

# Strategic Plan

## FY 2010-2015

### Update Addendum



**United States  
Department of Agriculture**



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## About this Report

This *Strategic Plan FY 2010-2015 Update Addendum* is written in response to the requirements of the GPRM Modernization Act, 31 U.S.C.1115(b)(10), requirement to address Agency and Federal Priority Goals in agency Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plan.

To summarize, USDA worked closely with stakeholders, partners, and OMB in selecting 3 Agency Priority Goals for fiscal years (FY) 2012 – 2013. The goals are:

- Further improve the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) payment accuracy rate, which is at an all-time high of 96.2 percent;
- Accelerate the protection of clean, abundant water resources by implementing high impact targeted (HIT) practices through Farm Service Agency (FSA), Forest Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs on 4 million acres within critical and/or impaired watersheds. Quantify improvements in water quality by developing and implementing an interagency outcome metric within 2-4 pilot watersheds; and
- Expand U.S. agricultural exports to at least \$150 billion to assist rural communities to build and maintain prosperity through increased agricultural exports.

These 3 Agency Priority Goals align with the strategic goals set forth in USDA's *Strategic Plan FY 2010-2015*, which are:

- Ensure that All of America's Children Have Access to Safe, Nutritious, and Balanced Meals;
- Ensure Our National Forests and Private Working Lands Are Conserved, Restored, and Made More Resilient to Climate Change, While Enhancing Our Water Resources; and
- Assist Rural Communities to Create Prosperity so They Are Self-Sustaining, Repopulating, and Economically Thriving.

This document updates the *Strategic Plan FY 2010-2015* by adding the 3 Agency Priority Goals as an addendum. Per the GPRM Modernization Act, P.L. 111-352, requirement to address Federal Priority Goals in the agency Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plan, please refer to [Performance.gov](http://Performance.gov) for information on Federal Priority Goals and the agency's contributions to these goals, where applicable.



## Priority Goal 1:

Further improve the high payment accuracy of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

### **P**riority Goal Statement:

By September 30, 2013, USDA will improve the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) payment accuracy rate, which is at an all-time high of 96.2 percent.

#### **1. Problem or opportunity being addressed**

SNAP is the Nation's largest nutrition assistance program, currently serving more than 44 million low-income people each month. It is the first line of the Nation's defense against hunger and poor nutrition.

It is essential that the program operates with accuracy and integrity so that only eligible people receive benefits, and that they receive the correct amount. SNAP payment accuracy has been a Government leader for years. Improper payments in FY 2010 were 3.81 percent, already well below the 4.18 percent Government-wide improper payment target set by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for 2013. Payment error rates are less than half of what they were 10 years ago, which has reduced improper payments by \$3.3 billion. However, the size of the program means that even small additional reductions can yield substantial savings. Continued focus on payment accuracy across the board – and particular emphasis on high-error States and error-prone activities – could result in hundreds of millions of dollars in additional error reduction. Improving program access for those eligible for benefits is also important.

#### **2. Relationship to broader agency objectives**

This agency priority goal supports USDA's Strategic Goal 4: *Ensure that All of America's Children Have Access to Safe, Nutritious, and Balanced Meals*. The ongoing mission of Federal nutrition assistance programs is inseparable from strong and sustained attention to program integrity and stewardship of Federal funds. Improper payments draw scarce program resources away from the children and low-income people who need them the most. Just as importantly, these programs are ultimately not sustainable without continued public confidence that benefits go to those who qualify for them, are used appropriately, and achieve the purposes for which they are intended. About half of SNAP program recipients and eligible people are children. Improving program access also contributes to the strategic goal above.



### **3. Contributing programs within the agency**

This agency priority goal focuses exclusively on SNAP, administered by Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and part of the Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services mission area.

### **4. Contributing programs or partners outside the agency**

Like other Federal nutrition assistance programs, SNAP operates as a partnership with State agencies. Program success requires the attention and engagement of the State agencies that deliver benefits to the customer. In recent years, USDA leadership has worked closely with State agency leadership to improve payment accuracy. At the staff level, efforts such as the Partner Web (an extranet for State agencies) and the National Payment Accuracy Work Group (consisting of representatives from USDA headquarters and regional offices) make timely and useful payment accuracy-related information and tools available, and share best practice methods and strategies across regions and States. SNAP is also interested in the payment accuracy and quality-control practices and initiatives of other Federal and State programs. We share our experience and seek to learn from other organizations through activities such as our participation in the Partnership for Program Integrity and multi-program integrity conferences.

### **5. Implementation Strategy Overview**

The implementation strategy relies on partnerships and actions that have enabled USDA to dramatically improve performance over the last decade. This includes:

- Strong Partnerships with State Agencies;
- The State Exchange Program, which provides funds for States to travel to see where ideas for improvement have been successfully implemented, and participate in conferences where such ideas are presented;
- The National Payment Accuracy Work Group; and
- Monitoring of State Performance/Early Detection: FNS uses an early detection system to target States that may be experiencing a higher incidence of payment errors based on preliminary Quality Control data. This process allows FNS to quickly detect and evaluate State-specific and National trends in the level, and causes of payment errors.

FNS is committed to continuing to develop and implement new strategies which have the potential to help to maintain success and further improve payment accuracy, including:

- Supporting State efforts to improve the efficiency of SNAP administration through Business Process Improvement/Re-engineering; and
- Fostering innovation by working with OMB on the Partnership Fund for Program Integrity Innovation. The Partnership Fund allows Federal, State, local, and tribal agencies to pilot innovative ideas for improving assistance programs.

Strategies to improve program access will focus on program simplification and targeting underserved populations, particularly underserved minority populations and the elderly.



## Priority Goal 2:

Further accelerate the protection of clean, abundant water resources by implementing high impact targeted (HIT) practices through Farm Services Agency (FSA), Forest Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs on 4 million acres within critical and/or impaired watersheds.

### **P**riority Goal Statement:

Accelerate the protection of clean, abundant water resources by implementing high impact targeted (HIT) practices through FSA, Forest Service, and NRCS programs on 4 million acres within critical and/or impaired watersheds. By September 30, 2013, quantify improvements in water quality by developing and implementing an interagency outcome metric within 2-4 pilot watersheds.

#### **1. Problem or opportunity being addressed**

The availability of clean, abundant water is critical to the country's sustainable agricultural production; ensuring healthy urban and rural communities; and supporting thriving business sectors including manufacturing, tourism, and recreation. Clean water and healthy ecosystems are also part of our national heritage. The twin pressures of population growth and climate change have added urgency to addressing the Nation's water resource challenges. Secretary Vilsack has made protecting the nation's water resources a top priority. And USDA's role is significant. More than a dozen USDA agencies have programs that in some way affect the Nation's water resources. Three of these agencies, Forest Service, NRCS, and FSA, implement programs that apply to more than 1.5 billion acres of public and private land, or more than 65 percent of acres in the continental U.S. Forest Service manages 194 million acres of public forest and grasslands. NRCS and FSA administer easement and financial assistance programs to farmers, ranchers, and forest land owners who manage more than 1.4 billion acres of land. In FY 2011, these investments totaled more than \$10 billion, a large percentage of which affect water. These land management practices protect the Nation's headwater streams – the source of drinking water for 60 percent of all Americans -- help ensure healthier flows in rivers including during floods and droughts, provide wildlife habitat, protect fresh and saltwater fisheries, and preserve crucial interior and coastal wetlands. By targeting the Department's resources in critical watersheds and bringing a unified approach to measuring results, USDA is moving into a new era of results-based, landscape scale conservation investment that will protect the resource more efficiently and effectively, and encourage innovations that attract private capital and create non-regulatory incentives for a variety of stakeholders to invest in sustainable water resource management practices.





## **2. Relationship to broader agency objectives**

The Department's core values are represented through this goal: Transparency, Participation, Collaboration, Accountability, Customer Focus, Professionalism, and Results Orientation.

This agency priority goal supports USDA and Administration priorities, including:

- The Department's Strategic Goals to *Assist Rural Communities to Create Prosperity so They Are Self-Sustaining, Repopulating, and Economically Thriving*, and *Ensure Our National Forests and Private Working Lands Are Conserved, Restored, and Made More Resilient to Climate Change, While Enhancing Our Water Resources*.
- Delivering results on action items in the President's America's Great Outdoors Initiative to build a 21st century conservation agenda; and
- Advancing innovative approaches to accelerating conservation through environmental markets.

## **3. Contributing programs within the agency**

Programs within the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Forest Service, and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

## **4. Contributing programs or partners outside the agency**

USDA promotes and implements conservation and education efforts in partnership with private landowners, educational institutions, and others on national forests and grasslands and in communities across the country. Strong partnerships with private landowners, State and local Government, tribes, non-Governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, educational institutions, and other stakeholders is foundational to our work.

## **5. Implementation Strategy Overview**

USDA has established Landscapes of National Interest, representing large-scale priority watersheds through executive orders, statute, and/or other policy guidance that Federal leaders identified as important for natural resource conservation. These landscapes include the Great Lakes Basin, Mississippi River Basin/Gulf of Mexico, Chesapeake Bay Watershed, and the Bay-Delta Sierra Nevada. By engaging the expertise of agency staff and land management partners, sub-watersheds have been identified and targeted. Sub-watershed selection criteria include, but are not limited to those:

- With a high proportion of agricultural and forest lands;
- In need of restoration that would benefit public health, economic viability, cultural heritage, and ecological sustainability. These watersheds might include those with 303(d) listed streams, a high proportion of hard surfaces such as roads, parking lots, and roof tops, or soil types and slopes that contribute to nutrient or sediment losses to streams or rivers and;
- With strong partnerships and opportunity to leverage Federal investments to achieve measurable results.





The second element of our strategy is to work with farmers, ranchers, forest and rangeland owners, and others to apply HIT practices in these watersheds to protect and enhance our Nation's water resources. We will also apply these practices to public forest land. Each watershed is evaluated to determine the mix of conservation practices that will best protect water quantity and quality given the particular problems in the watershed.

The third element of our strategy is to integrate ongoing or existing USDA research and data to develop outcome metrics. This includes creating interfaces between the Forest Service's Watershed Condition Framework and NRCS's and ARS's Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP), which quantifies the environmental effects of conservation practices.



## Priority Goal 3:

Assist rural communities to build and maintain prosperity through increased agricultural exports.

### Priority Goal Statement:

By September 30, 2013, USDA will expand U.S. agricultural exports to at least \$150 billion to assist rural communities to build and maintain prosperity through increased agricultural exports.

- Impact Statement: Assist rural communities to build and maintain prosperity through increased agricultural exports.
- Key Indicator: Dollar value of U.S. agricultural exports (available monthly).
- Target for Key Indicator: \$150 billion in agricultural exports for FY 2013 (equivalent to average annual export growth of 11 percent from the FY 2010 baseline).
- Baseline: FY 2010 agricultural exports were valued at \$109 billion. The average rate of growth over the last 5 fiscal years (FY 2006-2010) is 11 percent.

#### 1. Problem or opportunity being addressed

The vitality of rural America is heavily dependent on agricultural exports – one-third of all U.S. agricultural cash receipts come from export sales. USDA is a leading advocate for rural America. One of the primary ways that the Department supports rural communities is by expanding economic opportunities through increased trade and market access. For every \$1 billion of agricultural exports, an estimated 8,400 jobs are supported, and an additional \$1.31 billion in economic activity is generated. Agriculture is one of a few sectors in the U.S. economy in which exports are creating a positive trade balance. Moreover, agricultural exports continue to grow, averaging 11 percent per year, from FY 2006-2010. However, U.S. agricultural producers and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) face an increasingly challenging, technologically-advanced, and competitive business environment. USDA works to ensure that they are prosperous and competitive by supporting their access to international markets through market development programs, trade shows, prevention and resolution of Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) or those Sanitary/Phytosanitary (SPS) measures that are not based on sound science, and market-expanding trade agreements for U.S. agricultural products.

#### 2. Relationship to broader agency objectives

This agency priority goal directly relates to two of the four strategic goals outlined in the *USDA Strategic Plan*. Through trade facilitation, increased exports create jobs and increase prosperity domestically, which relates to Goal 1 (*Assist Rural Communities to Create Prosperity so They Are Self-Sustaining, Repopulating, and Economically Thriving*). By promoting and increasing exports, including biotechnology exports, this goal also helps to



enhance food security around the world, which relates to Goal 3 (*Help America Promote Agricultural Production and Biotechnology Exports as America Works to Increase Food Security*).

### **3. Contributing programs within the agency**

USDA's trade promotion programs help U.S. food and agricultural exporters take full advantage of market opportunities created by its trade policy and capacity-building successes:

- The Export Credit Guarantee Program facilitates commercial financing of U.S. agricultural exports by providing credit guarantees to U.S. exporters and offering competitive credit terms to foreign buyers in eligible countries. The GSM-102 program assists U.S. exporters in making these sales.
- The Foreign Market Development (FMD) program aids in the creation, expansion, and maintenance of long-term export markets for U.S. agricultural products. Under the program, USDA partners with U.S. agricultural producers and processors, who are represented by nonprofit commodity or trade associations called "cooperators," to promote U.S. commodities overseas.
- The Market Access Program (MAP) helps U.S. producers, exporters, small-scale private companies, and trade organizations finance overseas marketing and promotional activities such as trade shows, market research, consumer promotions, technical assistance, trade servicing, and educational seminars.
- The Emerging Markets Program provides funding for technical assistance activities that promote the export of U.S. agricultural commodities and products and address technical barriers to trade in emerging markets.
- The Quality Samples Program helps U.S. agricultural trade organizations provide small samples of their products to potential importers in emerging markets overseas to provide a better understanding and appreciation of those products.
- The Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops Program provides funding to U.S. organizations for projects that address sanitary, phytosanitary, and technical barriers that prohibit or threaten the export of U.S. specialty crops.

These programs are administered by the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), which is within the Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services mission area. Each of the five market development programs utilizes funds from the Commodity Credit Corporation.

### **4. Contributing programs or partners outside of the agency**

FAS administers its programs in partnership with about 75 cooperator groups, representing a broad cross-section of the U.S. food and agricultural industry, as well as state and regional trade groups. Through its programs, FAS provides partial matching funds on a reimbursable basis to these organizations to conduct activities, including market research, consumer promotion, trade servicing, capacity building, and market access support. In 2009, the MAP and FMD programs, totaling \$234.5 million, leveraged additional private



sector investment of more than \$335 million, bringing total investment in foreign market development to more than \$570 million.

## **5. Implementation Strategy Overview**

FAS implementation strategy includes the following:

- Prevent or resolve TBT or those SPS measures that are not science based and hinder U.S. agricultural exports;
- Increase effectiveness of market development programs;
- Increase effectiveness of exporter outreach and trade show programs to increase sales by U.S. companies;
- Expand and enhance partnerships, by improving communication, in particular with State Departments of Agriculture and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture by better matching exporter assistance solutions to SME related agricultural companies;
- Improving Results Oriented Management of programs by ensuring that FAS market development partners evaluate and report successes from: 1) Number of SMEs participating in programs; 2) Number of buyer missions out of the U.S.; 3) Number of buyer missions to the U.S.; and 4) Number of Agribusiness Trade Missions (ATMs); and
- Increase public awareness of export opportunities, the benefits of agricultural trade, and the export assistance role of FAS by further coordinating outreach efforts with the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee agencies.

As the principal measure to track progress, USDA will use monthly U.S. census trade data to report the dollar value of U.S. agricultural exports on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis. Quarterly figures will be reported cumulatively for the fiscal year-to-date. Annual figures will be reported as the total value for the fiscal year. The target value is a minimum of \$150 billion in agricultural exports for FY 2013.