

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS COUNCIL CHARTER

INTRODUCTION

Executive Order (E.O.) 13423, *Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management*, requires the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to take specified actions that adhere to the provisions of the E.O. and the implementing instructions issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) as directed by the E.O. These actions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (1) Implement within the department sustainable practices addressing nine areas specified in Section 3(a) of the E.O.;
- (2) Implement within the department environmental management systems (EMS) at all appropriate organizational levels;
- (3) Use EMS as the primary management approach for addressing environmental aspects of internal agency operations and activities, including environmental aspects of energy and transportation functions; and
- (4) Establish agency objectives and targets to ensure implementation of the E.O. and collect and report information to measure performance in this implementation.

The USDA Sustainable Operations Council (SOC) is established to assist in developing policies and procedures for implementing measures to facilitate USDA's compliance with the actions listed above and other actions as required E.O. 13423 and CEQ instructions. The SOC is chaired by the Assistant Secretary for Administration (the senior official designated by the Secretary for implementation of the E.O. within USDA) and is comprised of members as listed under MEMBERSHIP.

PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MISSION:

To provide leadership to USDA agencies in conducting their environmental, transportation, and energy-related activities under the law through continuing senior management involvement, setting clear goals and objectives and developing and implementing policy that results in an environmentally, economically and fiscally sound, integrated, continuously improving, and efficient operations of USDA.

The USDA SOC will:

- Provide ongoing senior management involvement and coordination to staff offices, mission areas and agencies environmental management systems (EMS) and sustainable operations programs

- Establish clear goals and objectives for continuously improving EMS and sustainable operations programs
- Implement performance measures tied to goals and objectives
- Promote a change in culture and operating practices within the department toward sustainability
- Assist in developing guidance to facilitate the success of agency EMS and sustainable operations activities
- Facilitate the exchange of information on successful EMS and sustainable operations programs, practices, lessons learned and other pertinent information
- Support and advise the ASA in matters related to department-wide implementation of actions required by E.O. 13423 and CEQ Instructions.

COMMITTEES and WORKING GROUPS

The efforts of the SOC will be supported by working groups, which will report to the SOC through the Hazardous Materials Policy Council, the Asset Management Council, and the Procurement Council. These working groups will be established by the ASA through the SOC.

MEMBERSHIP

USDA's ASA will be a voting member of the SOC and serve as its Chair. The SOC will be comprised of the members (or equivalent position) for the agencies and staff offices listed below in the Executive Committee section.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (Voting Members):

- Assistant Secretary for Administration, Chair
- Deputy Under Secretary for Conservation, Natural Resources and Environment
- Deputy Under Secretary, Research, Education, and Economics
- Deputy Under Secretary, Rural Development
- Deputy Administrator for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- Deputy Chief for Business Operations, Forest Service
- Director, Global Change Program Office, Office of the Chief Economist
- Director, Office of Operations, Departmental Administration

The Director, Sustainable Development, Office of the Chief Economist, as well as representatives from the Office of Budget and Program Analysis, Office of Chief Financial Officer, and Office of the General Counsel will serve as non-voting advisors to the SOC. The Council Chair reserves the right to consult with any other USDA agencies or offices as needed.

ALTERNATES:

Each voting member shall have one designated alternate. Nominations of the alternates shall be submitted in writing and confirmed by the Assistant Secretary for Administration. The alternates must be senior level officials who are authorized to speak on behalf of their mission areas/agencies.

SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS COUNCIL MEETINGS

SCHEDULE:

The SOC shall meet quarterly, with additional meetings held as necessary. If an initiative has a time urgency that requires SOC review and input prior to the scheduled meeting, an emergency meeting may be scheduled. Requests to schedule emergency meetings may be made by any SOC member to the Chair.

ATTENDANCE:

SOC members are expected to attend all meetings. In the event the primary member cannot attend, the designated alternate will attend.

AGENDA AND MINUTES:

Prior to all SOC meetings, the Chair will prepare and distribute to all members minutes of the previous meeting and an agenda for the next meeting. Each meeting's agenda shall include progress/status reports from SOC subcommittees or working groups, and shall also include a block of time specifically set aside for members to raise issues and topics of concern. These standing agenda items will be in addition to any items submitted in advance for inclusion in the agenda.

TERM OF COUNCIL

This Charter will be reviewed on an annual basis.