

Appendix A

Program Evaluations

USDA used several tools in developing this Strategic Plan. The types of tools included:

- Program Evaluations;
- Advisory Committees;
- Inspector General (OIG), General Accounting Office (GAO), and Other External Reviews; and
- Internal Management Studies and Performance Measurement Systems.

The following table highlights some of these tools as they relate to USDA's strategic goals and management initiatives.

Program Evaluations Used to Develop the Strategic Plan				
Goal	Evaluations / Analyses	Brief Description	What Was The Effect	Date
Goals 1 and 2 Economic Opportunities	FAS staff review, agency-wide performance reporting and verification.	Staff interview each FAS division with GPRA reporting responsibilities, evaluate verification procedures and report to the Administrator.	Enabled FAS to validate the information provided, identify discrepancies, and develop more meaningful performance measures.	Annually
	OIG and GAO audits and reviews	Review the export credit guarantee programs as part of their annual CCC financial audit. Provide procedural and security evaluations.	FAS staff discuss audit and program procedures for potential changes to be more effective and cost efficient.	Annually
	PART Review of USDA Foreign Food Aid Activities	A PART review was conducted as part of the 2005 budget process and was updated during the 2006 process.	Based on the PART findings, a new long-term performance measure was developed, the Food Aid Effectiveness Ratio.	Annually
Goal 3 Rural Opportunities	OIG and GAO audits and reviews	RD's financial statement is audited annually and its programs are audited on a variable schedule.	RD staff discuss findings with OIG and GAO and make improvements to operations to address recommendations.	Annually
	PART Assessments	All of RD's programs are being evaluated through the PART process and many programs are rePARTed.	Performance Indicators are changed and program goals modified as a result of the evaluation through the PART process.	Variable
	Business Program Assessment Reviews (BPAR)	Business Programs administered by Rural Development in the States are evaluated through the BPAR process on a rotating basis.	Program operation is modified to address findings from the BPAR process.	Annually Rotating States
	Management Control Reviews (MCRs)	State and national office operations are evaluated on a rotating basis for adherence to regulations and efficiency of operation.	State and national office operations are modified to address deficiencies found through the MCR process.	Annually Rotating States

Program Evaluations Used to Develop the Strategic Plan				
Goal	Evaluations/ Analyses	Brief Description	What Was The Effect	Date
Goal 4 Protection and Safety of Food Supply	OIG and GAO audits and reviews	FSIS's financial statement is audited annually and its programs are audited on a variable schedule.	FSIS staff discuss findings with OIG and GAO and make improvements to address recommendations.	Annually
	Food Safety Assessments of Industry Food Safety Systems	Review the vulnerabilities and corrective actions.	Industry food safety systems are modified to address deficiencies in food safety systems.	Ongoing
	Animal Health Safeguarding Review	Review by the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture.	Recommendations set a strategic roadmap for the agency around animal health issues.	Ongoing
Goal 5 Nutrition and Health	OIG and GAO audits and reviews	Financial statement and programs audited annually and on a variable schedule, respectively.	Staff made improvements to address recommendations.	Annually
	Household Food Security in the U.S.	A statistical report on the prevalence of food security, food insecurity and hunger in U.S. households (based on the September 2000 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement).	Used to define the outcome measures, and set targets, for the prevalence of hunger among children and low-income people in the U.S.	Annually
	Food Assistance Research Conferences	Customers, subject-matter experts and academics identify information needs and issues for next year's competitive grants and cooperative agreements.	Identified major research themes for the year's competitive grants process.	Annually
Goal 6 Natural Resources	OIG and GAO audits and reviews	Financial statement and programs audited annually and on a variable schedule, respectively.	Staff made improvements to address recommendations.	Annually
	Assessments of U.S. natural resources under RPA (Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act)	Track indicators used by the RPA Assessment.	Identified policy issues for priority attention.	Every five years
All Goals	Review of the Relevance and Adequacy of the Research, Education and Economics (REE) agencies' budget	As required by law, annually the National Research, Education, Extension, and Economics Advisory Board reviews the relevance, priority and adequacy of REE funding. The Board then sends the results to the Secretary in a letter.	Influenced budget decisions.	Annually

Program Evaluations Used to Develop the Strategic Plan				
Goal	Evaluations / Analyses	Brief Description	What Was The Effect	Date
All Goals (cont.)	OMB Program Performance Assessment using the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART)	All USDA Programs.	Structured OMB Review as part of the budget process to help determine program effectiveness.	Annually for various programs
	OIG audits	Audit USDA financial systems, 5 stand-alone agency financial statements and the USDA Consolidated Financial Statements.	Improved internal controls and financial system, and received an unqualified opinion.	Annually

USDA will undertake many new evaluations over the next five years. The following table highlights some of the longer-term studies as they relate to USDA’s strategic goals and management initiatives.

Future Program Evaluations and Other Analyses				
Goal	Evaluations / Analyses	General Scope	Methodology	Timetable
Goal 2 Economic Opportunities	Analysis of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation’s (FCIC) product portfolio	Comprehensive review of the risk management products offered by FCIC.	Actuarial and underwriting experts will review current and proposed crop insurance products, and opportunities for new products to assist the FCIC Board in developing a product strategy.	Ongoing
	Review of FCIC policies, plans of insurance and related materials	Comprehensive quality review of FCIC’s policies plans of insurance and related materials.	Actuarial and underwriting experts will review FCIC legislation, regulation and program materials to recommend any potential ways to improve the overall quality of the program.	Ongoing
Goal 3 Rural Opportunities	Implement recommendations of past evaluations	Comprehensive review.	RD conducts ongoing internal reviews, such as Business Program Assessment Reviews and Management Control Reviews, and evaluates Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and Government Accountability Office audits and reviews of rural development programs. The annual financial statement is audited by OIG. RD is also implementing the Strategic Economic Benefit Analysis System to measure the impact of USDA programs on improving the rural economy.	Ongoing

Future Program Evaluations and Other Analyses				
Goal	Evaluations/ Analyses	General Scope	Methodology	Timetable
Goal 4 Protection and Safety of Food Supply	Coordinate with agencies outside USDA for emergency preparedness and rapid response	Describes current interagency activities that constitute homeland security.	Memorandums of Understanding will be developed among all appropriate USDA agencies and with independent agencies or agencies in other executive departments.	September 2006
Goal 5 Nutrition and Health	Household Food Security in the United States	National estimates of the prevalence of food security, food insecurity and hunger in the U.S. (Used as a broad outcome measure).	A statistical report based on analysis of the Food Security Supplement to the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.	Annual; methodology currently under review
	School Nutrition Dietary Assessment	National evaluations of the food and nutrient content of school meals, and their impact on children's diets.	Analysis of nationally-representative data collected from schools and students.	Every five years
	Assessing Program Impacts on Hunger and Diet Quality	Development of research options to improve measurement of nutrition assistance program effectiveness in reducing hunger and improving nutrition.	Varies, but includes comparison of food consumption patterns of low-income Americans to accepted standards for healthy eating.	Design options to be completed in 2006; analysis of existing date in 2007
	Erroneous Payment Measures	Estimates of erroneous payments from major Federal nutrition assistance program.	Varies by program; generally involves analysis of program operations data supplemented by special data collections on recipient/program delivery partner characteristics.	Every 5-10 years (varies by program), supplemented by interim indicator measures or erroneous payment risks
Goal 6 Natural Resources	Evaluation of Wetlands Reserve Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Farmland Protection Program, and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	Determine effectiveness in meeting the intent of Congress and effectiveness and efficiency of management of the programs.	Oversight and Evaluation Quick Response Review.	Ongoing
	Reform and Assessment of Conservation Programs, called for by the 2002 FSRIA	Coordinate land retirement and agricultural working lands conservation programs to eliminate redundancy, streamline delivery, and improve services to agricultural producers.		Report to be delivered to Congress by December 2005

Future Program Evaluations and Other Analyses				
Goal	Evaluations/ Analyses	General Scope	Methodology	Timetable
Goal 6 Natural Resources (cont.)	Evaluation of the Conservation Technical Assistance Program	Perform the evaluations nationally.	Program Evaluation.	Ongoing
	National Conservation Appraisal and Program required by the Resources Conservation Act of 1977	Appraise the status, condition and trend of soil, water and related resources on non-Federal land. Analyze costs and benefits of alternatives for USDA conservation programs.	Analysis of resources databases; development of modeling tools as needed; projections of effects on the economy and the environment of alternative scenarios.	Appraisal due December 2005, and program due December 2007 to Congress
	Evaluation of the Resources Conservation and Development Program, called for by the 2002 FSRIA	Nationwide evaluation in consultation with RC&D councils to determine effectiveness of the program and develop recommendations.	To be determined by 2003.	Report delivered to Congress June 2005
All Goals Except 2	Peer Review of Research Projects Maintaining the core scientific capability of all ARS research programs and projects	Agriculture Research Service (ARS) gets input from customers/ stakeholders to establish relevancy, then develops an Action Plan. The outside Peer Panel evaluates each project in the National Program (NP).	ARS revamped its quality control program several years ago to meet the requirements in the Agricultural Research, Extension and Education Reform Act of 1998. The Office of Scientific Quality Review (OSQR) was established. All research is prospectively reviewed to ensure quality.	Every five years
	Peer review of individual scientists maintains the core capability of the ARS scientific workforce by periodically reviewing the work of each scientist	A highly qualified peer panel reviews the case write-up for each ARS scientist on a regular basis against standards established by OPM.	The Research Position Evaluation System (RPES) applies OMB's Research Grade-Evaluation Guide (RGEG) to determine the grade level of research positions.	Every three to five years
	2002 Farm Bill Review of ARS	The 2002 FSRIA mandates a Review of the Agricultural Research Service by an 8-member task force appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture.	The task force will review ARS and "evaluate the merits of establishing one or more National Institutes focused on disciplines important to the progress of food and agricultural science."	To be determined by the task force
All Goals	OMB's PART	PART is used to assess the management and results of selected programs.	Department and OMB staff develop responses to a series of questions assessing program management and performance.	Annually