



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

September 29, 2006

The Honorable Rob Portman
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Portman:

I am pleased to send you the Department of Agriculture (USDA) Chief Information Officer's and the Office of Inspector General's security program assessment and report for fiscal year (FY) 2006 as required by the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002 (FISMA).

The body of this report discusses the steps taken by USDA and its agencies to implement FISMA, details progress made in FY 2006, and identifies information technology (IT) security gaps and weaknesses. The central focus of the report is on performance and accountability. Significant progress has been made; however, we acknowledge the need to continue our efforts to identify the root causes of recurring weaknesses as well as the steps necessary to overcome them.

During FY 2006, USDA put into place a security program and measures that address the various elements of IT security. The Office of Inspector General's independent evaluation of USDA's information technology program recognizes that progress has been made in a number of areas. However, the report also identifies several areas of information technology security that need additional improvement. The Department intends to address these areas as part of its program implementation during FY 2007.

Over the past year, the Department has instituted changes to its IT security program, and we have identified additional changes that need to be made. These changes need time to mature in order to fully satisfy the requirement of an effective IT security program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Johanns", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Mike Johanns
Secretary

Enclosures