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Department of
Agriculture

Farm and Foreign
Agricultural
Service

Farm Service
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TO: All FSA Employees

FROM: Teresa C. Lasseter
Administrator

Teresa C. Lasseter

JUN 10 2008

SUBJECT: Farm Service Agency (FSA) Organizational Assessment Study
Final Report from KnowledgeBank, Inc.

In November 2007, I shared with you that FSA hired KnowledgeBank, Inc. (KB) to conduct an independent organizational assessment of key areas at the National Headquarters and at the State offices. This Study has now been completed, and I am pleased to announce the release of the Final Report of the FSA Organizational Assessment. Our primary goal for engaging this Study was to gain an outside perspective on the unique challenges we face in FSA, and to obtain some well-grounded, yet "outside-the-box" thinking regarding various ways we can address those challenges in such a way that we can achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in delivering our mission.

There are a total of 52 findings and recommendations in the Final Report, which is posted at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=about&subject=landing&topic=sao>. You will need to click on the box labeled "FSA Independent Organizational Assessment Study" located on the right side of the screen. A listing of the documents and a brief description of the contents of the Report are shown on the attachment. In addition, we will be developing a dedicated portion of the FSA website that will be used to keep you informed of our next steps as we proceed with addressing the Study's findings and recommendations.

The scope of the Study focused primarily on the headquarters organizations, so we could identify and address core structural issues in headquarters, and other issues impacting optimal guidance and direction to our State and County offices. In the course of the Study, KB did ten onsite visits with State offices, providing some options for how FSA could potentially restructure some of our program delivery processes. There is still much to be studied and considered before we can begin to make any significant changes in the field. The Study also included an extensive review of the Strategic Management of Human Capital, detailing our current workforce profile, addressing critical skills, and laying out strategies for meeting our workforce requirements.

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As you review the Report, you will find a wide variety of recommendations and ideas. KB presents many options that they noted will require additional study and a great deal of time and effort on our part before we settle on the best course of action. We will be choosing our priorities very carefully, and we will be implementing changes from a strategic viewpoint. We will focus first on those areas in which we are in agreement with both the findings and recommendations, for which we have the necessary resources at hand, and where we will see the most immediate return on our investment of those resources. Other recommendations, especially those that will require additional study, will be prioritized within a more long term context.

Especially as we move into implementation of the new Farm Bill, we recognize that attempting any shifts in the way we do business may seem particularly daunting. Yet there will never be an ideal time that would allow us to bring everything to a halt and collectively change direction. We will therefore make changes as wisely and strategically as possible. We look forward to your input on the various pieces as we begin to address them.

To assess the review findings and recommendations, I have established an Executive Steering Committee (ESC), comprised of key career senior leaders. Their role is to provide advice regarding the short and long term recommendations, which will produce the best value to the organization in terms of greater efficiencies, better customer service, lower program costs, and better internal controls. Together, we are deeply committed to ensuring FSA is on the right path.

I can assure you that the ESC and I are not making decisions hastily, nor are we allowing time to slip away. We know you will have many questions, and we are committed to being inclusive and transparent as we go through this process. As we move forward in these and other areas, we will provide regular updates so that you will be in the loop regarding our priorities and timelines.

This study provides a foundation piece for FSA's journey to modernize services and product delivery and a baseline to frame the FSA of the future. Hopefully, you will recognize and welcome the changes the future holds. I thank you in advance for your support as we proactively begin to translate the findings and recommendations outlined in the FSA Organizational Assessment Study into action.

Attachment

**FSA Organizational Assessment Study
Final Report from KnowledgeBank, Inc.**

- **Executive Summary**

Contains a detailed summary of the Study process, as well as the findings and recommendations

- **Human Capital Workforce Profile**

Includes a variety of demographic and trend data, such as staffing level trends, separation trends, and retirement trends and projections

- **Strategic Human Capital Report**

Describes the current composition of FSA's workforce, and will assist us in workforce planning initiatives

- **Summary of Cross Cutting Issues**

Details issues which cross functions and geographic locations

- **Benchmarking Report of Other Federal Agencies**

Contains information regarding other Federal agencies that have either undergone a recent transformation or are in the process of significant reform; so that FSA may learn from their experiences.