

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION	Number: DR 1043-055
SUBJECT: Permanent Establishment of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Science Council	DATE: November 19, 2015
	OPI: Office of the Chief Scientist

1. PURPOSE

This Departmental Regulation (DR) permanently authorizes the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Science Council to facilitate and support cross-department collaboration among all USDA agencies on issues pertaining to science and science policy.

The DR sets forth the objectives, policies, procedures, and responsibilities of the USDA Science Council as defined below.

2. BACKGROUND

On June 18, 2008, the 110th Congress enacted Public Law 110-246 titled the “Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.” Part II, Sec. 7511 created the position of Chief Scientist and provided that the Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics (REE) concurrently hold the title of Chief Scientist for the Department and be responsible for coordination of research, education, and extension activities of the USDA.

The USDA Science Council was reactivated by sub-cabinet memorandum on July 2, 2010, and its Charter signed on September 18, 2012.

The USDA Science Council advises the Secretary and Chief Scientist on the priorities for USDA’s science agenda, reflecting the high priority issues impacting all aspects of United States food, agriculture, natural resources, energy, and communities. Scientific discovery, technological breakthroughs, and innovation remain indispensable to the USDA mission for ensuring that science informs the policies and programmatic decisions of the Department.

3. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS/CANCELLATION

This DR replaces the existing Council Charter dated September 18, 2012 and signed by Under Secretary and Chief Scientist, Catherine Woteki.

4. POLICY

The USDA Science Council, herein referred to as the “Council,” shall:

- a. Support the Chief Scientist in promoting inter-agency cooperation and collaboration on scientific and technologic research to leverage the Department’s resources. This includes:
 - (1) Encouraging agencies to develop unified approaches to data collection;
 - (2) Creating incentives for agencies to more readily exchange information at the beginning, middle, and end stages of their scientific and technical research in a way that invites input, promotes collaboration, and avoids duplication of efforts.
- b. Recommend to the Chief Scientist areas for scientific research that will support the priorities of the Department and its leadership.
- c. Disseminate and promote the research, education, and extension activities of USDA to their respective agencies to ensure that the best science and best practices are available for decision making.
- d. Provide feedback to the research agencies of USDA regarding the effectiveness of research programs in meeting the missions of the Department. This includes encouraging them to consider the needs of their customers (internal and external) and developing the data, methodologies, and tools to measure the outcomes of USDA work.
- e. Provide advice to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief Scientist of USDA on issues that require or involve scientific research within the Department.
- f. Enhance the visibility of USDA as a premier Science agency.
- g. Conduct other science related duties as requested by the Secretary, the Chief Scientist, or as decided by the Council.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Scientist shall serve as the Chair of the Council.

The Director of the Office of the Chief Scientist, shall be responsible for the following:

- a. Providing administrative support for the USDA Science Council. In this capacity, the Director will appoint an Executive Secretary, whose duties will include, but not be limited to:
 - (1) Preparing an agenda for each Council meeting;
 - (2) Keeping records of the activities, decisions, projects and initiatives of the council; and

- (3) Compiling and distributing meeting notifications, agendas, and notes of the meetings to all members.

The Council shall be composed of members from each of the following:

- a. The seven USDA mission areas, including:
 - (1) Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services;
 - (2) Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services;
 - (3) Food Safety;
 - (4) Marketing and Regulatory Programs;
 - (5) Natural Resources and the Environment;
 - (6) Research, Education, and Economics; and
 - (7) Rural Development;
- b. The four USDA staff offices, including:
 - (1) Office of Budget and Program Analysis;
 - (2) Departmental Management;
 - (3) Office of the Chief Economist; and
 - (4) Office of General Counsel;
- c. The principal research and statistical agencies, including:
 - (1) Agricultural Research Service;
 - (2) Economic Research Service;
 - (3) National Agricultural Statistics Service;
 - (4) National Institute of Food and Agriculture;
 - (5) Forest Service; and
 - (6) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Membership shall be comprised of the Under Secretary or his or her delegate for each mission area and a delegate from each member agency and staff office.

Members can be changed or rotated at the discretion of the leadership of the respective mission area, member agency, or staff office.

6. PROTOCOL

The Council will meet a minimum of four (4) times per year.

Each member can invite two non-members to accompany the member to Council meetings. If a member cannot attend a scheduled meeting, a replacement, who is positioned to make decisions on behalf of the member, shall be sent.

The Council will develop recommendations to be presented to the Secretary and the Chief Scientist on high priority science issues.

This DR shall be evaluated by the Council every two years and updated as members deem appropriate.

Decision-Making Protocol

- a. The Chair will lead the meetings, but will not participate in forming recommendations;
- b. Recommendations of the Council will be determined by consensus, so long as 70 percent of the members are in attendance. If a member is absent, a designated representative from the same member organization may participate.
- c. Each member organization will have one vote/opinion.

The Council may create subcommittees as necessary to further effect the policy and objectives of the Council.

- d. To establish a new subcommittee, a charter outlining the following criteria shall be drafted and submitted to the Science Council for consideration.
 - (1) Purpose
 - (2) Objectives
 - (3) Sponsorship
 - (4) Membership
 - (5) Operating procedures
 - (6) Decision-making protocol
 - (7) Relationship to the Science Council and Other Relevant Bodies
- e. Existing subcommittees shall continue operation as is, unless changes to their charters are decided upon by the Science Council. Existing subcommittees include:
 - (1) Topics in International Agricultural Science, Technology, and Innovation;
 - (2) Education Coordinating Council;
 - (3) Scientific Data Management;
 - (4) Statistics; and
 - (5) Biosecurity and Biosafety Policy.

7. EFFECTIVE DATE

The provisions of this DR are effective immediately.

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