

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY




The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is pleased to present the *Performance and Accountability Report for FY 2002*. This report provides information on our performance and our operating and financial results.

We achieved success on a host of issues: implementing the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002; providing assistance to farmers and ranchers impacted by severe weather conditions; making significant progress on agricultural trade issues; fighting a near record-level of forest fires; supporting renewable fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel; advocating strong conservation programs; providing grants and loans to spur economic growth and create jobs in rural communities; investing in technology and infrastructure projects such as new water systems, hospitals, schools, housing projects and processing facilities;

and continuing to be vigilant in protecting the food and agriculture sector against intentional and unintentional threats.

USDA managers have reviewed the quality of performance data included in the Annual Performance Goals and Results section. Except for data limitations explicitly discussed in that section and based upon reviews by our management team, I hereby provide reasonable assurance that the data are valid and reliable. Furthermore, managers have discussed data limitations and plans for improvement in data quality.

This report includes information that satisfies the reporting requirements for the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA) to ensure that federal programs are operated efficiently, effectively, and in compliance with relevant laws. Therefore, except for those areas for improvement identified in this document, USDA is providing reasonable assurance that our systems of internal control comply with the objectives of FMFIA Section 2. Section 4 of the FMFIA requires financial systems to conform to certain standards, principles, and other specifications to ensure timely, relevant, and consistent financial information. Based on the work performed during FY 2002 and prior years, the Department's integrated financial management system is substantially compliant with the objectives of Section 4 of FMFIA with the exception of those financial system nonconformances identified in this report.


Ann M. Veneman
Secretary of Agriculture