

Preface

In this *Agriculture Fact Book*, you will find facts about American food consumption, the agricultural sector, and rural America. You will also find descriptions of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's wide-ranging programs and services in such areas as farm programs; exports; food safety; nutrition; management of land, water, and forests; protecting our borders from pests and diseases; and research on all of these topics.

This *Agriculture Fact Book* is also a gateway to further information from USDA. USDA is a good source for useful factual information across a variety of subjects—for example, what people eat, how to grow a garden, how to apply for a farm loan, how to maintain the soil and water resources on your farm or in your town, how to keep your family's food safe.

Not only are the USDA programs and missions wide-ranging, but USDA works every day to meet the needs of very diverse constituents. The information we provide is intended to be useful to diverse groups, including reporters, editors, researchers, students, teachers, businesses, Government employees, and members of the general public who are curious about the U.S. agricultural sector, food consumption, rural America, or any of the wide-ranging programs that USDA offers.

You will notice “**Agricultural Policy Notes**” featured in italics throughout this book. Most of them are from the book *Food and Agricultural Policy: Taking Stock for the New Century*, which USDA published in September 2001 to lay out the Bush Administration's point of view on agricultural policy.

You can find *Food and Agricultural Policy: Taking Stock for the New Century*, along with this *Agriculture Fact Book 2001–2002* in USDA's Web site (www.usda.gov). I encourage you to use this Web site, its links, and other media to reach information from USDA—because whether you are a farmer or a gardener, a professor or a child; whether you live in a city or a rural area; whether you grow, cook, or only eat food—USDA has useful information just for you.

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