

March 2, 2021



TO: All USDA Employees

FROM: Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture

SUBJECT: Ethical Conduct: Our Commitment to Restoring and Maintaining the Public's Trust in Government

As employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the actions we take and the decisions we make touch every American, every day. As I begin my service again as your Secretary, I want to emphasize my personal commitment to maintaining a culture that promotes the highest ethical standards. In everything we do as USDA employees, one factor must and will remain constant: USDA's firm commitment to maintaining the highest degree of integrity and ethical behavior.

In our work serving the American people, we must adhere to specific, time-tested ethics laws, regulations, and principles that govern our participation in official matters where those matters intersect with our personal interests. Shortly after becoming Secretary, I signed President Biden's Ethics Pledge and committed myself to decision-making based on the merits and exclusively in the public interest.

To assist employees in understanding their ethical obligations, USDA has a centralized Office of Ethics that provides ethics advice and training to all USDA employees and promotes employee compliance with Federal conflicts of interest laws and regulations. To further assist employees, the Office of Ethics created the USDA Ethics App, an interactive ethics resource that employees can freely download from any smartphone's app store by searching "USDA Ethics."

Additionally, the Office of Ethics and the Office of Communications produced a series of short videos that are available on demand on USDA's YouTube page. You can learn more by clicking on the link to the YouTube video: [How the USDA Office of Ethics Serves You](#). Employees throughout the Department can also contact the Office of Ethics Advisors who support your Mission Area or Office by clicking on this link, [Find My Ethics Advisor](#), or by visiting the USDA Office of Ethics website at www.ethics.usda.gov.

As USDA employees, you represent an America committed to working for the common good and treating everyone with dignity and respect. Together, we will promote an ethical culture that restores the faith and trust of the American people in public service. I am confident you will do your part and I pledge to do mine as your Secretary.