,000	Green Tons	Increase	＼
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

The Forest Service has made catalytic investments in the wood-based bioeconomy to support land management, wildfire risk reduction, climate adaptation, and local economies. In FY 2023, the Wood Innovations, Community Wood, and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance grant programs funded over 160 projects for $67 million to support innovation, market development and new and expanded manufacturing capacity. These projects support the critical connection between healthy and resilient federal, state, tribal and private forests, and the wood products economy.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

In FY 2025, the program goal will be to continue to support program delivery though the Wood Innovation grant program, the Community Wood grant program, the Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance grant program, and the Hazardous Fuels Transportation Assistance program. The Wood Innovation grant program uses funds from annual appropriations, BIL, and IRA. The Community Wood grant program uses funds from annual agency appropriations and BIL. The Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance grant programs use funds from BIL only. The Hazardous Fuels Transportation Assistance program uses funds from IRA.

A Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Wood Innovations grant program is planned for $3 million of BIL funds and $5 million of IRA funds. Community Wood is planned for $5 million of BIL funds. Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance is planned at $20 million. Additional funds from the annual Forest Service budget will be used if appropriate. The focus will be to support market development, facility expansion, and transportation assistance of material removed during hazardous fuels treatments.

The target for these programs is to support 90 facilities and projects that support increased manufacturing, and 20 projects that support hazardous fuels transportation. This is a projected decrease from FY 2024 since the majority of IRA funds will likely be expended in FY 2024.

Objective 1.3: Restore, Protect, and Conserve Watersheds to Ensure Clean, Abundant, and Continuous Provision of Water Resources

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
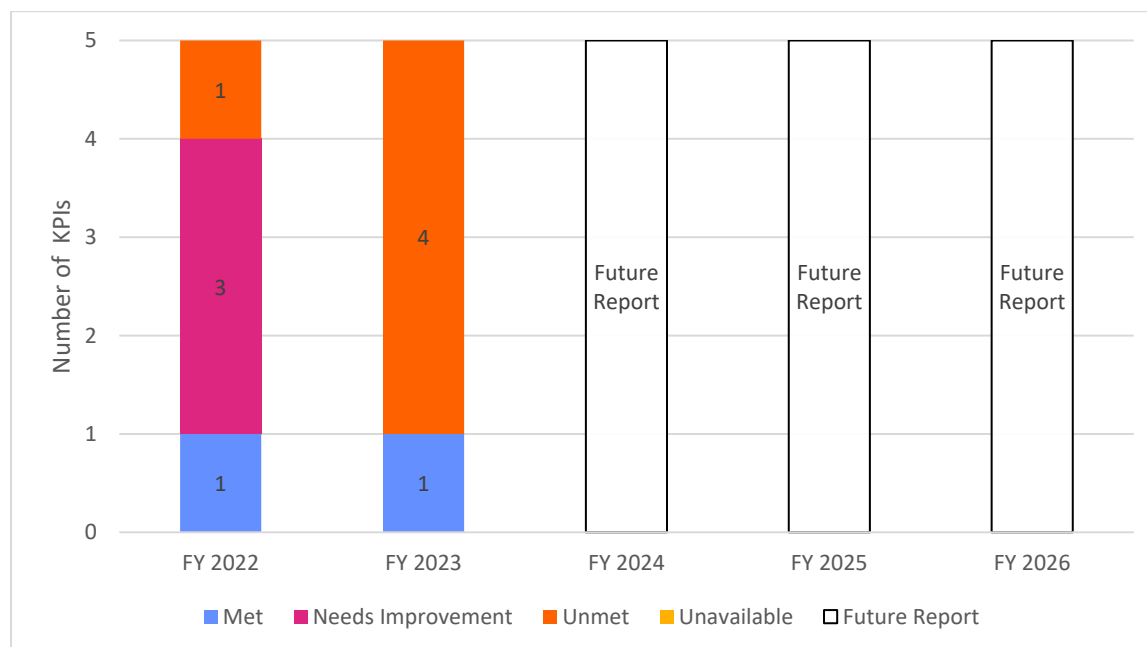
Accomplishments

- Snowmelt modeling technology adopted by California Department of Water Resources to predict water availability in the state.
- Two new practices were added to the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) to allow for management and establishment of early successional habitat cover and wildlife habitat. These new practices will enable SAFE partners to better target wildlife.
- Additional funding from BIL and appropriated funds have increased interest/participation of some units that had been, in the past, slow to adopt Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) projects.
- The Big Game Corridor was piloted in Wyoming and is expanding to include becoming a partnership program with the state and NRCS.
- Created the opportunity to implement additional flexibilities within the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) for the Colorado Republican River to include dryland agricultural production, equipping producers with the tools to reduce water consumptive use while promoting conservation and soil health.

Challenges

- There remains a large backlog of watershed restoration work across FS lands that outpaces USDA's ability to plan and implement projects annually with internal capacity.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Farm Service Agency
- Forest Service

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Tons of Sediment Prevented from Leaving Cropland and Entering Water Bodies

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	5.7	5.7	5.7	6	6	6	6	Million Tons	Increase	
Actual	6.3	8.2	8.1	8.3	8.5	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

Progress for soil sediment being retained exceeded FY 2023 expectations.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

NRCS has had a sustained and successful soil health campaign and will continue to utilize the effective methodology under this KPI. However, new Farm Bill requirements may pose risks to progress.

Conservation Practices Applied to Conserve Water

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	---	15.9	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

New KPI Description

This KPI will initiate in FY 2025. Land on which at least one conservation practice narrative was applied to improve conservation of water naturally available from precipitation or withdrawn from surface or ground water sources and used in crop production. All land uses are eligible. All programs are eligible.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

This KPI was designed to be a more exhaustive measure of the outcomes NRCS produces with relation to conserving water. The target for this KPI was informed from historic accomplishments in this conservation area. Water conservation is anticipated to continue being a priority resource concern on a national scale, and NRCS does not anticipate any changes to this priority that would impact reaching the FY 2025 target.

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Total National Acres in Grassed Waterways

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	0.110	0.120	0.125	.097	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	---	---	0.110	.107	.102	N/A	N/A			

Total National Acres in Contour Grass Strips, Contour Grass Strips in Terraces, and Prairie Strips

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	0.062	0.073	0.080	.038	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	---	---	0.060	.0595	.036	N/A	N/A			

Acreage of Restored Wetlands

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	2.34	2.41	2.34	2.64	2.76	2.96	2.33	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	2.34	2.35	2.36	2.39	2.30	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

Acres declined in the first quarter of FY 2023, and there was no significant change during the second, third and fourth quarters. Continued high crop prices have impacted producer enrollment and re-enrollment. High crop prices continue to impact enrollment across all areas of CRP. Additionally, the 2018 Farm Bill decrease of enrollment authority and rental rates has also decreased the enrollment of these continuous signup practices. Earlier targets were based on historic enrollment when the statutory cap was significantly higher and rental rates and crop prices were lower. FSA experienced a decrease for FY 2023 and anticipates that enrollment will continue to lag.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

FSA will continue outreach for enrollment; however, due to farm bill changes and the current farm economy it is difficult to forecast enrollment and progress. Furthermore, increasing crop prices reduces producer interest in CRP enrollment. Historically FSA factored 10 years of enrollment data to determine targets. However, considering these recent challenges, FSA is adjusting to 5-year historical enrollment for FY 2025 targets. FSA believes this more accurately reflects the current trends.

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FOREST SERVICE

Number of Watersheds Moved to Improved Condition Class or Sustained in Condition Class 1[1]

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	14	15	N/A	15	16	21	25	Watersheds	Increase	
Actual	8	9	N/A[2]	12	6	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

Completion of watershed restoration action plans requires that several projects be implemented over a period of a few years; projects implemented this fiscal year will contribute to watersheds completed in future years. Additional funding from BIL and IRA have increased the planning of Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) projects, resulting in an increase in priority watersheds being designated and in essential projects being planned. However, the accomplishment of six watersheds maintained or moved to an improved condition was lower than anticipated. Delays during the planning and implementation of projects, contract award timelines, and changes to the accomplishment reporting process contributed to the reduction in FY 2023 accomplishments. In previous years, the watershed accomplishment was based on when the agency obligated funding (either through contracts or agreements) for implementation. As the agency continues to explore new ways to communicate the agency's outcomes, this reporting measure has changed to take record accomplishments when the work within the watershed is considered completed.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

Increased project funding in FY 2023 through FY 2025 from BIL and IRA has allowed for an increase of four watersheds over the previous fiscal years target. Program investments will focus on making improvements to the conditions of priority and source watersheds, as well as improve water quality and quantity, along with providing updates to the Terrestrial Condition Assessment to enable continued reporting of ecological effects of ecological management activities. The program will also continue co-investment with critical partners, such as Trout Unlimited, to reach the Forest Service's goal of improving the condition of priority watersheds. Furthermore, in FY 2025, the Forest Service will continue to strengthen coordination with States, Tribes, local communities, private landowners, and partners in the public and private sector, working to advance the goals set in the Forest Service Equite and Plan and Tribal Action Plan.

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[1] National Assessments of national forest and grassland watershed conditions rate 47% either as "Functioning at Risk" or "Impaired Function". To improve their conditions and increase climate change resiliency, these watersheds require substantial restoration work. Specifically, using a mix of funding, the agency will complete essential projects outlined in the Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) Watershed Restoration Action Plans (WRAPs).

[2] This performance metric was developed in 2010 as the agency's first nationally consistent outcome performance measure to demonstrate accomplishments in watershed restoration. For FY 2021, watershed restoration was not a Departmental key performance indicator and no target was established.

Objective 1.4: Increase Carbon Sequestration, Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Create Economic Opportunities (and Develop Low-Carbon Energy Solutions)

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
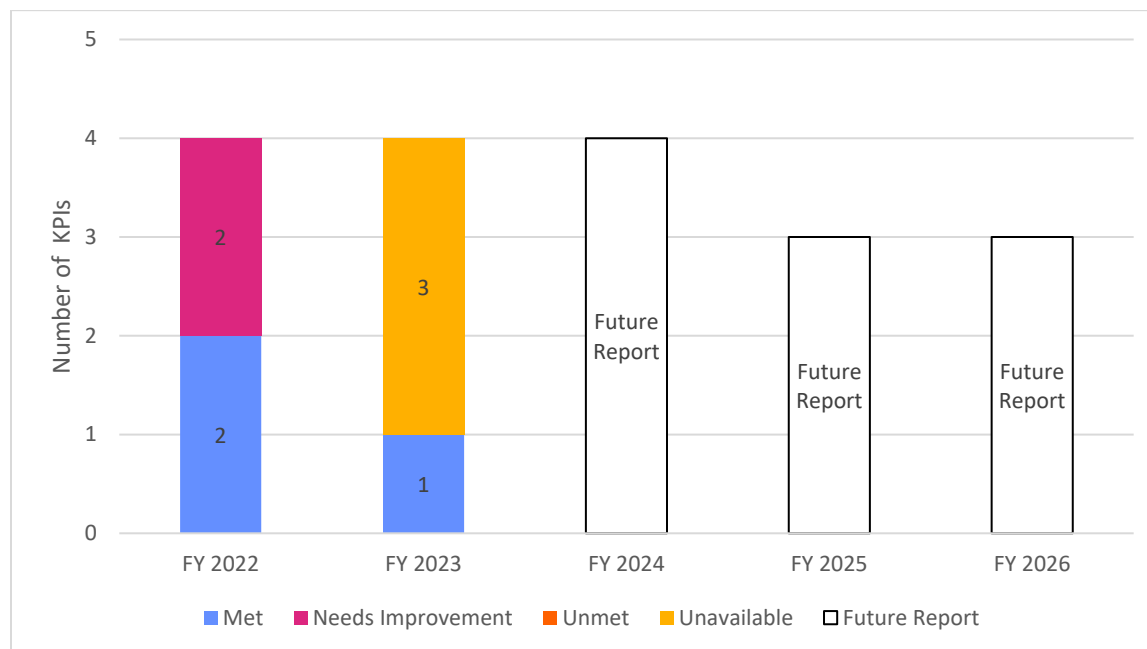
Accomplishments

- Submitted USDA's FY 2023 Buildings Strategic Plan, FY 2023 Carbon Pollution-Free Electricity Strategic Plan, and USDA FY 2022 Annual Energy Report.
- Released Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) notice of special funding under IRA. Setting up new programs Empowering Rural America (New ERA) and Powering Affordable Clean Energy (PACE) under Electric.
- Launched new grant program that offers assistance to Rural Energy Community Partnerships (RECPs) which was established to provide community-scale renewable energy benefits and help in underserved rural communities. Examples of RECPs include nonprofit or state-based organizations, federally-recognized Tribes, and municipalities or other public bodies.
- Increased sharing of best practices and efficiency tools across NRCS through the Future Innovations effort.

Challenges

- USDA, in consultation with the Department of Energy, updated and revised the procedure for estimating results of Greenhouse Gas Emissions, which led to apparent increases relative to historic info.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Office of Property and Environmental Management
- Rural Development

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Percentage of Items in a Contract that are Certified During the Life of a Contract

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	87	87	87	87	87	87	N/A	% of Items Certified	Increase	
Actual	87	87	87	87	TBD	N/A	N/A			

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025. The FY 2023 actual will be provided by March 15, 2024.

Progress Made in FY 2023

This is an annual measure. The Contract Implementation Ratio (CIR) was adopted as a USDA KPI and is used in the FPAC NRCS Operations Scorecard / Performance Report.

Percentage of Timeliness of Practice Certifications or Timely Modification of Past Scheduled Practices to Reflect a New Future Schedule Date[3]

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	53	53	53	53	53	53	N/A	% of Timeliness	Increase	
Actual	55	43	68	65.6	TBD	N/A	N/A			

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025. The FY 2023 actual will be provided by March 15, 2024.

Progress Made in FY 2023

The Practice Implementation Ratio (PIR) was adopted as a USDA KPI and is used in the FPAC NRCS Operations Scorecard / Performance Report.

Climate Change Mitigation

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	---	30	Million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMT CO2e)	TBD	

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[3] Numerator: a count of all practices certified within the target quarter. Denominator: a count of all practices that are expected to have been certified as of a given end-of-quarter timeframe.

Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A

New KPI Description

This KPI will initiate in FY 2025. Estimate of the climate change mitigation expected from implementation of mitigation practices in the current fiscal year in million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMT CO_2e). Estimation is based on the applied acres of the practice and the specific mitigation coefficient for that practice over the practice lifespan (includes the estimated cumulative benefits).

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

The FY 2025 target will be updated to incorporate expectations from IRA funding as USDA is in the early stages of implementation for this transformational work and data is still needed for the necessary establishment of the initial trends.

NRCS is also working to advance the methodology for the KPI. This longer-term work is supported as part of IRA and will continue through FY 2031. For FY 2025, initial improvements will be driven by improved documentation and expanding input from Subject Matter Experts to identify and advance opportunities, such as refining assumptions and implementation data.

NRCS is also considering options for updating the source of program data to better capture applied practice units, which are key inputs to the estimates and are converted to the estimated benefit using coefficients (e.g. from COMET-Planner). NRCS is also working to advance automation of the estimates.

Conservation Practices Applied to Mitigate Climate Change

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	---	23	Million Acres	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

New KPI Description

This KPI will initiate in FY 2025. Sum of applied acres of Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) mitigation practices and enhancements applied in the current fiscal year. All land uses are eligible.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

The FY 2025 target will be updated to incorporate expectations from IRA funding as USDA is in the early stages of implementation for this transformational work and data is still needed for the necessary establishment of the initial trends.

NRCS is also making improvements to the process and data for estimating this KPI. These improvements include advancing the automation of the calculations, expanding input from Subject Matter Experts, and considering options for the source of program data to better capture applied practice units.

OFFICE OF PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Percent Reduction in Scope 1 and Scope 2 Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent) [4]

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	21	22	23	36	% Reduction in Scope 1 and Scope 2 Emissions	Decrease	
Actual	28.7	31.8	21.3	19	TBD[5]	N/A	N/A			

Baseline and targets are preliminary and subject to change based on White House policy direction. The baseline year is FY 2008.

Progress Made in FY 2023

In FY 2023, USDA initiated several priority actions to make progress on reducing scope 1 and scope 2 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as required by Executive Order (EO) 14057. These actions include increasing facilities energy efficiency, implementing renewable energy projects, designing and building low-emission buildings, and planning for zero-emission vehicles acquisition and charging infrastructure.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

USDA plans to increase priority sustainability actions to achieving the 65 percent reduction in scope 1 and scope 2 GHG emissions goals by 2030 from 2008 levels as required by Executive Order (EO) 14057, *Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs Through Federal Sustainability*. These actions will build on past sustainability strategic planning efforts and direction from the USDA Sustainable Operations Council. The actions will focus on purchases of carbon pollution-free electricity and zero-emission vehicles, and on facility energy efficiency improvements.

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[4] Scope 1 emissions are direct greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the activity of an organization. Scope 2 emissions are indirect greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the energy an organization purchases. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Scope 1 and Scope 2 Inventory Guidance | US EPA. Accessed December 19, 2023.

[5] USDA's GHG emissions for FY 2023 will be reported on January 31, 2024, and approved by the Department of Energy (DOE) and OMB later in 2024. The actual percent change in Scope 1 and Scope 2 GHG emissions will be provided when it is approved in 2024.

Total Number of Departmental Fleet Vehicles

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	27.1	36.5	36.5	39.1	39.1	39.1	N/A	Vehicles	Maintain	
Actual	27.1	37.9	37.1	39.7	38.6	N/A	N/A			

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025.

Progress Made in FY 2023

USDA is committed to attaining its optimal fleet inventory. Efforts to eliminate inefficient and non-essential vehicles from the inventory continued throughout FY 2023, placing a focus on fleet optimization. In the years ahead, USDA remains resolute to continue executing right-sizing and right-typing acquisition strategies designed to identify and eliminate inefficient vehicles and replace them, as needed, with vehicles that use less petroleum per mile and use alternative fuels/electricity where available and are best-matched to the mission.

Long-term, USDA's plans consist of a multi-year map and systematic approach to vehicle acquisition, use, maintenance, refueling, and replacement, which is meant to anticipate and account for changes in mission, organization, and resulting vehicle demand, while establishing strategic positioning for achieving full compliance with current management and sustainability mandates. These plans will help define how vehicle selection will achieve maximum fuel efficiency, and limit motor vehicle body size, engine size and optional equipment to what is essential to meet the mission while guiding the programming of funds necessary to continue fleet operations.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Reduction and Avoidance of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from RD investments (PACE and New ERA)

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	---	TBD	Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	---	N/A			

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Reduction and Avoidance of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from RD investments (REAP)

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	---	17M	Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	---	N/A			

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

Funding for this program will be obligated before or by FY 2025. Therefore, in FY 2025, USDA will be conducting administrative grant work related to the program and will consider ways to evaluate impact of the supplemental funding.

Goal 2: Ensure America's Agricultural System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous

A strong and prosperous agricultural sector is essential to the well-being of the U.S. economy. America's farmers and ranchers ensure a reliable food supply, support job growth, and promote economic development. To maintain an equitable and competitive agricultural sector, USDA will safeguard animal and plant health, support farmers and ranchers' ability to start and maintain profitable cooperatives and businesses and offer financial support to all producers affected by natural disasters. Additionally, USDA's research agencies will continue to introduce high-performance plants and animals and offer integrated management options to increase the efficiency of farming practices.

Objective 2.1: Protect Plant and Animal Health by Minimizing Major Diseases, Pests, and Wildlife Conflicts

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
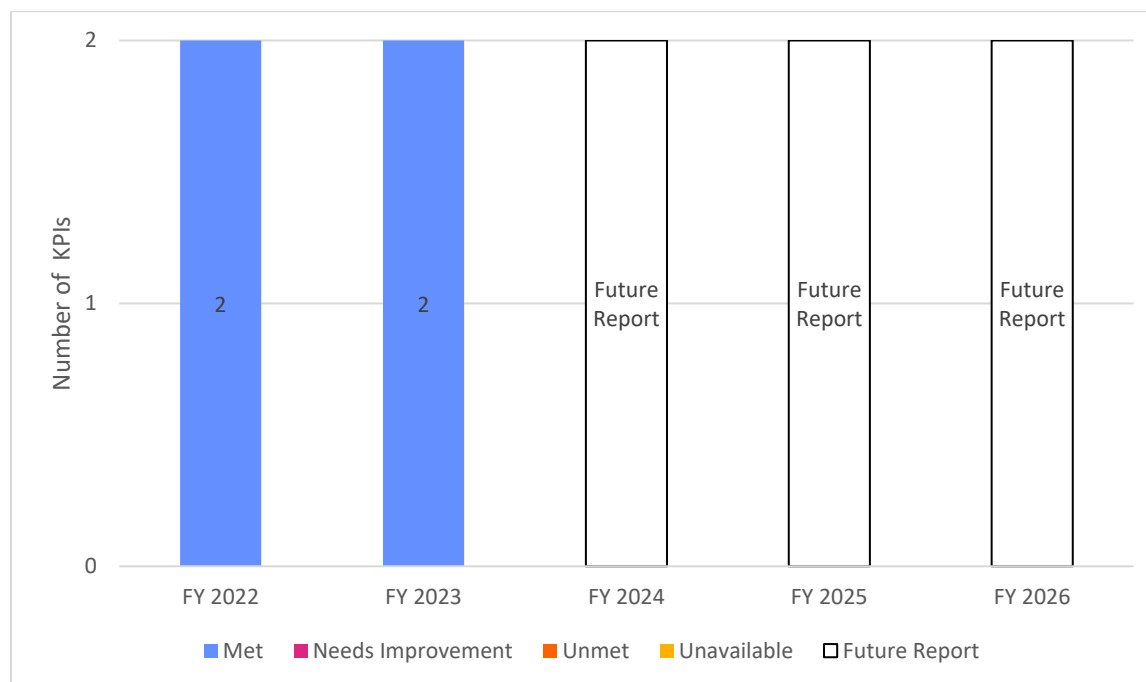
Strategic objective 2.1 has been designated as an area making noteworthy progress.

Accomplishments

- Continued sampling migratory birds for highly pathogenic avian influenza, collecting more than 31,000 samples from wild birds and confirming 2,650 detections in wild birds in at least 87 species across 45 States and Washington D.C.
- Coordinated the reporting of highly pathogenic avian influenza in 203 wild mammals across 18 species.
  Developed 8 new climate suitability maps (for a cumulative total of 24 maps) for high-risk plant pests to support early detection efforts.

Challenges

- APHIS wildlife disease surveillance staff supported response efforts for the widespread outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza, prevention and preparedness activities for African swine fever, and SARS-CoV-2 projects. The program was able to meet its target of sampling for an additional disease despite capacity challenges due to these emergency response efforts.
  Developing climate suitability maps for pests with complex lifecycles that may have long dormant periods or other complicating factors takes additional time and requires new approaches.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

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ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE

Number of Zoonotic and Agricultural Diseases Sampled in Wildlife

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	16	17	18	N/A	Diseases Sampled	Increase	
Actual	---	---	15	16	17	N/A	N/A			

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025. Staff are at capacity sampling for emergency programs needs such as highly pathogenic avian influenza, African Swine Fever (ASF), and SARS-CoV-2.

Progress Made in FY 2023

APHIS monitors for diseases that have the potential to spread from wildlife to farmed livestock, or even humans, and serves as an early warning system for outbreaks of foreign animal diseases. APHIS continued responding to widespread outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza in FY 2023. To help inform the response, APHIS continued surveillance for the disease in wild birds to provide an indication of where additional avian influenza detections may occur in domestic poultry and help target surveillance. The program continued conducting surveillance for African swine fever (ASF) in feral swine in high-risk areas of Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas (expanding from four states in FY 2022 to 10 states in FY 2023) as well as the Caribbean territories of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The program also began to expand efforts to detect and remove feral swine and conduct ASF surveillance in counties along the southern border with Mexico in Arizona and New Mexico. Under funding provided by the American Rescue Plan Act, the program continued surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 in white-tailed deer and added additional cervid species such as mule deer and elk. The program collected more than 13,000 samples in FY 2023 and gained insight into disease spread between humans and cervids. In addition, APHIS is assisting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Arizona State University to begin a sampling program for avian circoviruses, which cause immune suppression and potentially death in domestic and wild birds, adding this disease to the list of those sampled in wildlife and meeting the program's annual target.

Number of Priority Pests for Which Climate Sustainability Maps Have Been Completed

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	14	24	32	38	Pests	Increase	
Actual	---	---	6	16	24	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

APHIS is developing climate suitability maps for high-risk plant pests to support early detection efforts. APHIS completed maps for eight high-risk pests in FY 2023, bringing the cumulative number of maps to 24 and meeting the program's annual target. The maps focus on pests that could have destructive effects on a variety of specialty crops, forest resources, wheat, soybeans, and ornamental trees,

illustrating where the pests could become established based on suitable climate conditions. The program established an expanded team of entomologists, pathologists, and plant ecologists to address challenges in modeling suitability for pests with complex life cycles, such as long dormant periods or other complicating factors. The program will create a panel of users to help determine how to present maps for pests with complex life cycles and develop a user guide.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

In FY 2025, APHIS will complete six new climate suitability maps for a cumulative total of 38 maps and will begin updating previously completed maps with the latest climatic and scientific data. APHIS develops the maps using a modeling framework that predicts the changing suitability of an area for pest or disease occurrence based on the likelihood of favorable conditions specific to the pest or the disease occurring. The maps will help guide efforts to determine where to conduct surveys. Importantly, the maps will help APHIS and cooperators use survey resources more effectively by eliminating the need to survey for some high-risk pests if suitable conditions do not exist in an area.

Percent of U.S. Swine Inventory Enrolled in Swine Health Improvement Program (SHIP) Pilot

|	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A	70	% Swine	Increase	❘
Actual	---	---	---	---	60	N/A	N/A			

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

The U.S. SHIP program is a key part of APHIS' national plan to safeguard U.S. pork production from ASF and other diseases. This program provides support for industry leadership on sustainable solutions to ASF preparedness and prevention, and participation in this program will ensure an increase in biosecurity and traceability practices that will enhance APHIS' ability to control disease and return to productivity and marketability in the event of an ASF incursion in the swine sector. APHIS plans to expand the current pilot to a permanent program and this KPI will help measure the success of enrolling industry in the program.

Objective 2.2: Build Resilient Food Systems, Infrastructure, and Supply Chain

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
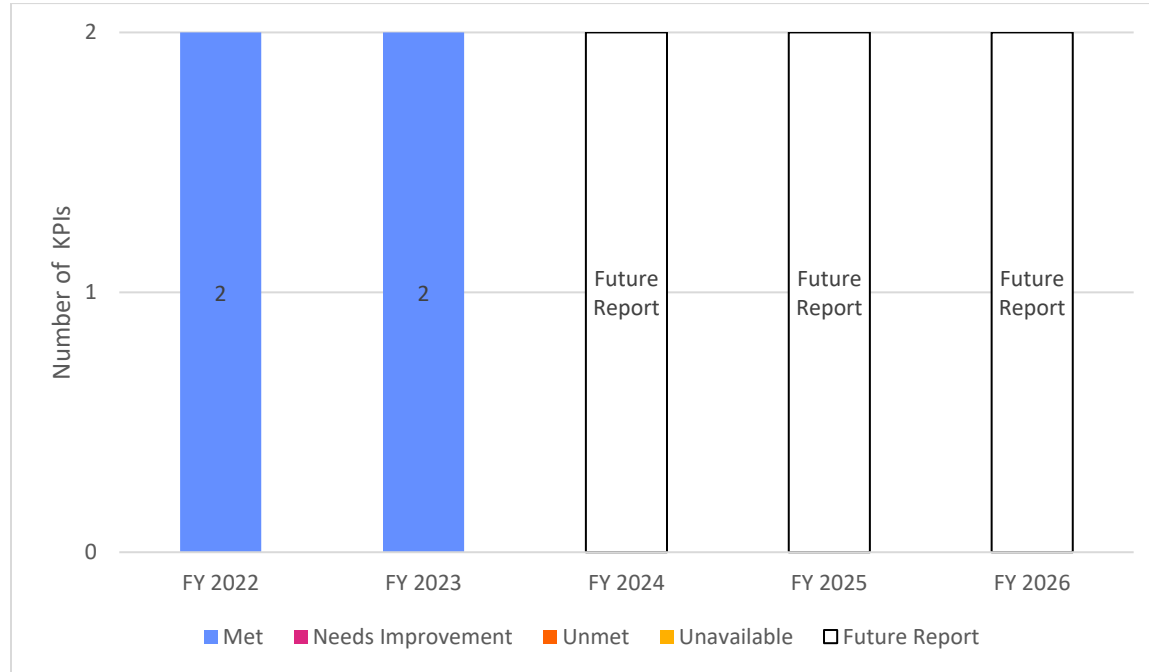
Accomplishments

- Approached adequate staffing levels (between 87 percent and 91 percent) for AMS' livestock and poultry graders. Based on analysis of recruitment and retention data, AMS' Livestock and Poultry Program expanded recruitment incentives to all Agricultural Commodity Grader locations beginning in February 2023 to meet hiring needs in mission-critical series.

Challenges

- Continued to face hiring challenges in hard-to-fill duty locations; creative recruitment strategies and retention incentives have contributed favorably to outcomes.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Agricultural Marketing Service

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

Percentage of Graders' Time Recovered Through Customer Billing (Poultry Livestock)

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	83%	83	87	87	87	87	% of Time	Decrease	
Actual	---	95	94.5	94	95.2	N/A	N/A			

Percentage of Graders' Time Recovered Through Customer Billing (Meat Livestock)

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	83	83	87	87	87	87	% of Time	Decrease	
Actual	---	93	94.9	94.4	96.4	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

Recruitment of Agricultural Commodity Graders increased between FY 2021 and FY 2023, with 115 hires in FY 2021 and 133 in FY 2023, while attrition rate decreased, from 8.67% in FY 2021 to 7.28% in FY 2023. A total of 635 retention incentives were initiated in FY 2023 for Agricultural Commodity Graders, with 603 processed in October 2023.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

AMS is continuing to assess attrition and hiring challenges. A key challenge for AMS is competition in the labor pool. However, creative hiring strategies and recruitment efforts have helped address this challenge. In addition, retention incentives for current employees will likely contribute favorably to attrition challenges.

Objective 2.3: Foster Agricultural Innovation

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
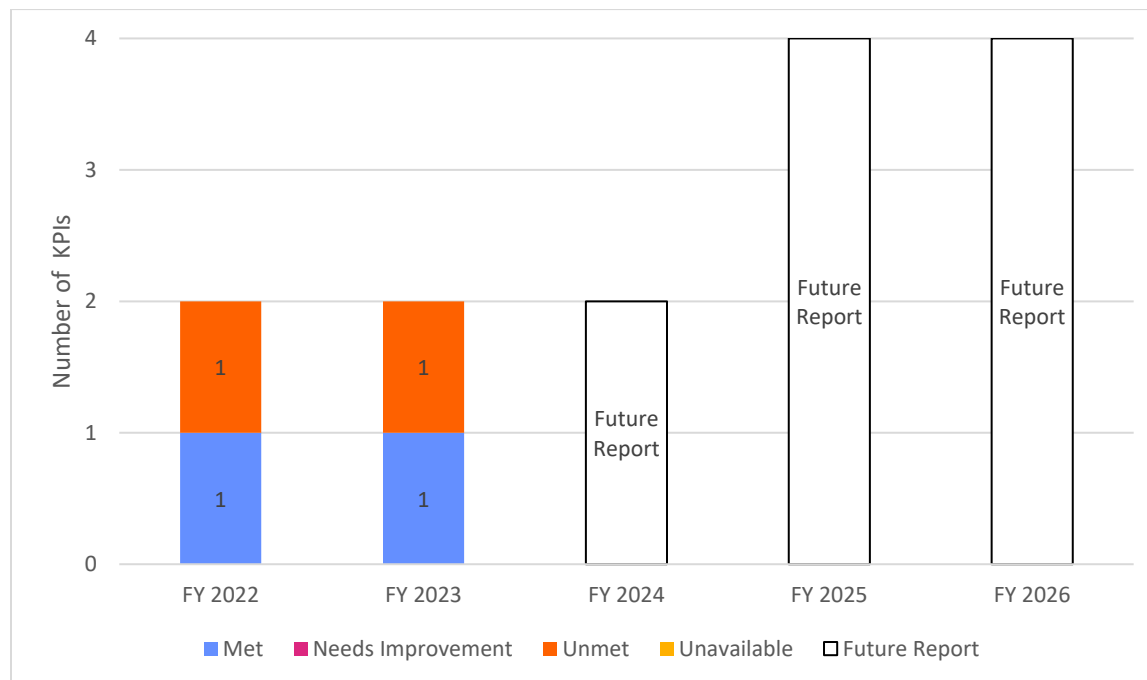
Accomplishments

- Developed and released the USDA's first ever *Science and Research Strategy 2023-2026: Cultivating Scientific Innovation (S&RS).* This document coordinates the forward-looking research priorities and innovative ideas of all eight USDA Mission Areas. Looking forward to FY 2024, the OCS is conducting an extensive stakeholder engagement initiative to move the strategy from "intention to implementation." It is anticipated that OCS and the *S&RS* will continue to foster and drive Ag innovation through new partnerships while strengthening existing.
- Released USDA's Agriculture "Advanced Research and Development Authority's (AGARDA's): Vision for Disruptive Science to Confront Audacious Challenges" Roadmap in FY 2023. The document outlines the imperative for a new approach to deliver disruptive breakthrough discoveries for agriculture and details a strategic framework for how the program will be executed when appropriated funding is received at the authorized level plus contingencies for various other funding levels.

Challenges

- Measuring the impact of science innovation has traditionally proved challenging as there is often a delay from when research is funded until impact is realized. However, the OCS is leading the science community in exploring new ways in which to measure and articulate the impact of its scientific research and innovations.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Office of the Chief Scientist – Research, Education, and Economics

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OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SCIENTIST – RESEARCH, EDUCATION, & ECONOMICS

Intellectual Property (IP) funded by NIFA - Count of Reports of Intellectual property supported by NIFA funding

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A	231	Inventions	Increase	ı
Actual	---	---	---	---	211	N/A	N/A			

New KPI Description

This is a new KPI for FY 2025 and includes two components, inventions and patents, both of which indicate the progress towards the protection of Intellectual Property (IP). Supported by funding from NIFA, this KPI demonstrates USDA successes support IP lifecycle, including compliance monitoring by the Bayh-Dole Act. Selection of this KPI is in line with anticipated modernization and prioritization of this publicly funded asset. The metric includes reporting to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) system iEdison which supports funding recipient Bayh-Dole responsibilities to report subject inventions, patents filed to protect subject inventions, and utilization.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

NIFA plans to increase emphasis and importance of report IP for NIFA grantees. REE will review NIFA terms and conditions and the financial policy guide language to ensure alignment with updates to Bayh-Dole. REE may also consider an information webinar or resource guide for NIFA grantees to increase awareness of this reporting requirement.

Count of Journal Article Publications Reported to NIFA, Published from NIFA-funded Research, Education and Extension

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A	13,025	Publications	Increase	ı
Actual	---	---	---	---	9,784	N/A	N/A			

New KPI Description

This is a new KPI for FY 2025 which measures the number of published journal articles that are reported to NIFA from NIFA-funded research, education, and extension. By tracking the reach of NIFA-funded research and its related publications, REE is able to monitor and drive accessibility, usability and reach of its science, expanding opportunities for new innovations and impact. Additionally, NIFA expects to see this number increase with the issuance of Departmental Regulation 1020-006, "Public Access to Scholarly Publications and Digital Scientific Research Data" ensuring that USDA science is increasingly accessible to its stakeholders and scientific community. This new KPI has been co-developed with the National

Agriculture Library (NAL) where NIFA grantees can submit publication info to PubAg to collect and track data.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

NIFA will host an informational webinar along with NAL in October 2023 on how to submit publications to PubAg. This webinar will be heavily advertised to NIFA stakeholders and grantees and also recorded and posted to an external webpage. NIFA terms and conditions and financial policy guide will be updated based on DR 1020-006. NIFA continues to collaborate with NAL via an interagency agreement to conduct a gap analysis on NIFA-funded publications (reported) in other databases vs PubAg. NIFA will pursue an application programming interface to PubAg in the future for both of primary post award reporting systems.

Number of Citations of REE Reports (NASS/ERS)

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	119	122	126	129	134	N/A	Reports	Increase	
Actual	---	134	82	95	70	N/A	N/A			

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025.

Progress Made in FY 2023

In FY 2023, USDA conducted extensive analysis of both data sources and data distribution. The policy needs for products fluctuate as new interests and policy problems arise, making it challenging to directly influence this metric.

Percent of USDA Patents Licensed per Patents Issued

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	25	35	35	35	35	35	% of Patents Licensed	Maintain	
Actual	---	26	50	55	100	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

In FY 2023, the ratio of patents licensed per patents issued was 100 percent, exceeding the 35 percent target. However, the target will not be raised because ARS identified that an average of one-third (patents licensed/issued patents) would be an appropriate range based upon the analysis of research outcomes and its adoption. For non-USDA Agencies, the average of one-third (patents licensed/issued patents) may not be appropriate. The percent of patents licensed is an indicator of the commercialization of patented research outcomes. Due to the inability to accurately predict the needs of the future, a high percent target may miss important research outcomes that would need to be protected for adoption and commercialization. A lower target would protect a higher number of research outcomes that would not be commercially viable. Over time, the goal is to have approximately one-third of issued patents licensed.

Although the year in which a license is signed is not typically the year in which the patent has issued, over time the ratio of newly signed licenses over the number of newly issued patents may be an indicator of "judicious" patenting contemplating among other things commercial viability of the technology. For the last 10 years, the average is approximately 37 percent which is within the target range of 1/3 of issued patents being licensed.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

This target is constant over a multiple-year period based upon historical adoption of USDA's research outcomes. Most of REE's research outcomes are not transferred through a patent license. Because the REE mission is to transfer research outcomes for broad public use by the most effective mechanism, REE only pursues patents and licensing principally to incentivize commercialization and to facilitate adoption in the marketplace. This is usually the case when complementary investment by the private sector is necessary to commercialize a product, and patent protection is required to protect this investment. As a result, the ratio of the number of patents newly licensed per year over the number of patents issued that year would not be an indicator for the adoption of many REE research outcomes. Instead, the percent of patents licensed is an indicator of the commercialization of patented research outcomes. Because it is not possible to accurately predict the needs of the future, a high percent target may miss important research outcomes that would need to be protected for adoption and commercialization. A lower target would protect a higher number of research outcomes that would not be commercially viable. The current goal is to have approximately one-third of issued patents licensed. Although the year in which a license is signed is not typically the year in which the patent has issued, over time the ratio of newly signed licenses over the number of newly issued patents may be an indicator of "judicious" patenting contemplating among other things commercial viability of the technology.

ARS Peer Reviewed Publications (ARS)

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	---	3500	Publications	Retain	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	---	N/A			

New KPI Description

This KPI is being introduced in FY 2025 and monitors the number of ARS authored, peer-reviewed publications in the fiscal year. Currently, ARS has ~660 research projects across 15 National Programs, and each of these projects produces publications as one of their outputs. Publications are the industry-accepted measure of best practice for researcher productivity. Additionally, publications help to foster innovation by ensuring a continual stream of new ideas, research, and data for the scientific community. Due to funding fluctuations, the target seeks to maintain a steady state over a multi-year period. ARS authored, peer-reviewed publications are housed in the National Agricultural Library and can be found using the search feature found here: SEARCH | National Agricultural Library - "Agricultural Research Service" OR "USDA ARS".

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

The target is an average of the last five years of publications. In the ARS policies and procedures, the performance plan for ARS Category 1 scientists states, "The minimum requirement for report results can

be met by authorship on two manuscripts of original research for refereed journals with authorship at any level, adhering to ARS guidelines on Authorship requirements." ARS does not anticipate many more or less publications than 3,500 per year and anticipates reaching at least 3,500 publications with the two publication requirements written into the performance plans. The target was previously 4,000 publications but has been lowered to 3,500 because the average publications has decreased over the last five years due to disruptions due to COVID: in some instances, scientists were unable to access their data or labs during the pandemic resulting in delayed or decreased publications. ARS publications for both FY 2022 and FY 2023 were below 4,000 prompting the change in this KPI's target.

# Goal 3: Foster an Equitable and Competitive Marketplace for All Agricultural Producers

Expanding international marketing opportunities for U.S. farmers and exporters is critical to fostering business and income growth across rural America. USDA promotes American agricultural products and exports by expanding overseas markets, developing international standards, removing trade barriers by monitoring and enforcing existing trade agreements, and negotiating trade agreements that benefit the U.S. agricultural economy. USDA provides tools to domestic producers so that they are well-positioned to secure a share of the growing global market for agricultural products. USDA also works with developing countries to grow their economies and facilitate trade, developing markets of the future for all USDA's producers.

Objective 3.1: Foster Sustainable Economic Growth by Promoting Innovation, Building Resilience to Climate Change, and Expanding Renewable Energy

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
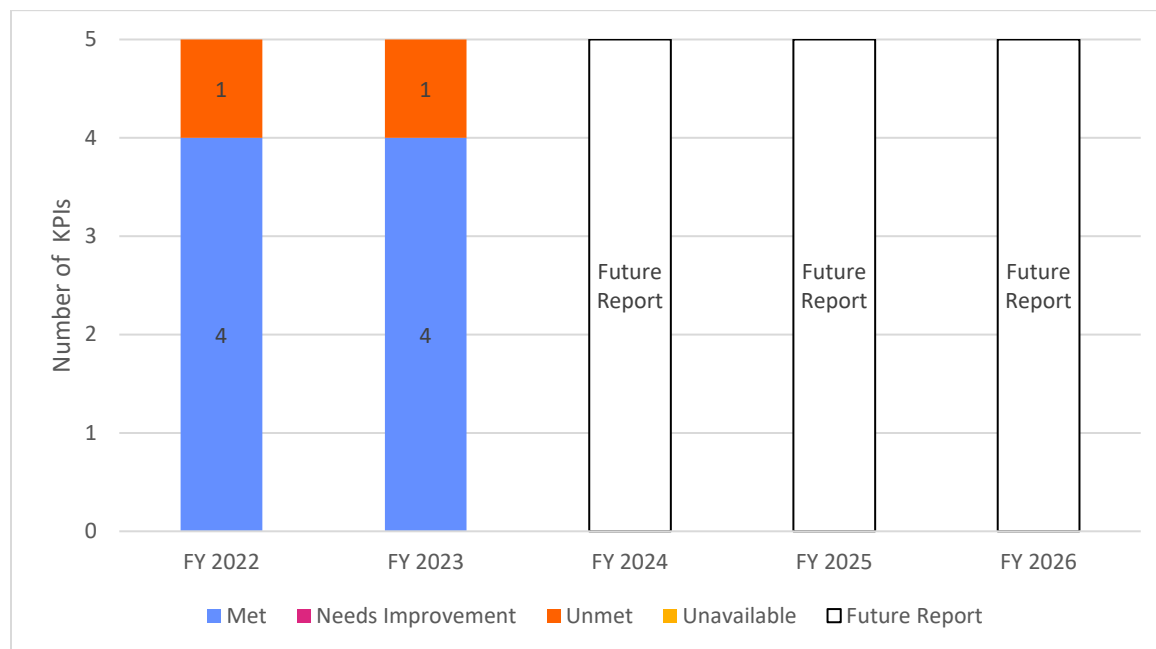
Accomplishments

- Published the Seed Report entitled "More and Better Choices for Farmers: Promoting Fair Competition and Innovation in Seeds and Other Agricultural Inputs" on March 6, 2023.
- Developed a Climate Smart Toolkit to inform customers about the use of Farm Loans as a credit source for financing conservation practices and precision ag equipment; publication scheduled for January 2024.
- Completed/have in-progress 20 of the 27 recommendations from Farm Loan Program's DEIA Working Group, such as reducing barriers to credit access by simplifying the loan application, adding program education information online such as the Loan Assistance Tool, and signing an interagency agreement with NIFA to develop a network of NGOs to provide technical assistance to customers applying for Direct loan origination or servicing (launch in mid-to late summer 2024).
- Paid to distressed Direct and Guaranteed Loan borrowers nearly $2 billion of the $3.1 billion in supplemental program funding provided in Section 22006 of IRA.

Challenges

- Clearing livestock final rule through inter-agency review; this challenging process is underway.
- The choice of producers to transition to organic will depend on market demand, which is not under agency control.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Farm Service Agency
- Risk Management Agency

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FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Percentage of Direct and Guaranteed Loan Borrowers Who Are Beginning Farmers

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	53.0	59.9	59.9	59.9	59.9	59.9	59.9	% of Borrowers	Increase	
Actual	54.5	58.6	59.9	60.9	63	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

FSA exceeded its FY 2023 target. Lending to beginning farmers continues to represent nearly two-thirds of loan customers.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

The Farm Loan Program (FLP) is expanding its data analytics capabilities to track progress and identify gaps for lending to beginning farmers. Continued implementation of automation plans is needed to improve employee loan making/servicing and provide risk management tools for customers. FLP is using its loan making and servicing flexibilities to assist producers who have cash flow challenges.

First Installment Delinquency Rate on Direct Loans

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	8	8	9	9	9	8	Delinquency Rate (%)	Decrease	
Actual	---	9.9	13.8	8.4	5.9	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

Delinquency rates are cyclical across traditional growing cycles, but FSA has met (or exceeded) annual targets consistently.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

This KPI measures Farm Loan Officers' credit quality assessment of loan requests. As part of its internal control regime, FLP implemented credit quality reviews of farm loan officers in FY 2021 for compliance with loan making and servicing directives, and these reviews will continue. With allowance for exceptions due to natural or economic disasters, loans should not become delinquent in the first year. Realistic cash flow projections and forecasted commodity/livestock prices are factors inspected in credit quality reviews.

Direct Loan Delinquency Rate

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	7	7	7	7	7	7	Delinquency Rate (%)	Decrease	
Actual	---	4.3	4.7	4.5	1.5	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

The significant decline in this KPI is largely due to IRA, Section 22006, payments resolving loan delinquencies. The rate may continue to decline as complex cases (bankruptcies, foreclosures) are resolved.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

Flexibilities for FLP loan making and servicing are being provided to the extent that statute and regulations allow for producers experiencing cash flow challenges. Automated risk management tools for customers are being planned and will be implemented as part of FLP's delivery modernization.

RISK MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Improper Payment Rate for All Categories of Payments

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	2.09	2.26	2.38	2.38	Payment Rate (%)	Decrease	
Actual	---	---	1.41	2.58	2.64	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

RMA completed the FY 2023 *Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Improvement Act of 2012* (IPERIA) Reviews and reported a calculated error rate and Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to OMB on October 27th, as required. Despite reporting an error rate higher than the estimated target rate, RMA has maintained a tolerable error rate for the past nine years. The estimated error rate is RMA's prediction of the agency's error rate for the subsequent reporting period and is easily influenced by many factors (i.e., natural disasters, introduction of new programs, changes to current programs, program participation, etc.). As a result, RMA's primary goal is to sustain a tolerable error rate as this is a more accurate indicator of the agency's performance. The CAP is derived from a thorough analysis of the FY 2023 results data and consists of steps RMA will take to help reduce improper payments in the federal crop insurance program. Currently, RMA's Regional Compliance Offices (RCOs) are reviewing documents uploaded from the Approved Insurance Providers (AIPs) for the FY 2024 IPERIA review cycle. As reviews are completed, RCO's will issue Initial Findings or Closure Letters to the AIPs.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

RMA utilizes KPI data from the prior year to add areas of focus for the upcoming year's compliance review cycle. Focusing on prior year's root causes of errors helps to ensure the agency addresses any deficiencies so that errors are less likely to be repeated. The adoption of new products and insurance options presents additional opportunities for errors and improper payments.

Annual Normalized Value of Risk Protection Provided to Agricultural Producers through the Federal Crop Insurance Program

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	77.3	77.6	77.9	78.2	78.5	78.8	81.1	Billion Dollars	Increase	
Actual	78.2	84.1	87.9	94.4	100	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

In FY 2023, RMA conducted outreach efforts including the RMA Roadshow for the Whole Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm Policies. The agency expanded Margin Protection coverage. RMA also implemented pilot programs for grapevines, kiwifruit, pomegranates, shellfish, and controlled environment agriculture as well as implemented program improvements for numerous commodities including sesame, sugar beets, hemp, olives, grass seed, camelina, pistachios, and Florida citrus fruit. RMA implemented a tropical storm option for the Hurricane Insurance-Wind Index program. Finally, RMA maintained partnerships with the states of Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana, and Wisconsin for a state-funded cover crop incentive.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

RMA utilizes KPI data from the prior year to add areas of focus for the upcoming year's outreach efforts. RMA has identified two challenges to address in FY 2024 – training agents and farmers about new coverage to maximize participation. Ad hoc disaster assistance has been provided each year from 2017 through 2023. Farmers may consider reducing their crop insurance coverage if they believe similar types of assistance will continue in the future.

Objective 3.2: Expand Markets for Emerging Technologies, Sustainable Products, and Novel Products

Accomplishments

- Developed and launched the Meat and Poultry Intermediary Relending Program (MPILP), Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP), and Indigenous Animals Harvesting and Meat Processing Grant Program (IAG) to increase marketing opportunities for producers by creating decentralized and diversified supply chains to improve resilience and farmer incomes.
- Developed and executed a strategic action plan for managing the outcome of a key vote on maximum residue limits (MRLs) for the veterinary drug zilpaterol, which culminated in the interim adoption of the MRLs at the 45th Session of the Commission.
- Hosted the 53rd Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, advancing major food safety texts on Shigatoxin-producing *E. coli* and safe reuse of water for final adoption by the Commission.
- Two new winter oilseed crops that can be feedstocks for sustainable aviation fuel were developed by USDA supported research and now have commercial plantings in 2023 with industrial project partners CoverCress for pennycress and Nuseed for carinata. The new crops will help diversify crop portfolios, increase farmgate income, support bioeconomy jobs, and provide new sources of feedstock for fuel and for livestock feed without using additional farm land.

Challenges

- Tight deadlines to stand up new programs.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Foreign Agricultural Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Agricultural Marketing Service
- Office of the Chief Scientist — Research, Education, and Economics

FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE

Progress Made in FY 2023

In FY 2023, FAS accelerated its operational tempo to pre-pandemic levels – and beyond – while also deepening its strategic planning efforts to advance the global adoption and use of products of agricultural biotechnologies. Through a blend of policy expertise, strategic thinking, and results-oriented programming, FAS, in partnership with trade and regulatory agencies, took actions to maintain and or expand markets for U.S. exporters of agricultural products derived from biotechnology, whose sales abroad in 2023 totaled over $59 billion [corn, soybeans, soybean meal, soybean oil, cotton, and distillers' grains]. Notable examples include: supporting U.S. government efforts to maintain market access for U.S. biotech corn exports to Mexico through high-level U.S. Government-Government of Mexico diplomacy and the United States- Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) Dispute Panel on Mexico's Agricultural Biotechnology Measures; advancing the adoption and use of agricultural biotechnology within the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (AEPC) region, a market representing 74 percent of U.S. exports in 2022; promoting the science-based decision making for genome editing in the EU to help meet key sustainability and food security goals, and at the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), to unlock the potential of genomics and genome editing to enhance sustainable dairy production in Sub-Saharan Arica; and engaging with like-minded partners to collectively advance the use of transparent, science-based regulatory approaches for agricultural biotechnologies globally.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

Looking forward, agricultural biotechnology is poised to play an increasingly pivotal, positive role in addressing global climate change challenges, food insecurity, and supply and value chain issues – but only to the extent that its potential is not artificially limited by non-science-based regulatory and trade barriers. In FY 2025, FAS plans to continue efforts to address or remove trade barriers; facilitate global acceptance of innovative technologies; enhance and promote science-based decision making; and engage in global dialogues. FAS will continue efforts to promote exports of U.S. products of agricultural biotechnology by ensuring that trading partners' policies and regulations are science-based, risk-proportionate, and consistent with their trade obligations, as well as advance the global understanding of current and potential agricultural applications of biotech, so that U.S. farmers' access to the innovative technologies – and to current and future market opportunities – is not unfairly constrained.

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Progress Made in FY 2023

NRCS has obligated approximately $3 Billion in grants under the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity, which are building markets and investing in America's climate-smart farmers, ranchers, and forest owners to strengthen U.S. rural and agricultural communities.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

Through the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, NRCS is supporting the production and marketing of climate-smart commodities through a set of pilot projects that provide voluntary incentives through partners to producers and landowners, including early adopters, to:
- implement climate-smart production practices, activities, and systems on working lands,
- measure/quantify, monitor, and verify the carbon and greenhouse gas (GHG) benefits associated with those practices, and

- develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities.

Projects will provide meaningful benefits to a representative cross-section of production agriculture, including small and underserved producers.

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

Progress Made in FY 2023

Packers and Stockyards Division

The Packers and Stockyards Division (PSD) is continuing its market-level price monitoring program for fed cattle and hog markets. PSD's price monitoring program includes a weekly internal reporting protocol based on statistical models for fed cattle and hog markets. The statistical models rely on publicly reported price data to identify regional prices that are outside the range of prices predicted by the models. PSD investigates any fed cattle and hog prices that are outside the range predicted by price monitoring models.

PSD also continues conducting investigations of alleged unfair or anti-competitive conduct in the livestock, meat, and poultry industries. These investigations are triggered by complaints from industry participants or from PSD's internal industry monitoring and surveillance. AMS is currently engaged in rulemaking efforts that will enhance PSD's ability to conduct investigations of alleged unfair or anti-competitive conduct in the livestock, meat, and poultry industries.

Finalizing Organic Rules

Strengthening Organic Enforcement

- AMS published the Strengthening Organic Enforcement final rule on January 19, 2023. This rulemaking amends the USDA organic regulations to strengthen oversight and enforcement of the production, handling, and sale of organic agricultural products. Key updates include:
- Requiring certification of more of the businesses, including brokers and traders, at critical links in organic supply chains.
- Requiring National Organic Program Import Certificates for all organic imports.
- Requiring organic identification on nonretail containers.
- Increasing authority for more rigorous on-site inspections of certified operations.
- Requiring uniform qualification and training standards for organic inspectors and certifying agent personnel.
- Requires standardized certificates of organic operation.
- Requires additional and more frequent reporting of data on certified operations.
- Creates authority for more robust recordkeeping, traceability practices, and fraud prevention procedures.
- Specify certification requirements for producer groups.

Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards

AMS published the Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards final rule on November 2, 2023. This rule establishes clear, strong, and consistent standards for organic livestock and poultry production, levels the playing field for organic livestock farmers, ranchers and businesses and promotes fairer, more competitive markets for their products, while providing consumers with more transparency about their purchases. The final rule outlines more consistent standards for six key areas, including:

- Outdoor space requirements,

- Indoor and outdoor living conditions,
- Poultry stocking densities,
- Preventative health care practices,
- Physical alterations and euthanasia, and
- Transport, handling, and slaughter.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

AMS will continue to conduct investigations of alleged unfair or anti-competitive conduct in the livestock, meat, and poultry industries. By FY 2025, AMS is expected to have recruited and onboarded an Associate Administrator with a focused role of developing, administering, and coordinating regulatory programs/activities, particularly those relating to fair and competitive markets.

The Strengthening Organic Enforcement and Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards final rules were published in January 2023 and November 2023, respectively. AMS will continue to enforce these regulatory requirements and review the rules as necessary.

## OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SCIENTIST — RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

ARS bio-technology results in new technologies that help farmers, domestically and abroad, be more productive, reduce input costs, and has environmental benefits. The data attempts to measure products and tools that are market ready. Patents are an indicator of commercialization and demonstrate there is a market need for the research and technologies ARS scientists produce. REE pursues patents and licensing to incentivize commercialization and patent protection is required to protect complementary investment by the private sector into ARS technologies.

Objective 3.3: Expand All Producers' Access to Global Markets Through Negotiation and Enforcement of Trade Agreements

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
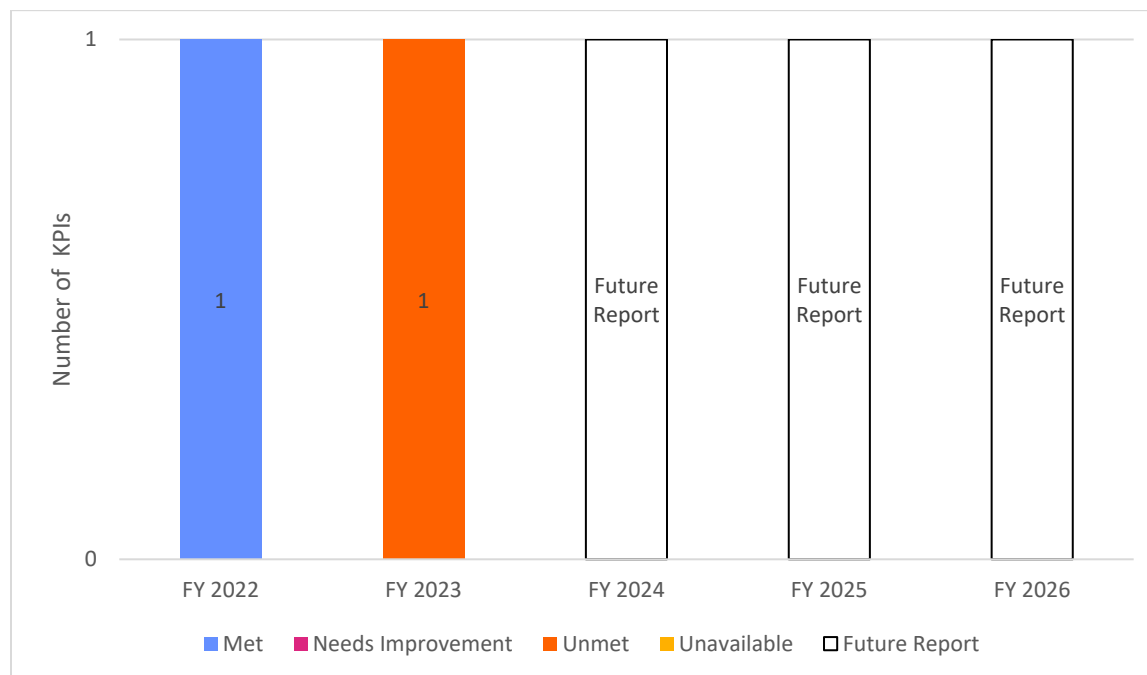
Accomplishments

- Participated in the first Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-1) for the UN Plastics Agreement in November 2022.
- Initiated a second dairy case under the U.S-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) after determining that Canada had yet to fully comply with the terms of its tariff rate quota (TRQ) allocation for dairy products. The U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) has also initiated consultations with Mexico on biotech.

Challenges

- Convincing global trading partners about the science and efficacy of the U.S. position and having sufficient funding to do trade capacity building initiatives to demonstrate the U.S position.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Foreign Agricultural Service

FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE

Value of Trade Preserved Through Resolution of Foreign Market Access Issues[6]

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	5.5	6.00	6.10	6.10	5.70	5.70	5.70	Billion Dollars	Increase	
Actual	2.47	7.67	5.89	6.42[7]	4.93	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

In 2023, FAS, in partnership with the regulatory agencies who have statutory authority over the respective products, took actions that opened markets and preserved access for nearly $5.0 billion in U.S. agricultural exports. Notable examples include opening markets for grapefruit to Vietnam valued at $15 million annually, processed poultry to Senegal valued at $21 million, new access for pork and lamb to Ghana, bovine semen to Algeria valued at $50,000; securing access to Japan for ethanol valued at more than $180 million; restoring access for natural casings to the EU valued at $13 million; persuading Bangladesh to remove a fumigation requirement on cotton, generating easier access to a market worth $475 million; and negotiating the elimination of India's tariffs on $1 billion in tree nuts, lentils worth $50 million, and apples recently worth $157 million. FAS also negotiated the release of hundreds of detained shipments from the United States to dozens of counties. These shipments represent well over $10 million and range from cooking oil in China, cheese in Costa Rica, grapefruit in Germany, to pepperoni in Thailand. Detained shipments risk being destroyed and have an immediate impact on U.S. companies, especially small and medium-sized companies, as well as a ripple effect on farmers, ranchers, and producers, that cannot afford to lose an entire container or more of product.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

This performance indicator measures the value of trade preserved through the resolution of foreign market access issues, such as U.S. export detainment, issues related to sanitary and phytosanitary concerns, technical barriers to trade, and trade regulations. In FY 2025, FAS plans to continue efforts to diversify markets and opportunities abroad by focusing and identifying markets and products that present the greatest export opportunities for American Agriculture. The FAS economic global market review will assist in identifying export opportunities, presenting options for more robust foreign engagement, and cooperative multilateral economic and trade forums. FAS is committed to monitoring and enforcing existing trade agreements, including addressing unfair trade practices, facilitating trade, and ensuring that trading partners meet their commitments.

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[6] Foreign market access issues include U.S. export detainment, sanitary/phytosanitary concerns, technical barriers to trade, and trade regulations.
[7] FY 2022 actual changed from $1.77 billion to $6.42 billion, reflecting data validation.

Objective 3.4: Expand International Marketing Opportunities and Build Demand in Developing Countries Through Delivery of Technical Assistance and Capacity Building

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
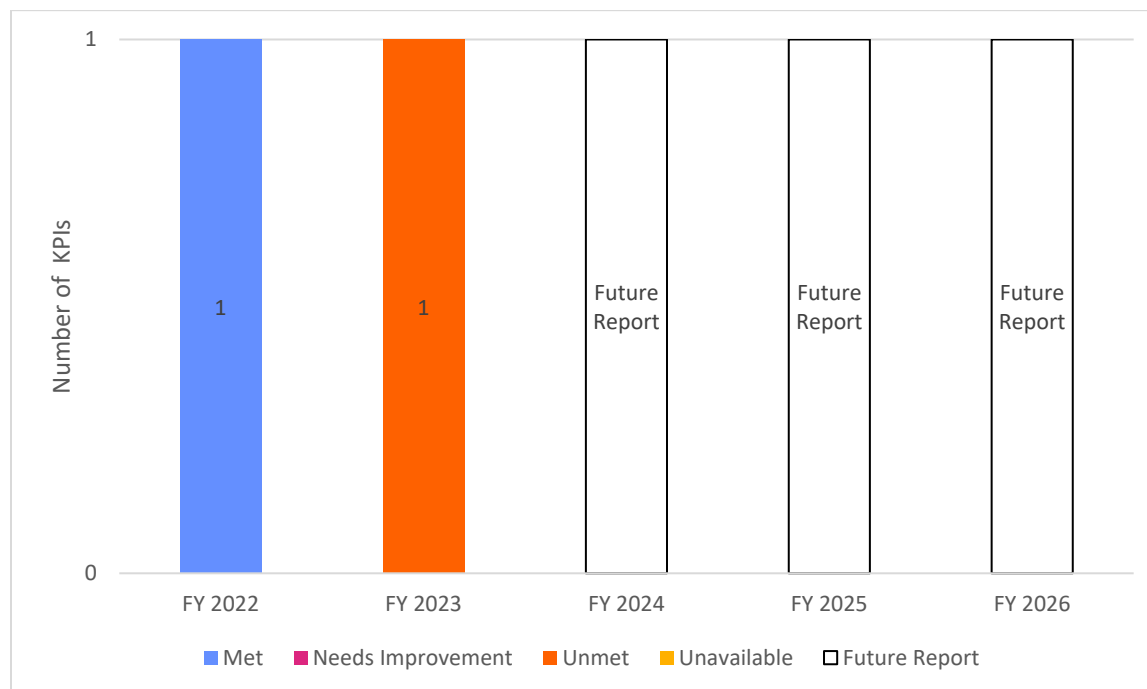
Accomplishments

- Expanded international marketing opportunities and promoted network building between U.S. exporters and foreign importers. Innovative approach in outreach to developing countries and new markets using virtual trade events. Improved outcomes (i.e., increased KPI results) and efficiency due to integration of mobile application into trade missions and endorsed trade shows.
- Hosted 4 virtual colloquia on the Codex Committees for Residues of Veterinary Drugs (CCRVDF); Nutrition (CCNFSDU); Food Additives (CCFA); and Contaminants (CCCF).

Challenges

- USDA is largely dependent on funding from reimbursable programs with the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Department of State to do capacity building that leads to trade-enabling agricultural economic development polices in low- and middle-income countries.
- COVID-19 pandemic and staff attrition in certain countries (particularly within Asia) has weakened communication and relationships.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Foreign Agricultural Service

FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE

Value of Agricultural Exports Resulting from Participation in USDA-Endorsed Foreign Agricultural Trade Shows and Trade Missions

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	1.75	2.13	1.75	1.75	2.00	2.15	2.30	Billion Dollars	Increase	
Actual	2.20	1.16	0.119	2.3	1.73	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

In FY 2023, USDA endorsed a total of 24 trade shows that occurred and an additional four trade shows – in Asia – that were canceled. The 24 USDA-endorsed trade shows featured 797 U.S. companies and organizations across 17 countries, drawing buyers from all over the world. Projected 12-month sales reported by U.S. exhibitors at the shows were estimated at $1.66 billion.

USDA/FAS hosted six Agribusiness Trade Missions in FY 2023 to East Africa, Spain, Panama, Netherlands, Japan, and Chile. A total of 129 U.S. agribusinesses across these six Trade Missions participated in 1,744 business-to-business meetings, generating $70.4 million in on-site and projected 12-month sales. FAS also hosted two unique virtual trade events (VTEs) in the Canadian market focused on healthy and natural foods and pet food. These VTEs resulted in 86 business to business meetings and generated $150,000 in 12-month projected sales for U.S. exporters who were unable to travel to these international markets.

The 28th annual Gulfood trade show was held February 20-24, 2023, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). Gulfood 2023 hosted 5,223 exhibitors from 125 countries with 134,460 visitors. The USA Pavilion welcomed 157 U.S. exporters (including 11 Cooperators, 4 SRTGs, and 5 State Departments of Agriculture (SDoAs)) reporting $18,620,000 in on-site sales and $170,600,000 in projected 12-month sales. U.S. exhibitors showcased 1,128 products and made 2,406 serious contacts. FAS Administrator Whitley attended the show to visit with U.S. exhibitors and cooperators and to take part in a gumbo cooking demonstration highlighting U.S. poultry. In addition to local buyers in the UAE, over 60 FAS-sponsored buyers from India, Tunisia, France, Bulgaria, South Africa, Ethiopia, Egypt, Jordan, Cote D'Ivoire, and Ghana attended Gulfood to visit the USA Pavilion.

SIAL Paris (Salon International de l'Alimentation) was held October 19-23, 2022, in Paris, France and welcomed over 7,000 exhibitors and over 265,000 visitors, of which 87 percent were international visitors from over 200 countries. The USA Pavilion welcomed 138 U.S. exporters (including 10 Cooperator, 4 SRTGS, and 5 SDoAs) reporting over $332.6.1 million in projected 12-month sales and $9.6 million in on-site sales. New to the show this year was the USA Pavilion expanding into the Dairy Hall and the creation of a matchmaking service between FAS lead buyer delegations and U.S. companies.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

FAS plans to host six Agribusiness Trade Missions and support between 20-24 USA Pavilions at USDA-endorsed International Trade Shows. Updated branding at trade shows and focusing on targeted product sectors for USDA Trade Missions is expected to help FAS meet its targets. While FAS does not plan to increase the number of events, FAS will work to utilize technology and new marketing ideas to improve the quality of interactions at these events.

Goal 4: Make Safe, Nutritious Food Available to All Americans

USDA plays a critical role in preventing foodborne illness and protecting public health, while also ensuring Americans have access to healthy foods and beverages and nutrition education that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence. While keeping the food supply safe, USDA must also reduce food insecurity and prioritize nutrition insecurity, which emphasizes providing Americans not just calories, but calories that matter for their health and well-being.

To ensure the food supply is safe, the Department will continue to enhance its food inspection system with the goal of reducing illness from meat, poultry, and egg products and drive compliance with food safety regulations. At the same time, USDA's research, education, and extension programs will continue to provide science, information, tools, and technologies to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness. USDA will also continue to foster partnerships that support best practices in implementing effective programs to ensure that eligible populations have access to programs that support their nutrition needs.

Objective 4.1: Increase Food Security Through Assistance and Access to Nutritious and Affordable Food

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
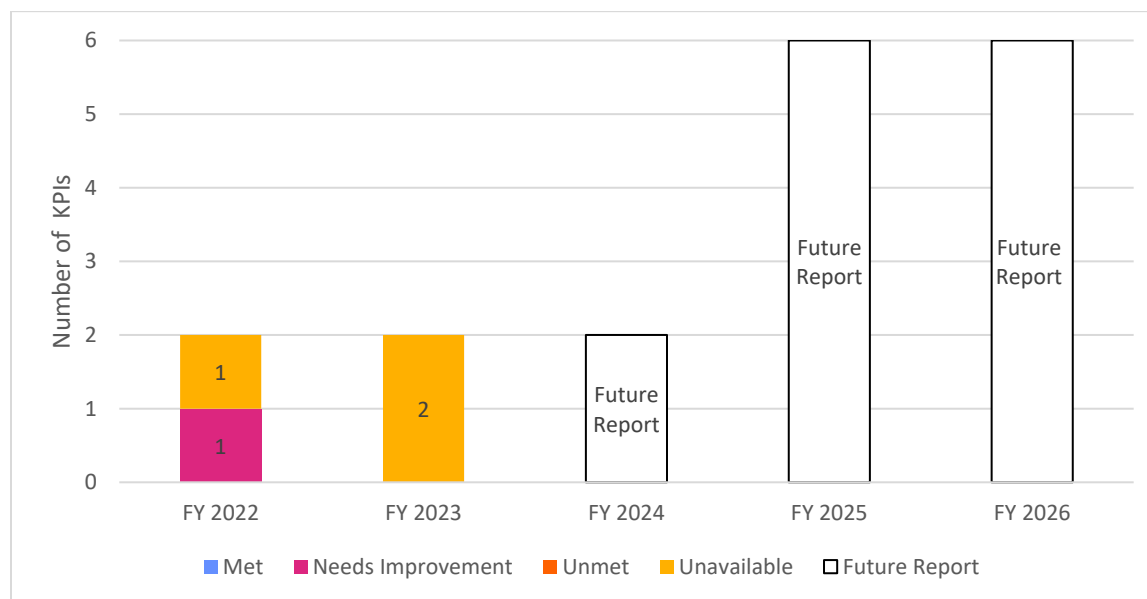
Accomplishments

- Launched a mobile application to support remote distribution sites in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Developed requirements for evaluating round 1 of the FDPIR Self-Determination Demonstration Project as part of the FDPIR Characteristics Study, with a report expected in FY 2025.
- As part of the food system transformation framework, Secretary Vilsack announced nearly $40 million to support GusNIP Produce Prescription projects using funding from the American Rescue Plan Act. $21 million in awards were finalized that supported 43 FY 2022 Produce Prescription Program proposals. Among these awardees, 95% are first-time applicants to the GusNIP Produce Prescription Program, and 60% are new entries overall.
- Developed and launched the Indigenous Animals Harvesting and Meat Processing Grant Program (IAG). IAG is designed to support the priorities of Tribal Nations in meeting the needs of traditional harvesting methods and indigenous animals. The program will fund projects which invest in Tribal Nations' supply chain resiliency, indigenous animals, restoring local indigenous food systems, and indigenous processing methods, and expanding local capacity.

Challenges

- Access to food is measured by the food insecurity rate prepared annually by ERS. This measurement fluctuates and is impacted by several factors, including population, policies, and economic conditions.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Food and Nutrition Service
- Office of the Chief Scientist – Research, Education, and Economics

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FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE

Percentage of American Households with Consistent, Dependable Access to Food

	CY 2019	CY 2020	CY 2021	CY 2022	CY 2023	CY 2024	CY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	87.9	89.0	89.2	89.3	89.4	89.5	89.6	% of Households	Increase	
Actual	89.5	89.5	89.8	87.2	TBD	N/A	N/A			

CY 2023 data will be available in fall 2024.

Progress Made in FY 2023

- Released guidance on implementing non-congregate meal service through the SFSP and NSLP Seamless Summer Option (SSO) for rural areas with no congregate meal service.
- Finalized a rule to expand the Community Eligibility Provision.
- Submitted proposed rule for clearance: Food Distribution Programs: Improving Access and Parity.
- Solicited additional ITO participation in the FDPIR Self-Determination Demonstration Project through the publication of a "Round 2" federal notice.
- Released Request for Applications for a second round of TEFAP Reach and Resiliency Grants for States.
- Increased Access to Summer Feeding in Rural Areas. Starting in summer 2023, FNS allowed certain rural areas to distribute summer meals to kids outside of the typically required group (congregate) settings through the Summer Food Service Program and National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option.
- The 2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee membership was announced, and public meetings were held.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

In FY 2025, FNS will continue implementing the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) program, expand non-congregate summer meals in rural areas under certain circumstances, and lower the Community Eligibility Provision threshold, which is expected to reduce food insecurity. In addition, FNS will continue to support efforts to update and promote the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) for 2025-2030. The DGAs are updated every five years. FNS will also conduct research to support the next reevaluation of the TFP, which is scheduled to be released in 2026. The TFP represents a healthy, practical, and cost-conscious diet for low-income households living in today's food environment, and is based on current food prices, consumption data, the nutrients in food, and the latest dietary guidance. The cost of the TFP serves as the basis for the maximum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit allotment.

Annual Average Monthly Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rate

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	82.1	82.2	82.3	82.3	Participation Rate (%)	Increase	
Actual	82	78	N/A[8]	TBD	TBD	N/A	N/A			

FY 2022 data will be available in Spring 2024. FY 2023 data may be available in late 2024.

Progress Made in FY 2023

- Expanded online shopping to 50 States and the District of Columbia in 2023, enabling 99 percent of SNAP recipients to use their benefits to purchase food online. Over 210 retailer chains, representing thousands of storefronts, are participating as SNAP online retailers.
- Direct marketing farmers are now able to accept SNAP payment online due to a partnership between USDA and the National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP). SNAP participants can now purchase produce online from participating local farmers for pick-up or delivery.
- Awarded a grant to a SNAP Electronic e-Benefits Transfer Modernization Technical Assistance Center to assist independent, small, and rural retailers with adopting SNAP online purchasing.
- Provided technical assistance for State agencies to support the end of the Federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.
- SNAP worked to implement the provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 in a manner that ensured compliance with the law. FNS provided ongoing technical assistance to state agencies to ensure that eligible participants maintain access to the program and do not improperly lose benefits.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

In FY 2025, FNS will continue to work with state agencies to ensure access and reduce barriers to SNAP benefits for eligible people while also providing technical assistance to implement provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023. FNS will implement a research study to evaluate the impact of EBT modernization on a range of indicators such as program performance, access, equity, and cost. FNS will also initiate a study with the aim to create a comprehensive inventory of SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) providers and their locations to help participants find services and for FNS and States to identify gaps in coverage. FNS will also publish a proposed rule to modernize SNAP benefit issuance and increase program integrity.

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[8] FNS will not have SNAP Participation Rate for FY 2021 because the collection of SNAP Quality Control data was waived due to the pandemic. This data is used in the numerator of the participation rate.

Number of States Participating in the Summer EBT Program

	CY 2019	CY 2020	CY 2021	CY 2022	CY 2023	CY 2024	CY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	27	40	Number of States	Increase	/
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

New KPI Description

Summer EBT is a new program established by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328) that will provide grocery benefits to children from low-income households during the summer months to provide continued access to nutrition when school is not in session. This KPI is a count of the total number of notices of intent that are submitted by States each year. States, territories, and tribes have to submit a notice of intent to FNS by January 1 of each year for the upcoming summer period.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

FNS has made significant efforts to support State participation in Summer EBT including educating States about Summer EBT, providing technical assistance through a variety of venues, issuing early guidance, holding numerous listening sessions, attending industry conferences, and facilitating sharing among States. As part of this, FNS is in the process of developing a protype application and is working with external stakeholders who are producing technical assistance materials and/or have funding available to support State Summer EBT programs. To encourage States that are not already operating the program to administer Summer EBT in 2025, FNS will need to continue the activities noted above. FNS may also need to facilitate cooperation between States, help identify funds to cover State administrative expenses and identify other resources and strategic partnerships to support State implementation.

Number of Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) Participating in the Summer EBT Program

	CY 2019	CY 2020	CY 2021	CY 2022	CY 2023	CY 2024	CY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	2	4	Number of ITOs	Increase	/
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

New KPI Description

Summer EBT is a new program established by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328) that will provide grocery benefits to children from low-income households during the summer months to provide continued access to nutrition when school is not in session. As amended, the National School Lunch Act allows ITOs that administer WIC to issue benefits which are usable at local grocery stores. This KPI is a count of the total number of notices of intent that are submitted by ITOs each year. States, territories, and tribes have to submit a notice of intent to FNS by January 1 of each year for the upcoming summer period.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

To date, FNS has made significant efforts to support ITO participation in Summer EBT including educating ITOs about Summer EBT, providing technical assistance through a variety of venues, issuing early guidance, holding numerous listening sessions, attending industry conferences, and facilitating sharing among ITOs. As part of this, FNS is in the process of developing a protype application and is working with external stakeholders who are producing technical assistance materials and/or have funding available to support ITO Summer EBT programs. To encourage ITOs that are not already operating the program to administer Summer EBT in 2025, FNS will need to continue the activities noted above. FNS may also need to facilitate cooperation between States and ITOs, help identify funds to cover ITO administrative expenses and identify other resources and strategic partnerships to support ITO implementation.

Number of Congregate and Non-Congregate Meals Served in Each State's Peak Summer Month as a Percentage of Free and Reduced Price Meals Served During an Average Month During the Preceding School Year

	CY 2019	CY 2020	CY 2021	CY 2022	CY 2023	CY 2024	CY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	---	20	% of Meals	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	N/A	N/A			

New KPI Description

This KPI is calculated as the total number of congregate and non-congregate meals served during each State's peak summer month (typically July but sometimes June, depending upon the State) divided by the average number of free and reduced price meals served over the preceding October - May. These data are reported to FNS by State agencies on forms FNS-418 and FNS-10.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328) established a rural non-congregate meal option in the Summer Food Service Program and the SSO. FNS will continue to support State and local agency implementation of the interim final rule, which was published in FY 2024. As part of this, FNS will provide States with technical assistance to capture and increase each State's peak summer month as a percentage of free and reduced-price meals served during an average month during School Year 2024-2025. In FY 2025, two provisions from the interim final rule will become effective – the requirement for all State agencies to contribute site information to the Summer Site Finder, as well as the development and publication of a Coordinated Services Plan, whose intent is to coordinate and mutually strengthen the statewide availability of services offered through the Summer Meal Programs and the Summer EBT Program.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SCIENTIST – RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS

Number of Firms Associated with Delivery of Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program Nutrition Incentive or Produce Prescription Program

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	---	2,300	Firms	Increase	I
Actual	---	---	---	---	1,959	N/A	N/A			

New KPI Description

This KPI is being introduced in FY 2025. This measure represents the scope of service or the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program by proxy of the number of firms engaged in incentive or program delivery. Nutrition Incentive (NI) Projects provide incentives to individuals using SNAP or Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables. Produce Prescription Program (PPR) projects provide prescriptions in the form of incentives for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

Data collected in year two of GusNIP NI and PPR indicates fruit and vegetable intake increased for participants, the longer they participated in the program. In 2022 the PPR program RFA was separated from the NI RFA which allowed greater program management and thus greater impact. Firm partnerships are a lagging indicator relative to RFA and award and impact is anticipated to begin being seen in firm partnership metrics by 2025. Assuming funding is sustained or increased for the GusNIP program, the number of firms is expected to increase, given the many benefits which include reduction of food insecurity and the burden of chronic disease, and positive impacts to local economies.

Objective 4.2: Encourage Healthy Dietary Choices through Data-Driven, Flexible, Customer-Focused Approaches

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
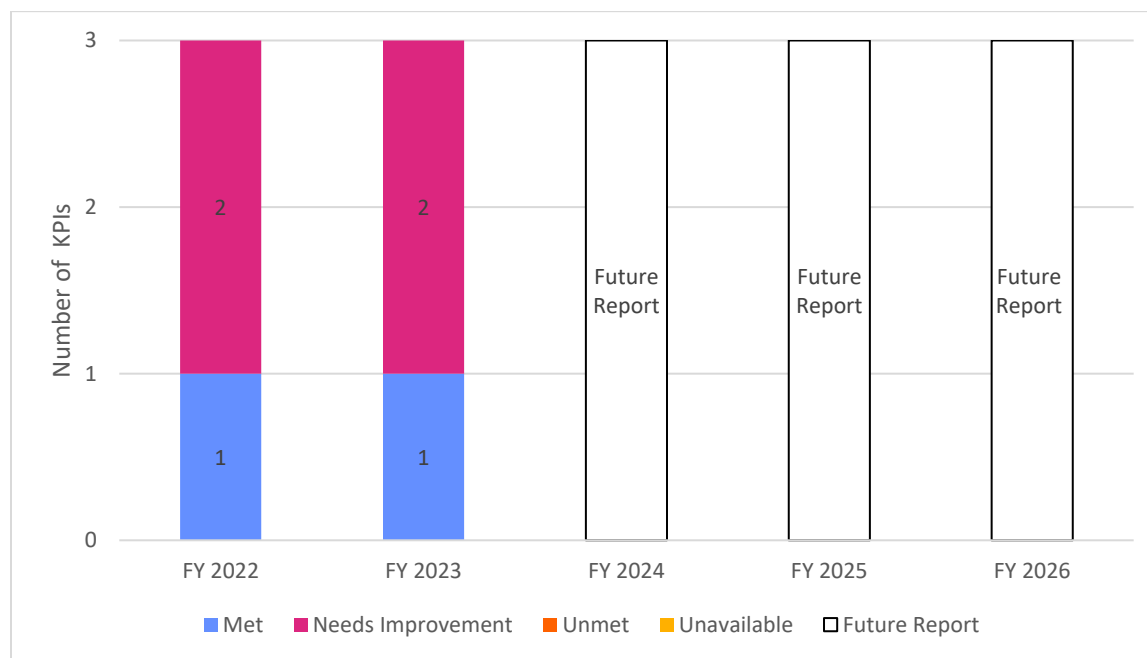
Accomplishments

- Published the WIC Food Packages proposed rule on November 21, 2022, and the comment period closed on February 21, 2023. USDA received over 15,000 comments and is reviewing/analyzing the comments to inform development of the final rule, expected to be published in FY 2024.
- Published the proposed rule, "Child Nutrition Programs: Revisions to Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans." FNS reviewed and analyzed 17,000 comments received in response to the proposed rule and expects to publish a final rule in FY 2024.
- The 2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee membership was announced, and three committee meetings were held in February, May, and September 2023. FNS worked together with a grantee to award nearly $30 million in Healthy Meals Incentives Sub-Grants to 264 small and/or rural SFA across 44 states and the District of Columbia.
- FY 2023 marked the tenth year of awards in the Farm to School Grant Program. Since then, FNS has awarded more than 1,100 projects totaling more than $84 million and reaching all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam, reaching more than 28 million students in nearly 63,000 schools.

Challenges

- Because SNAP participation fluctuates based on economic conditions, a rate of eligibles participating to total number of eligibles is the most appropriate metric to use.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Food and Nutrition Service

Annual Average Monthly Participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	6.3	6.4	6.8	7.0	Million Participants	Increase	
Actual	6.4	6.2	6.2	6.3	6.6[9]	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

FNS invested in modernizing WIC by funding 36 projects aimed at increasing participation and equity in WIC. FNS further focused on increasing equity by translating additional materials in languages other than English and completed data collection for a breastfeeding study that may inform program and policy changes. FNS also worked on the WIC Food Packages final rule, which will align the WIC food packages with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and is intended to provide WIC State agencies and participants with greater flexibility and choice of a wider variety of foods that accommodate participants' special dietary needs and personal and cultural food preferences.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

In FY 2025, FNS will continue several efforts aimed at increasing participation and retention in WIC. FNS previously awarded grants to modernize and create innovative outreach strategies aimed at increasing participation and ensuring that WIC meets the needs of participants. FNS will monitor the implementation of these efforts and evaluate their impact on key indicators including participation, retention, and the redemption of WIC benefits. In addition, FNS will finalize rulemaking to address key regulatory barriers to online shopping in the WIC program. FNS will also publish a proposed rule with the aim to modernize food delivery and customer service through updated regulatory requirements that consider the changing retail marketplace.

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[9] This number is based on publicly posted preliminary data; actuals for FY 2023 will be available, at the earliest, in April 2024.

Annual Percentage of Eligible Children Participating in the National School Lunch Program

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	59	59	59	59	59	59	59	% of Eligible Children	Increase	
Actual	57	43	N/A[10]	57	57	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

FNS proposed updates to school meal nutrition standards to align them with the latest Dietary Guidelines and continued building on the strides made in school nutrition over the past decade. Notably, the proposed rule would introduce standards for added sugars for the first time based on recommendations in the latest edition of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, as well as extensive feedback from stakeholders. FNS also expanded access to school breakfast and lunch to students at no cost in an estimated 3,000 more school districts in high need areas by finalizing a rule to expand the availability of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

In FY 2025, FNS will continue to encourage school meal participation including promoting CEP elections and providing technical assistance to support the final CEP regulation. The intention of this rulemaking is to expand access to CEP and provide greater flexibility to states and schools that want to contribute additional state and local funds to provide no-cost meals to students. FNS will also provide implementation support for the final meal nutrition standards rule through guidance, webinars, and toolkits. In addition, FNS will continue to provide support and guidance for the Healthy Meals Incentive initiatives. The Healthy Meals Incentives initiative gives local schools the resources to craft meals that are both healthy and appetizing to children, raising the bar in school meal quality.

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[10] FY 2022 actual was 57%, including children receiving lunch through the Seamless Summer Option (which most schools used to provide school meals during SY 21-22). No rate is available for FY 2021 as there is not complete data due to waivers in place during SY 20-21.

Annual Percentage of Eligible Children Participating in the School Breakfast Program

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	30	31	31	31	31	31%	31%	% of Eligible Children	Increase	
Actual	29.6	24	N/A[11]	30	29	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

FNS proposed updates to school meal nutrition standards to align them with the latest Dietary Guidelines and continued building on the strides made in school nutrition over the past decade. Notably, the proposed rule would introduce standards for added sugars for the first time based on recommendations in the latest edition of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, as well as extensive feedback from stakeholders. FNS also expanded access to school breakfast and lunch to students at no cost in an estimated 3,000 more school districts in high need areas by finalizing a rule to expand the availability of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

In FY 2025, FNS will continue to encourage school meal participation including promoting CEP elections and providing technical assistance to support the final CEP regulation. The intention of this rulemaking is to expand access to CEP and provide greater flexibility to states and schools that want to contribute additional state and local funds to provide no-cost meals to students. FNS will also provide implementation support for the final meal nutrition standards rule through guidance, webinars, and toolkits. In addition, FNS will continue to provide support and guidance for the Healthy Meals Incentive initiatives. The Healthy Meals Incentives initiative gives local schools the resources to craft meals that are both healthy and appetizing to children, raising the bar in school meal quality.

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[11] FY 2022 actual was 31%, including children receiving breakfast through the Seamless Summer Option (which most schools used to provide school meals during SY 21-22). No rate is available for FY 2021 as there is not complete data due to waivers in place during SY 20-21.

Objective 4.3: Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
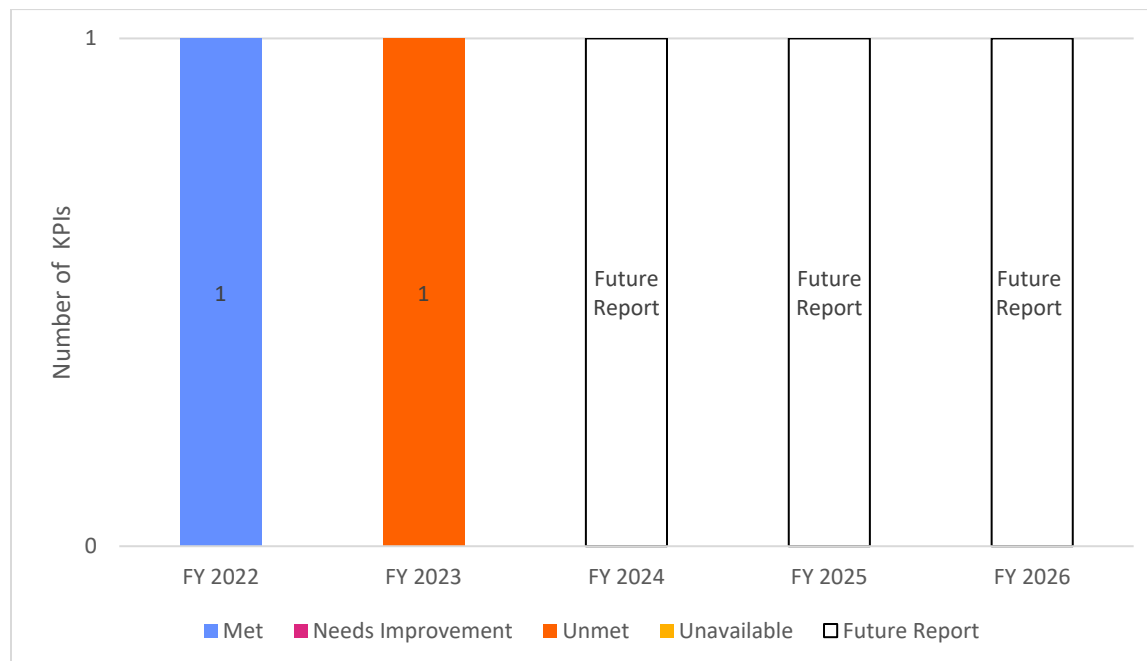
Accomplishments

- Issued a draft *Salmonella* framework and announced a proposed determination to declare *Salmonella* an adulterant in breaded stuffed raw chicken products if they exceed a certain level of *Salmonella* contamination in the chicken components.
- Hosted five roundtables and launched a monthly newsletter for small and very small establishments to share the latest developments that may impact their operations.
- Began inspection of cell-cultured poultry products, in collaboration with FDA, and proposed new regulatory requirements for the voluntary "Product of USA" claim.
- Promoted transparency, innovation, and collaboration through the deployment of an application programming interface (API) for recall and public health data, which allows software developers to create digital services and apps using FSIS data on recalled meat and poultry products.
- Continued efforts to revise the current Safe Handling Instructions label through listening sessions with stakeholder groups, a literature review, and development of a number of alternative label designs to test with focus groups and consumers.

Challenges

- As of the end of FY 2023, there was an increase in samples that tested positive for the *Salmonella* serotypes most commonly associated with human illness. FSIS is in the process of proposing regulatory action to help reduce *Salmonella* in poultry products through the *Salmonella* framework.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Food Safety and Inspection Service

FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE

Reduction in the Proportion of Poultry Samples with *Salmonella* Serotypes Commonly Associated with Human Illness

|	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	-2%	-4%	-6%	-8%	% of Samples	Decrease	
Actual	---	---	---	-3%	+22%	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

- FSIS granted pilot projects to several poultry establishments to examine the merits and logistics of excluding *Salmonella* poultry vaccine strains from the FSIS *Salmonella* performance-categorization calculation. Data collected from the pilot will be shared with and analyzed by FSIS to determine whether the findings support changes to existing FSIS *Salmonella* control strategies.
- To provide scientific support for FSIS' proposed *Salmonella* framework, FSIS completed a peer-reviewed risk profile to provide information on whether certain serotypes or subtypes of *Salmonella* should be considered as adulterants in specific poultry products within the meaning of the PPIA. FSIS also collaborated on peer-reviewed quantitative risk assessments for *Salmonella* in chicken and turkey to evaluate the potential benefit of risk- management options for controlling *Salmonella* levels and more virulent serotypes. FSIS, in collaboration with private- sector risk and data scientists, applied modern analytics to harness a vast amount of genomic data in predictive models to refine the identification of poultry-associated *Salmonella* serotypes of greatest public health significance. The risk profile and risk assessments are expected to be published as part of the regulatory proposal in FY 2024.
- FSIS hosted a virtual public meeting on Reducing *Salmonella* in Poultry in November 2022. The attendance at the public meeting reached 748 by web or audio and USDA received 1,034 comments on the *Salmonella* framework.
- FSIS continued to hold meetings with stakeholders and, through a cooperative agreement with the University of Maryland, held 15 meetings with industry partners to discuss data sharing for FSIS *Salmonella* risk assessments for chicken and turkey.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

FSIS anticipates publishing the final determination for not-ready-to-eat breaded stuffed chicken products in FY 2024. FSIS also expects to publish a proposed new *Salmonella* framework in FY 2024 and would begin implementation of the framework in FY 2025.

Goal 5: Expand Opportunities for Economic Development and Improve Quality of Life in Rural and Tribal Communities

Rural America provides the Nation's food and energy resources, produces the fiber for goods and manufacturing, contributes more than 35 percent of the Nation's military members, and operates about 80 percent of the Nation's critical infrastructure lifelines. Unfortunately, it is also where the country's majority of underserved communities and persistently poor families reside and where repeat disaster losses and climate change risks occur. It is also home to the country's fastest aging population and the majority of the Nation's aging infrastructure. USDA is taking bold action to promote rural prosperity and economic development by providing technical assistance and financing investments in rural water, electric, broadband, housing, community facilities, local and regional food systems, and rural businesses and cooperatives. USDA will leverage funds, stimulate private-public partnerships, and collaborate with communities to increase economic opportunities in underserved communities and build rural infrastructure. This includes working with Federal partners and various stakeholder groups to help rural and Tribal communities thrive.
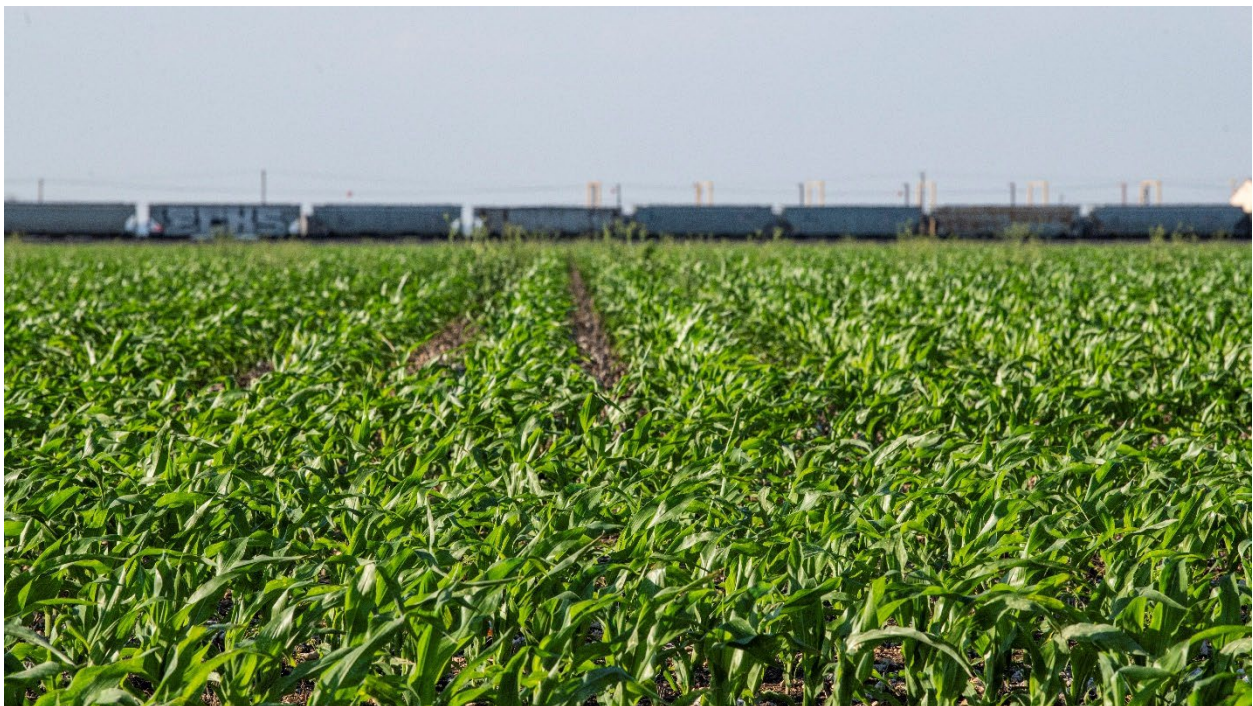
Objective 5.1: Improve Rural and Tribal Community Infrastructure, Including Affordable E-Connectivity, Cornerstone Community Facilities, Sustainable and Reliable Power, and Clean and Safe Water and Sewer Systems

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
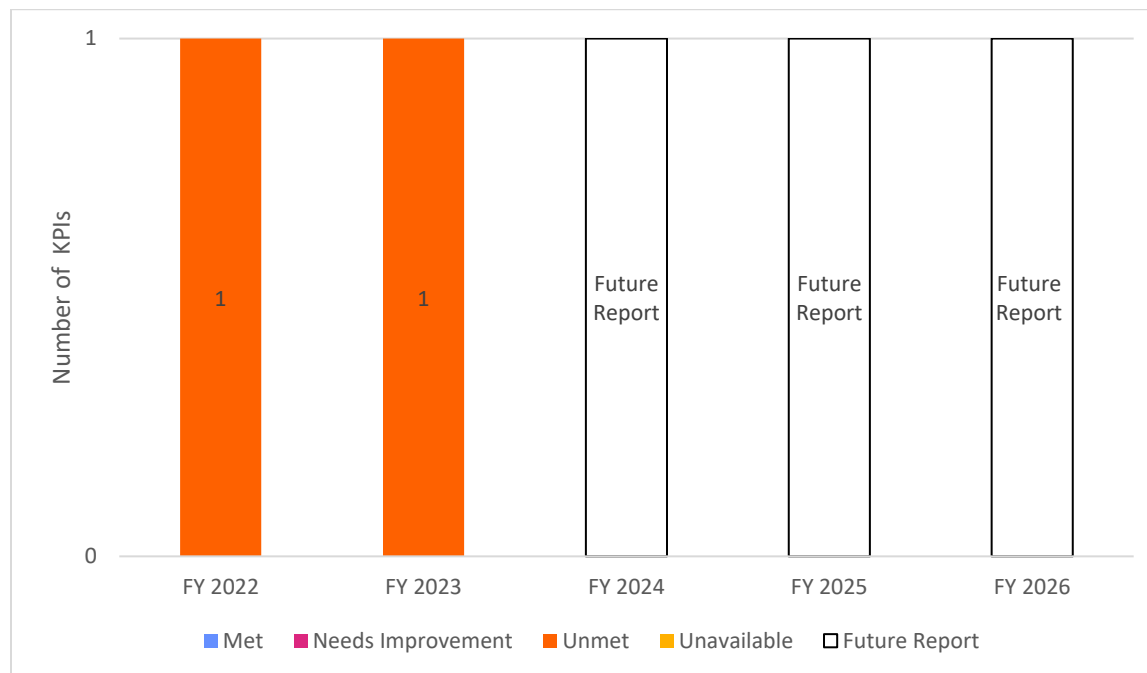
Accomplishments

- For funding announcements beginning in FY 2022, RD began assigning priority points for projects across a variety of programs that advance new and better markets, climate goals, and equity priorities. These points help raise the score of qualifying projects and can increase their likelihood of receiving funding. This effort helps ensure equitable access to programs and benefits from projects for underserved communities. Underserved communities often include a limited capacity to apply for and successfully receive federal financing. Based on the analysis from FY 2023, RD had the most traction under Advancing Racial Justice, Place-Based Equity, and Opportunity. For those programs that awarded priority points for equity, RD invested $2.17 billion dollars to support socially vulnerable communities.

Challenges

- The biggest challenge to implementing priority points is the varying regulations for each program.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Rural Development

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Number of Households with Potential Access to Rural Development-Funded New and/or Improved E-Connectivity Services

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	200,000	250,000	125,000	125,000	House-holds	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	134,804	98,811	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

While this KPI did not meet the aspirational FY 2023 target, RD continues to make progress in decreasing the digital divide between urban and rural communities by funding projects that will connect over 98,811 households with broadband access when completed. Most notably, 49,347 of the households that will have new or improved broadband are Tribal and/or socially vulnerable communities. This makes up a remarkable 50% of funded projects and this success is attributed to dedication of RD staff to conducting outreach and technical assistance. Making broadband available in Tribal and rural areas will help create jobs, help farmers use precision agriculture technologies, expand access to health care and educational services.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

RD has launched a Broadband Technical Assistance Program which will help build a pipeline for e-connectivity investments. RD will deploy the technical assistance grants via cooperative agreements to support communities of need. RD will continue to collaborate with Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) on the joint APG to ensure the further deployment of BIL funds and annual appropriations. Risks to progress include reduced or limited continued appropriations, dependency on partnership with NTIA, and potential staffing need to conduct environmental reviews on incoming applications.

Objective 5.2: Boost the Financial Security of Rural and Tribal Communities through Access to Affordable Housing

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
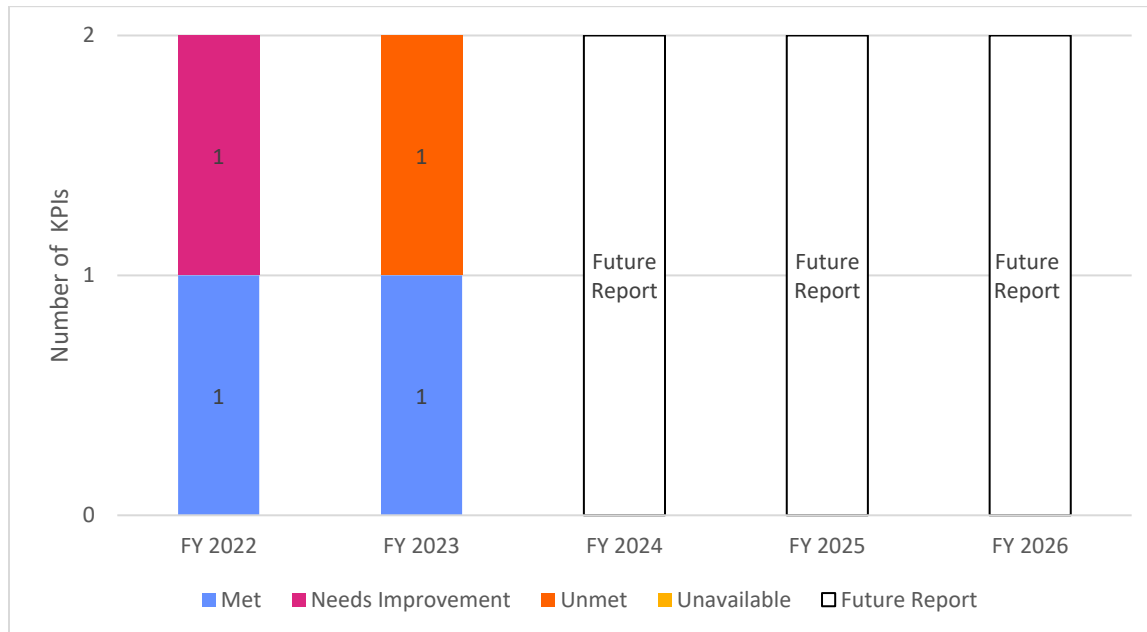
Strategic objective 5.2 has been designated as an area making noteworthy progress.

Accomplishments

- Made significant progress implementing the RD Equity Action Plan which provides an opportunity to listen to local leaders/residents about their needs and barriers that keep the community from participating in RD's programs. Through this project, RD can connect rural Americans with the resources they need. RD identified more than 8,000 rural areas that fit the parameters.
- Continued to prioritize the access and reduction of barriers to funding for Tribes, Tribal entities, and Tribal members. The Annual USDA Tribal Consultation & Listening Session on Equity/Barriers addresses Tribal requests, concerns, and actions taken by USDA.
- While historically the program had not been fully utilized, recent changes including the reduction of barriers for applicants and increased outreach to stakeholders have ensured program funds are fully used and indeed, applications in the last cycle exceeded annual appropriations and almost expended the carryover amount. Given the importance of this program, USDA has implemented a significant number of changes to it over the past two years to increase its usage by stakeholders.

Challenges

- With an increase in workload and servicing expectations, RD may be unable to meet customer expectations if it does not improve its automated loan and accounting systems and allocate staff to meet highest priority needs.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Rural Development

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Number of Underserved, Socially Disadvantaged, and Vulnerable Rural and Tribal Communities Engaged in Field-Based Programs

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	460	230	92	92	Communities	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	425	191	N/A	N/A			

Investment in Underserved, Socially Disadvantaged, and Vulnerable Rural and Tribal Communities in Field-Based Programs

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	12	60	60	40	Million Dollars	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	165.8	221.5	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

Ensuring that all eligible areas, entities, and residents have equitable access to RD programs and can benefit from RD-funded projects is vital to the future economic growth and prosperity of the United States. As such, RD is leveraging its extensive field network, data, and strategic investments resources to support the Equity Project, recently rebranded as CORE (Creating Opportunities through Rural Engagement). While the name changed, the essence, structure, and goals remain the same, as the change simply reflects how central equity is to RD activities. Through RD's network of field offices, RD is actively engaging underserved rural and tribal communities in every state to better understand and identify the barriers they face to participating in RD programs. In FY 2023, RD was able to engage 191 new CORE communities and invest $221.5 million dollars into these communities.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

RD will continue this multiphase strategic engagement project (CORE) designed to connect RD to socially vulnerable, distressed and persistent poverty rural and Tribal communities to listen, understand and document: community assets, needs and plans barriers to participation in RD; and to determine what type of assistance is needed now (capacity building, planning, application or funding) and uses data to identify rural areas of focus.

Objective 5.3: Increase Capacity, Sustainability, and Economic Vitality in Rural and Tribal Communities

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
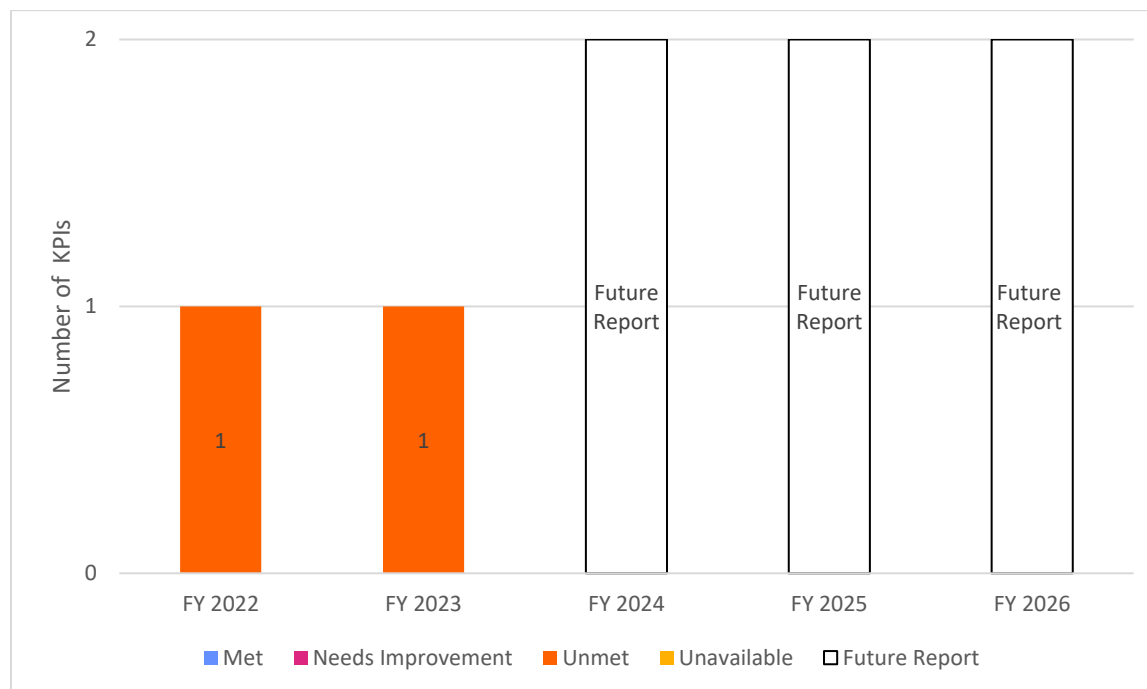
Accomplishments

- Launched in Spring of 2022, the Rural Partners Network (RPN) is an all-of-government effort led by RD. RD is leading the Rural Partners Network in collaboration with 20 federal agencies and regional commissions through the Rural Prosperity Interagency Policy Council, co-led by the White House Domestic Policy Council and USDA. The RPN will help selected underserved rural communities navigate federal resources that can support their economic development vision and priority projects. Federal staff known as Community Liaisons help with this navigation and identify barriers to these resources. They can then work with respective federal agencies to address program or policy changes for the benefit of all rural communities. RPN Community Networks were launched in Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Challenges

- RD needs additional staff to fully support the implementation of RPN.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Rural Development

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Percentage of Rural Development Assistance Directed to Distressed Communities[12]

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	12	13	14	25	30	30	30	% of Assistance	Increase	
Actual	11	12.5	12.3	21	24	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

Even though RD did not meet the performance target, it had the largest percentage of investments go to Distressed Communities since implementing this key performance indicator in FY 2019. The target set for FY 2023 was ten percentage points higher than the 5-year baseline for investments in Distressed Communities. The target was purposefully aspirational. RD will continue to target investment in Distressed Communities with the goal of increasing the percentage of funding invested in these communities.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

RD's continued focus on investing in Distressed Communities directly supports one of the key priorities under this administration:

> Assist rural communities recover economically through more and better market opportunities and through improved infrastructure.

RD is seeking changes in the Farm Bill that would provide RD flexibility to offer technical assistance that matches customer need and support strategic engagement.

Percentage of Rural Development Commercial and Infrastructure Investments that Leverage Non-Federal Funding in Distressed (DC) and Socially Vulnerable (SV) Communities

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	70	75	% of Investments	Increase	
Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A			

This measure is being revised for FY 2024 to include "Distressed (DC) and Socially Vulnerable (SV) Communities".


[12] Measured at the zip code level.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

RD is placing an emphasis on staff to seek out funding partners who can make projects more affordable through the blending of RD funds with other state, local or philanthropic funding.

Objective 5.4: Promote Environmental Justice by Maximizing Sustainable and Green Economic Development in Rural and Tribal Communities

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
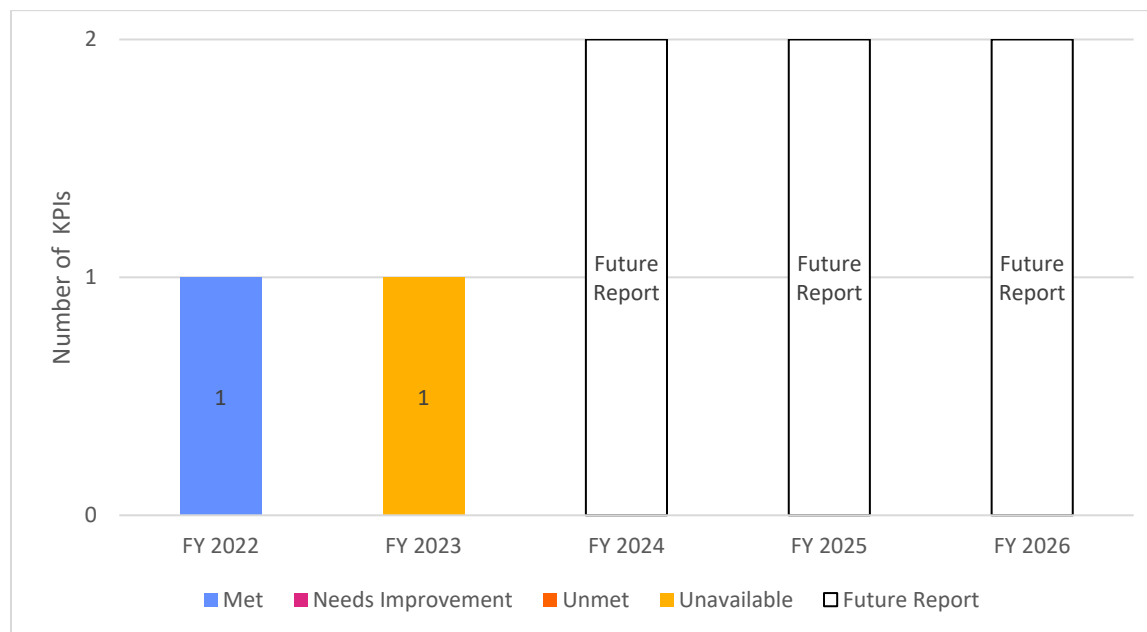
Accomplishments

- Built a climate adaptation tool that can assess the impact of weather-related disasters on RD's investments. The tool is expected to increase decision-makers' awareness of the relative sensitivity of rural communities to the projected economic impact of weather-related disasters.
- Worked with Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Housing and Urban Development to conduct an analysis of past, current, and projected weather risk to housing portfolios. Climate risks from hurricanes, tornados, and riverine and coastal flooding do not present a major financial risk to housing portfolios; however, the human costs of these disasters are substantial and often disproportionately affect the most vulnerable communities.
- Announced $37 million in investments to improve recreation infrastructure located on national forests and grasslands, which includes $19 million for recreation sites and $18 million for cabins and historic buildings. USDA is finalizing a list of approved projects. The projects are expected to be implemented within five years and will improve visitor satisfaction on recreation sites.

Challenges

- Outdoor recreation on National Forest System lands and sites have become more popular, with visitation to national forests and grasslands peaking at 168 million visits nationally in 2020. This increase has created challenges and opportunities in meeting new demands while ensuring the safety of visitors and the health of the environment.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Rural Development
- Forest Service

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Percentage of Total Investments Made into Energy Communities, as defined by the Inflation Reduction Act, through Rural Development Programs

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	19	20	% of Investments	Increase	
Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A			

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

These investments are further prioritized by IRA, which includes a provision that directs additional financial incentives for clean energy projects developed in "energy communities," which could provide economic benefits to regions that face challenges associated with the energy transition. The IRA defines energy communities as:

a) A "brownfield site" (as defined in certain subparagraphs of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA))
b) A "metropolitan statistical area" or "non-metropolitan statistical area" that has (or had at any time after 2009) 0.17% or greater direct employment or 25% or greater local tax revenues related to the extraction, processing, transport, or storage of coal, oil, or natural gas; and has an unemployment rate at or above the national average unemployment rate for the previous year
c) A census tract (or directly adjoining census tract) in which a coal mine has closed after 1999; or in which a coal-fired electric generating unit has been retired after 2009

FOREST SERVICE

Percentage of Customers Satisfied with Recreation Facilities, Services, and Settings in National Forests

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	95	95	95	95	98	98	95	% of Customers Satisfied	Maintain	
Actual	95	95	95	96	TBD[13]	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

This program provides recreational access to over 193 million acres on National Forest System lands containing more than 31,000 campgrounds, picnic areas, trailheads, and day-use areas; 220,000 miles of fishable streams; almost 160,000 miles of trail opportunities, 33,000 special use permits, and 122 ski areas. Over the past three years, outdoor recreation on National Forest System lands and sites have

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[13] Data collection for FY 2023 is still on-going and visitor satisfaction levels will be available in spring 2024.

become more popular, with visitation to national forests and grasslands peaking at 168 million visits nationally in 2020. Prior to the pandemic, national forest recreation visitor use ranged from around 145 to 150 million, with increases of around 1 to 2 percent a year. As noted above, visitation to national forests increased dramatically in the last half of FY 2020 and the first half of FY 2021, resulting in record high visitation. In FY 2022, customer satisfaction levels amongst recreation users remained high, continuing the trend over the past several years. Data collected indicated that, for activity choices, the trend toward increased participation in hiking and walking continued. Approximately 50 percent of national forest visitors participated in hiking and walking in FY 2022, with around 29 percent indicating it was their primary activity while visiting the national forest. Combined with increases in the total number of visits, this indicates increased pressure on the trails system. Over 3 million more visits with hiking/walking as the primary activity occurred in FY 2022 compared to just a year ago.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

Continued investment in addressing deferred maintenance needs and additional investments in areas to accommodate high visitor use will support high levels of visitor satisfaction. In addition, investments made in customer service through such platforms as Recreation.gov will make Forest Service facilities easier to find and facilitate trip planning to match recreation user and visitor needs to appropriate resources. High levels of visitor satisfaction will likely continue, thanks to the recent hiring of new staff to support recreational programs, investments in deferred maintenance, and continued public interest in outdoor recreation. The targets for FY 2023 and FY 2024 were erroneously set at 98 percent, which was likely never achievable at the current financial resource levels. Therefore, the FY 2025 target has been adjusted back to a historically achievable level.

Goal 6: Attract, Inspire, and Retain an Engaged and Motivated Workforce that's Proud to Represent USDA

USDA is committed to reaching new heights by recruiting, onboarding, supporting, and retaining a diverse and talented workforce and cultivating a workplace environment that is collaborative, service-oriented, mission-centered, healthy, inclusive, and welcoming. This includes leaders and staff who work together to build a culture that welcomes, respects, and supports everyone in reaching their highest potential by ensuring equal opportunity compliance, providing proactive civil rights, and championing USDA's zero-tolerance policy for unlawful discrimination and sexual harassment for all employees. USDA believes this focus on organizational culture will enable it to build the USDA back better as a premier organization and model employer that lives by its values.

As the landscape of talent continues to evolve, it is imperative that USDA seek to continuously find ways to attract talent that represents the diversity of America. The COVID-19 pandemic has also catapulted leaders to rethink and reimagine where and how the Department works. In the coming years, USDA will build on best practices for a hybrid work environment and continue to evaluate the future of work at USDA. As such, the Department is committed to being a learning organization that tolerates risk-taking, explores the untested and unknown, and nurtures innovative ideas at all levels of the organization. USDA will prioritize learning and training throughout the employee experience.

Objective 6.1: Foster a Culture of Civil Rights, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, Transparency, and Accountability

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
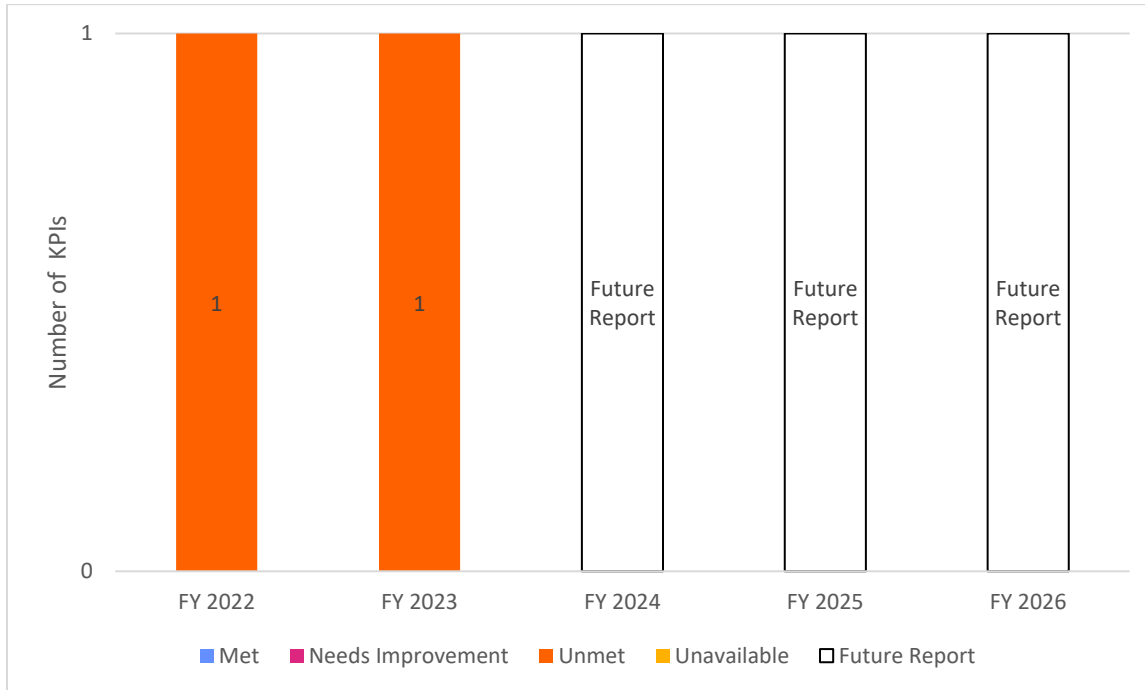
Accomplishments

- Appointed USDA's first permanent Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (CDIO) who is leading USDA in its ongoing efforts to improve diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) across the Department and will oversee the implementation of USDA's first-ever DEIA Strategic Plan.
- Stood up the new Office of the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer.

Challenges

- USDA needs to increase efforts to recruit and retain a diverse workforce.
- Identifying meaningful learning opportunities for leadership and employees to understand and advance DEIA in their respective organizations.
- Increasing persons with disabilities, military spouses, and National Service hires.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Office of Human Resource Management

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Period of Time (Days) Between Request Hiring Validation Date (SF-52 Approved Date) and New Hire Actual Start Date (Entry on Duty Date) (Percentage hired within 80 days)

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	60	60	60	60	% Hired Within 80 Days	Increase	
Actual	---	---	22	26[14]	26	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

USDA is a critical part of hiring surge initiatives to implement the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) with 1,777 positions targeted to be filled in FY 2023. USDA expects to reach that target and currently is achieving a time to hire metric of 73 days for BIL positions. Leading practices are being identified from this initiative and reviewed for use across the Department. Communities of practice have also been established for employment and for pay and leave practitioners, as well as for student program managers, to disseminate guidance and promote sharing of leading practices across the Department.

Through the agency hiring goals initiative, USDA mission areas and staff offices identified annual hiring goals. The input was used to create dashboards enabling them to track progress and make adjustments in real time to reflect changes in budgets and priorities. To assist managers and HR practitioners in the recruitment and hiring process, OHRM developed and shared guidance on hiring flexibilities, authorities to bring on student and early career talent, use of direct hire authorities, details and promotions, and pay and leave flexibilities. Another resource is the Hiring Managers Guide which takes managers through the employment life cycle including workforce planning and pre-recruitment, recruitment and outreach, interviewing, onboarding, performance management, and offboarding. This guide is part of a toolkit for front line managers and human resources staff to build their own recruitment and hiring strategies. OHRM and DA are leading on a department-wide campaign that will encourage non-HR staff to take an active role in recruitment and retention.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

USDA will continue to redefine its approach to outreach to increase awareness of USDA openings and career opportunities. In addition to institutions of higher education, affinity groups, and professional organizations and associations, USDA will reach out actively to occupational fields that are experiencing economic impacts such as layoffs, especially in rural America. USDA will also look for opportunities to increase awareness and use of non-competitive hiring authorities for people with disabilities, veterans, military spouses, former Peace Corps and AmeriCorps volunteers, post-secondary students, and college graduates. OHRM, mission areas and staff offices will partner to maximize opportunities for agencies to share hiring certificates, utilize certificates from cross-government hiring actions, and take part in recruitment events. USDA will continue to look for ways to improve the hiring process including identifying

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[14]The FY 2022 actual was changed from 33% to 26% due to an update in the dashboard calculations that contribute to the methodology of the time-to-hire KPI.

tasks which can be performed concurrently vice in a linear process and explore the use of artificial intelligence to automate aspects of the hiring process.

USDA will continue to explore ways that technology can streamline processes, increase applicant and employee experience, and leverage resources to maximize efficiency.

Objective 6.2: Establish a Customer-Centric, Inclusive, High-Performing Workforce that is Representative of America and the Communities We Serve

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
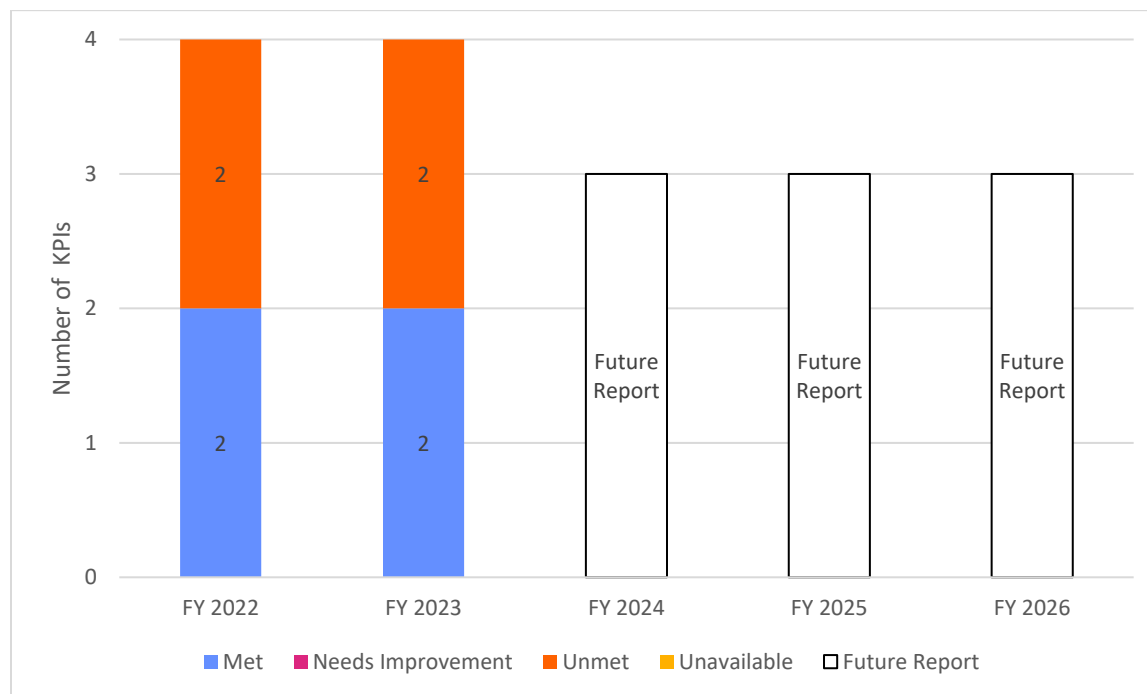
Strategic objective 6.2 has been designated as a focus area for improvement.

Accomplishments

- Implemented E.O. 14058 to improve Federal Customer Experience by publishing a simplified Direct Loan Application, reducing the average customer completion time by half.
- Launched the Loan Assistance Tool to assist customers in navigating the types of real estate and operating Direct Loans suitable to their needs and conducting an eligibility self-assessment.
- Implemented the Application Fast Track pilot to reduce Direct Loan application processing times by expediting the underwriting assessment of some borrowers in 166 local offices.
- Sent a quarterly survey to 1,250 Direct Loan applicants (total 5,000 applicants) to track customer satisfaction with front-line service and loan application processing; developed a dashboard to track survey metrics.

Challenges

- Improvements are needed in developing additional organizational health and performance measures.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Office of the Chief Scientist – Research, Education, and Economics
- Farm Service Agency
- Rural Development

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SCIENTIST – RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS

Number of Agriculture and Food Research Initiative-Supported Undergraduate, Graduate Students, and Post-Doctoral Fellows

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	1,423	2,495	3,831	4,222	4,392	N/A	Students	Increase	
Actual	---	1,167	4,462	5,026	7,811	N/A	N/A			

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025.
Targets for FY 2023 and FY 2024 -have been previously communicated as -5,659 and 5,951 respectively (in FY 2024 explanatory notes (1) https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/22-2024-NIFA.pdf

Progress Made in FY 2023

In FY 2023 the number of students reported by awardees supported by AFRI funds reached 7,811 demonstrating a 38% above target and 55% increase from actuals in FY 2022. This figure reflects undergraduate, graduate students, and post-doctorate fellows. These figures do not reflect degree attainment.

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Average Number of Days to Process Direct Loans

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	30	32	32	34	34	33	33	Days	Decrease	
Actual	32	34	36	31	31	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

The decline in FY 2022-FY 2023 is an improvement over recent years but this is not attributable to an increase in productivity. Instead, it reflects a:
- Cyclical reduction in loan application demand.
- Decline in demand for loan servicing, driven by moratoriums on accelerations and foreclosures and IRA Section 22006 payments resolving most delinquencies.

Productivity gains are expected when the pilot for Application Fast Track pilot (i.e., streamlining the underwriting review for some direct loan customers) conducted in July-December 2023 expands from 166 pilot sites to nationwide use in January 2024. Additional business process and automation improvements are also in development or planned for rollout in 2024.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025
Farm Loans is conducting business process improvement assessments throughout the loan lifecycle for both direct and guaranteed loan programs. The tools that it has already launched (i.e., educational Loan

Assistance Tool, Online Direct Loan Application) are being developed using a modular approach so that each can expanded in 2024-2025 to include other parts of the loan lifecycle. Two examples:

- The Loan Assistance Tool currently provides a step-by-step guide for Direct Loans but is being expanded to do the same for Guaranteed Loans that will be used by lenders and customers.
- The Online Direct Loan Application will be expanded to accept Direct Loan Servicing Applications (e.g., requests to restructure a loan, defer a loan payment) and lenders' guarantee applications under the Guaranteed Loan Program.

In addition to the two customer-facing examples listed above to enhance the customer experience of external users, improvements to back-office operations are a high priority for the morale, efficiency and effectiveness, and hiring and retention of employees. Streamlining and automating business processes will significantly reduce employees' time spent on paper-based manual processes so their time is spent on value-added activities such as customer service. Enhancing internal controls and data analytics capabilities will be incorporated at the same time. The most prominent of these efforts is to replace the Program Loan Accounting System's accounting and subsidiary general ledger features, which may be challenging due to the other priorities of the financial subject matter experts.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Percentage of OneRD Customers Whose Application Processing Time Does Not Exceed 30 Days[15]

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	45	55	65	55	% Applications Processed in < 30 Days	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	38	35	N/A	N/A			

Percentage of OneRD Program Customer (Lender) Satisfaction Survey Ratings of 4 or Above

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	60	65	70	65	% Survey Satisf-action	Increase	
Actual	---	---	---	47	46	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

America's rural leaders in building prosperity. Through a series of regulatory reforms, USDA eliminated duplicative processes and launched a single platform for the Agency's four key loan guarantee programs. These programs are:

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[15] Receipt to Conditional Commitment.

- Water and Waste Disposal Guaranteed Loan Program
- Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program,
- Business and Industry Loan Guarantee Program,
- Rural Energy for America Guaranteed Loan Program.

Customer input has been a core component of the development of the rules, processes, and procedures under OneRD. Customer engagement continues on a regular basis with regularly scheduled Lender Office Hours and quarterly Lender Feedback Forums. While RD did not meet its key performance targets for OneRD loan processing or Lender satisfaction, staff remain committed to the streamlined delivery of the commercial guarantees despite the barriers experienced in demand for funds, lack of staffing and IT systems to support the programs.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

RD's progress in improving both processing and customer satisfaction are impeded by both IT and staffing constraints. OneRD has not received funding for an application in-take system for lenders. RD lacks the staff to meet customer expectations. One issue raised by customers is the time it takes for RD to complete environmental reviews.

Objective 6.3: Promote USDA Operational Excellence Through Better Use of Technology and Shared Solutions

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan
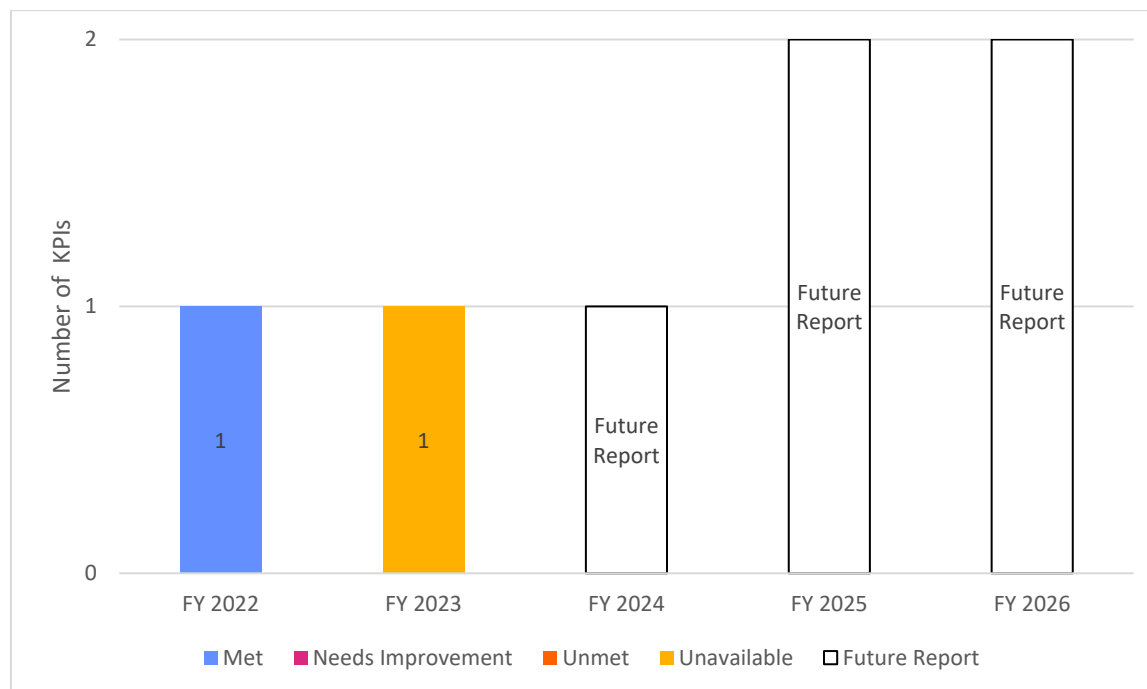
Strategic objective 6.3 has been designated as a focus area for improvement.

Accomplishments

- Made progress in strengthening USDA's data program and use of dashboards.
- The CDO is championing the development of a new 3-year USDA Data Strategy for FY 2024-FY 2026, which was developed with all Mission Area involvement.

Challenges

- USDA data leadership is key to address opportunities and challenges on:
  - Leveraging governance to manage data as a strategic asset
  - Recruitment and retention of the data workforce
  - Cost-effective data and analytics modernization
  - Leveraging data for internal and external stakeholder decision making
  - Ethical and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Office of Property and Environmental Management
- Office of the Chief Scientist — Research, Education, and Economics

OFFICE OF PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Reduction in the Department's Overall Real Property Footprint through Effective Disposal and Consolidation Efforts

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	31.5	31.2	31.1	31.0	30.8	30.0	29.6	Million Square Feet	Decrease	
Actual	31.3	31.2	31.1	31.0	TBD[16]	N/A	N/A			

Progress Made in FY 2023

In FY 2023, USDA reduced its footprint by over 784,505 SF, resulting in $15.7 million in cost avoidance annually. To begin the initiative, DA first identified 10 top priority cities where USDA has a large footprint. Importantly, this first focus was on office buildings with "backroom" type functions rather than customer-facing or program operational facilities. Collectively these ten priority cities had nearly 3.6 million SF of leased space. UDSA targeted a 744,000 SF reduction, or just over 20 percent.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

USDA plans to continue to right-size its real property portfolio in alignment with government-wide return to the physical workplace needs and telework/remote work policy. USDA's real property asset management efforts and related goals are significantly influenced by its desire to achieve an efficient real property portfolio. USDA balances many priorities in its real property management process. The Department seeks to maintain an efficient portfolio in support of USDA's strategic goals and its desire to have a modern work environment. USDA's vision for the workplace is one that enables effective mission achievement and quality employee experience that promotes flexibility, sustainability, and safety. The overall goal of space management and utilization is to create a modern workplace, retain and recruit workers, cut costs, and deliver programs and services.

Pre-pandemic and current occupancy data affirm underutilization of assets across the portfolio. USDA's priority is to reduce rental payments to facilitate investments in modernization. USDA is working closely with the General Service Administration (GSA) to prioritize space optimization in major metropolitan areas where USDA has a large footprint of predominantly office space.

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[16] Square footage reductions are realized 3-5 years upon lease termination/release. Federal Real Property Profile data for FY 2023 will be available Mid-February 2024.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SCIENTIST – RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS

Error Free Reporting (NASS)

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	Units	Preferred Direction	Trend Data
Target	---	---	---	---	---	---	>95	% reports	Retain	
Actual	---	---	---	---	---	---	N/A			

New KPI Description

This KPI is being introduced in FY 2025. The KPI measures the percentage of reports released without errors. This measure represents the accessibility, relevance, coherence, comparability, and usefulness of NASS official reports and products and services as measured by NASS issuing errata for Agricultural Statistical Board reports.

NASS data are ingredients for a host of products, services, decisions, and outcomes. Delivering accurate data makes it possible for: farmers and ranchers to use NASS data to make better business decisions or use ag-based products and services that rely on such data; allows researchers to answer challenging questions on crop management, chemical pesticides, land usage, and veterinary science; other USDA agencies to make solid market assessments; and for policymakers to use the facts and statistics provided in NASS reports to make well-informed policy decisions and create budgets that will serve and benefit their agriculture constituents. This KPI is one way NASS demonstrates a commitment to its mission to deliver timely, accurate, useful statistics in service to US agriculture.

Plans for Progress in FY 2025

NASS will continue to make use of a variety of review and validation methods to ensure the reports produced are accurate. In addition to utilizing database queries and various software applications to validate and check the accuracy of data values in a report, NASS employs a multilevel review process from data collection to publication to actively monitor and review data for completeness and accuracy. NASS is committed to producing and disseminating complete and accurate information about agriculture.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AMS	Agricultural Marketing Service
APG	Agency Priority Goal
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
ARP	American Rescue Plan
ARS	Agricultural Research Service
ASF	African Swine Fever
BIL	Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
CEP	Community Eligibility Provision
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CJEST	Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool
CNP	Child Nutrition Program
CNPP	Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
CSP	Conservation Stewardship Program
CTA	Conservation Technical Assistance
DEIA	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
DGA	Dietary Guidelines for Americans
EBT	Electronic Benefits Transfer
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
ERS	Economic Research Service
FAS	Foreign Agricultural Service
FDPIR	Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
FS	Forest Service
FLP	Farm Loan Program
FSA	Farm Service Agency
FSIS	Food Safety and Inspection Service
FY	Fiscal Year
GPRAMA	GPRA Modernization Act of 2010
HPAI	Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
IP	Intellectual Property
IRA	Inflation Reduction Act
ITO	Indian Tribal Organization
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NASS	National Agricultural Statistics Service
NIFA	National Institute of Food and Agriculture
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
OBPA	Office of Budget and Program Analysis
OCE	Office of Chief Economist
OCS	Office of Chief Scientist
OCX	Office of Customer Experience
RECP	Rural Energy Community Partnerships
RMA	Risk Management Agency
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SAS	Sustainable Agricultural Systems
TFP	Thrifty Food Plan

TRQ   Tariff Rate Quota
USDA   U.S. Department of Agriculture
USTR   U.S. Trade Representative
WIC   Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children