

Opportunities for Black Farmers in USDA

Introduction

- Secretary Vilsack's vision for USDA is one of a "People's Department". Every day our programs touch every person. Secretary Vilsack has delivered a message loud and clear to all employees that we have a responsibility to make sure that USDA programs serve all of the people who need them.
- Our activities can be summed up in three ways: transforming the culture of USDA; improving access; and accountability

Transforming USDA

- Departmental Administration has been charged with leading the effort to transform the culture of USDA.
- Our goal is to transform USDA into a model organization that is run by the guiding principles President Obama uses to run the federal government – transparency, participation, and collaboration.
- USDA Cultural Transformation is the process of creating an environment of inclusion, exceptional performance and transformational leadership.
- Core Values - in cultural transformation:
 - Leadership - Influencing exceptional performance
 - Performance – maximizing human potential;
 - Inclusion – equity of opportunity
- Through a collaborative process, we will examine the work environment, customer service, training, leadership and other issues that create barriers to operational and service excellence.
- Cultural transformation will move us from the current state to our future – a USDA that has high performing employees who are actively engaged and productively serving our customers.

Improving access

- We are also focused on breaking down barriers and improving access
- Office of Advocacy and Outreach (OAO) was established in the new Farm bill that was passed in June 2008.
- Assistant Secretary Reed was assigned the responsibility for establishing a plan to set up the office within 60 days – an August 1, 2009 deadline by Secretary Vilsack

- We have met that challenge.
- Office of Advocacy and Outreach will be window to the programs and services of USDA for underserved customers like black farmers and also will serve as an advocate
- Established in the 2008 farm bill to
 - Improve access to programs of the USDA
 - Improve the viability and profitability of small farms and ranches; beginning farmers and ranchers and socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers

- **Stakeholder process to establish office:**

2 collaborative work sessions: first with external and internal USDA stakeholders; second with internal USDA stakeholders. In addition, USDA mission areas were consulted.

- **Four key program areas:**

Small and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers; Farmworker Coordination; Socially Disadvantaged Farmers; Higher Education Institutions Program;

- **Two functional areas:**

Community Engagement; Accountability

Accountability

- USDA must be accountable to the people it serves and we are committed to making this happen.
- We are focused on ensuring that services get to all people who request them. Office of Advocacy and Outreach will not only connect black farmers to the department but it will gather data on outcomes. We will ensure that programs are delivered fairly and that the needs of small and minority farmers are considered in policy making.
- Accountability also involves making sure everyone has opportunities to benefit from USDA programs. USDA is revitalizing rural communities by expanding economic opportunities for farmers and ranchers and investing in infrastructure that will stimulate rural economies, and create jobs.
- In DA we have the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization. This office is planning to implement a pilot program to enhance the ability of small rural farmer cooperatives to conduct at least \$200 million in food

sales to the federal government. This will begin to shift USDA's buying power from the traditional focus of big corporations to small farms.