



United States Department of Agriculture
Research, Education, and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

JAN 18 2008

SUBJECT: 2008 Diversity/Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement

TO: All Employees

FROM: Edward B. Knipling
Administrator

As the Administrator of one of the world's premiere scientific organizations, I ask that you join me to create and maintain an environment that reflects the diversity of today's society, and ensure a congenial workplace free of discrimination, harassment (sexual and non-sexual), and retaliation. Through our words and actions, we should all work to guarantee that no Federal laws are broken prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital or familial status, political beliefs, parental status, protected genetic information, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. While diversity encompasses many aspects of our lives, it positively impacts the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), as well as our domestic and international partners and stakeholders (including university and industry partners), which enhances our ability to take full advantage of multicultural viewpoints, ideas, and backgrounds.

Our performance plans hold us accountable to ensure that everyone is treated equitably and fairly, in accordance with anti-discrimination laws and regulations. Conduct or behavior that indicates discrimination, harassment (sexual or non-sexual), or retaliation will not be tolerated, and will lead to appropriate disciplinary or other adverse action. Managers and supervisors are held accountable for employment decisions regarding hiring, promoting, training, and rewarding, as well as providing leadership, educating, and updating employees on diversity and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) issues in the workplace, and ensuring that lines of communication are open at all levels. All employees will continue to receive training to ensure they fully understand their role in helping to create and maintain a work environment that displays diversity, and is free from discrimination.



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An Equal Opportunity Employer

Each employee should be proactive in helping to prevent and eliminate workplace barriers that may hinder the goal of a diverse workplace, by participating in mentoring/career development programs, attending and/or participating in special emphasis programs, serving on EEO/Diversity Committees, and participating in other innovative and empowering activities, both at work and in your community. Employees should feel comfortable in stating their opinions and ideas, and are encouraged to seek assistance, and discuss their EEO issues and concerns with their supervisors and managers. ARS encourages the utilization of the Cooperative Resolution Program that offers various techniques for alternative dispute resolution, i.e., mediation, facilitation and team building, to settle disputes at the earliest stage of conflict, to resolve issues and concerns as quickly as possible.

Teamwork is vital! I trust that all ARS employees will join me in committing to this policy. I look forward to fulfilling the Agency's vision together.