



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Farm and Foreign
Agricultural
Services

Foreign
Agricultural
Service

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Washington, DC
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TO: FAS Employees

FROM: Michael W. Yost
Administrator

JUL 26 2007

SUBJECT: Interim Telework Policy

The respective collective bargaining agreements between the Foreign Agricultural Service and the American Foreign Service Association and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (Local 3976), provide for the continued existence of the Joint Telework Working Group to monitor progress, identify issues, and make necessary adjustments through collective bargaining procedures when needed. On March 7, 2007, the Joint Telework Working Group held its initial meeting to discuss management's detailed proposal for a more comprehensive and consistent telework program.

After several meetings and subsequent discussions, management and the unions agreed to the following interim policy governing the telework program.

- (1) Provided all suitability and eligibility requirements are met, supervisors have the discretion to approve telework agreements with a regular work schedule of up to 2 days per week at an alternative worksite. The 2-days per week maximum applies to any new telework agreement or any existing telework agreement with less than 2 days per week. New approved medical telework agreements are not subject to the 2-days per week limitation.

Any previously approved telework agreement (an agreement approved prior to the date of this memorandum) with more than 2 days per week offsite including regular, long-term offsite, and medical telework agreements, are not subject to the 2-days per week limitation.

- (2) A workplan is required for the first 90 days of any new telework agreement (this does not apply to the annual renewal of telework agreements). Supervisors have the discretion to require a workplan to address performance or productivity issues of an employee on an existing telework agreement.
- (3) Supervisors' participation in the telework program will continue on an ad hoc (intermittent) basis.

This policy will remain in effect through the end of the 2007 fiscal year. No later than 14 workdays prior to the end of the fiscal year, management will notify the unions of its intention to: (1) extend these provisions for a specified period of time, but not to exceed the end of the calendar year; or (2) engage in collective bargaining over these matters.

Reminder: Teleworkers should always have work that can be performed "off-line" should there be connectivity issues with the FAS network. It is a good telework practice to always have reading or writing assignments in hard copy or available on a flashdrive to ensure productivity should technical issues occur. If the majority of a teleworker's portable work relies upon connectivity, the teleworker and his/her supervisor should assess whether the telework day should be cancelled or rescheduled.