

## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) appreciates this opportunity to share with Congress, the Executive Branch, and all Americans information on the important efforts undertaken and progress made on your behalf during the past year. From expanding the economic security and opportunities available to farmers and ranchers, to safeguarding the Nation's food supply, to enhancing the quality of life in rural America, to promoting nutrition and health, to protecting our natural resources, USDA has a proud record of accomplishment in 2005 advancing timeless objectives for our Nation. We are pleased to share the highlights of our efforts in this *FY 2005 Performance and Accountability Report*.



USDA and its more than 100,000 employees directly touch the lives of virtually every American every day. Evolving over 140 years, USDA is one of the most complex departments in the Federal Government, with more than 300 programs advancing progress in a diverse array of significant public responsibilities. Annually, we spend more than \$75 billion of our fellow Americans' money. In 2005, these resources helped:

- Expand economic opportunities and security for farmers, ranchers, and rural communities by implementing the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002;
- Provide access to a healthy diet for needy households;
- Improve the health of low-income pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children;
- Aid U.S. agricultural producers battered by severe weather conditions;
- Enhance U.S. farm export opportunities by advancing America's commitment to free trade;
- Implement the President's Healthy Forests Initiative;
- Protect public safety, homes, and resources during a severe wildland fire season in the West;
- Support the increased use of renewable fuels, such as ethanol and biodiesel, to provide new revenues to farmers while reducing our Nation's dependence on foreign fuel;
- Improve and expand conservation programs;
- Invest in infrastructure that can bring new economic opportunities and jobs to rural areas;
- Modernize the nutrition guidance we give the Nation to reflect the latest scientific information and to increase our efforts to combat our country's growing obesity epidemic;
- Further advance food safety and protect U.S. agriculture from both existing and emerging threats; and
- Leverage technology to ensure that the resources provided to us by Congress and the American people reach those who need them, with minimal expense and maximum impact.

The dedicated public servants of USDA have good reason to be proud of the work they did in 2005. Their efforts have made a tangible, positive difference in the lives of all Americans—from the safety of the food on your plate, to the abundance and affordability of the food in your grocery store, to the economic viability of America’s farms and ranches, to the prosperity and opportunity available in rural communities, to the wholesome meals provided to citizens in need, and to agriculture’s contributions to global food security and international commerce. To ensure we have a strong foundation for the performance and accountability process, USDA managers have reviewed the data used in this report. Except where we point out and discuss specific limitations, I hereby provide reasonable assurance that the data we provide are valid, reliable, and an accurate measure of where we have made real progress and where we still have room for improvement. This effort complies with the Federal Managers’ Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA), both in terms of the strength of our financial management systems and of the overall efficient, effective operations of our programs.

This report also satisfies FMFIA reporting requirements. FMFIA ensures that Federal programs are operated efficiently, effectively, and in compliance with relevant laws. Therefore, except for those areas in need of improvement identified in this document, USDA is providing qualified assurance that our systems of internal control comply with FMFIA’s objectives. FMFIA also requires financial systems to conform to certain standards, principles, and other specifications to ensure timely, relevant, and consistent financial information. The Department’s financial management systems comply substantially with the objectives of FMFIA, with the exception of the material deficiencies identified in this report.

USDA was first called “the people’s department” by President Abraham Lincoln. I believe we still live up to that title today. I am proud of our employees and the positive impact their diverse efforts have had on American life over the course of the past year. I also want to thank you for your interest in USDA and its work. I am pleased to share this information with all of our stakeholders, and I look forward to reporting even more progress in the year ahead.



Mike Johanns  
Secretary of Agriculture  
November 15, 2005