



United States Department of Agriculture

USDA Accomplishments 2009-2012

Secretary Tom Vilsack

Agriculture

USDA works each day to strengthen American agriculture. Despite the difficult economic climate of the past years, USDA's efforts – coupled with the 2008 Farm Bill, the Recovery Act, and the entrepreneurial spirit of America's farmers and ranchers – are paving the way for American agriculture to lead the nation's recovery.

- American agriculture remains resilient and a bright spot in our nation's economy. Net farm income stood at \$114 billion in 2012 – up from \$85 billion in 2008.
- American agriculture is related to 1 in 12 American jobs, provides American consumers with more than 80 percent of the food we consume, ensures that Americans spend less of their paychecks at the grocery store than most other countries, and supports homegrown renewable energy markets.

Maintaining a Strong Safety Net for Farmers and Ranchers

To help keep American agriculture profitable and keep farmers on the farm, USDA immediately responds to farmers affected by the disasters across the country, ranging from record floods, droughts and tropical storms.

- Since 2009, USDA's crop insurance program has paid out more than \$28 billion in crop insurance indemnities to 340,000 farmers who lost crops due to natural disasters.

- In addition USDA expedited 2008 Farm Bill disaster assistance programs that have provided more than 400,000 payments to producers totaling more than \$4 billion.
- Since 2009, the Department has provided more than 134,000 loans totaling \$18.6 billion in credit for family farmers and ranchers.
- Simplified the Secretarial disaster designation process and reduced the time it takes to designate counties affected by disasters by 40 percent.
- Took historic action during the 2012 drought to help farmers and ranchers who were impacted. This included helping gain additional flexibility on crop insurance; opening 2.8 million acres of CRP land for emergency haying and grazing; and holding regional drought forums across the nation to work collaboratively with farmers and ranchers.

Streamlining Our Assistance, Saving Taxpayer Dollars

- Saved taxpayers \$4 billion by renegotiating contracts with private companies that deliver crop insurance programs to farmers and ranchers. USDA also released the Common Crop Policy that replaced five policies with three simplified versions.
- Established 15 common dates for farmers and ranchers to report acreage and crop data, reducing burdensome paperwork on producers and USDA costs. There had previously been more than 70 reporting dates.

Boosting Competitiveness with Better Research and Predictable Access to Technology

- Teams of USDA scientists are working hard to achieve the next breakthroughs on drought-tolerant, heat-tolerant, and saline-resistant crops that enhance the competitiveness of American farmers in global trade.
- USDA research is also helping improve the technology associated with irrigation equipment, to reduce spills and help manage limited water resources more effectively. By developing new software technologies and more robust forecasting models, USDA will help producers better manage water resources in the future.
- Meanwhile, we're strengthening USDA's long history of support for researchers at public and land-grant universities nationwide. Every day, university researchers are working to solve complex challenges for agriculture – and much of this work will help mitigate drought.
- While maintaining strong oversight to ensure the safety of GE products, we have cut the time it takes to consider petitions for use of GE crops in half, reducing to 13-16 months the potential adoption of new seeds that can deliver impressive yields with reduced inputs.

Supporting the Next Generation of Farmers and Ranchers

- To raise a new generation of leaders for American agriculture, USDA provides affordable credit, including loans under the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program, and Youth Loans via Extension and 4-H offices.
- Since 2009, more than 40% of all FSA's farm loans went to beginning farmers and ranchers.
- Created an office specifically to reach new farmers, and provided new grants that have supported education and training for more than 40,000 beginning farmers and ranchers since 2009.

Strengthening the Connection Between Farmers and Consumers

A surge in consumer demand for locally-produced food is creating jobs and opportunity throughout rural America, for farms as well as small businesses that store, process, market and distribute food locally and regionally. In 2009, USDA launched the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative (KYF) to better serve this growing market segment.

- The initiative brings together USDA's many agencies and offices to coordinate our work on local and regional food systems, fulfill congressional mandates and foster a national conversation about the importance of agriculture. KYF has helped producers and businesses tap into the multi-billion dollar market for local foods.
- USDA strengthened and increased local marketing opportunities by helping expand the number of farmers markets nationwide to more than 7,860 from fewer than 5,000 in 2008. In addition, increased the number of food hubs nationwide to more than 200 while creating a new "Regional Food Hub Resource Guide" to help producers access these new, local marketing opportunities.

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