

**United States Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service**

**Safeguarding the Health and Value of  
American Agriculture Since 1972**

**Strategic Plan 2015-2019**



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# A Message from the Administrator

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Since 1972, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has been a vital force in American agriculture. Over the years, the Agency has modernized to be more proactive, flexible, and responsive to the needs of those we serve. Although APHIS' activities have changed over the years, our core mission remains the same: to safeguard the health and value of America's agriculture and natural resources. Meaning we take appropriate measures to protect our resources from damage and loss.



Looking ahead to the next 5 years, I have two core beliefs about our mission. One is that healthy and profitable agriculture is good for America; it provides food and clothing for countless people worldwide and is a key pillar to a thriving economy. My second belief is that Government's role is to do collectively what no one of us can do for ourselves. These core beliefs are the groundwork that will guide us as we adapt to changes in the world around us and strive to deliver the most value to our stakeholders, partners, and the American public.

Increasingly, APHIS will seek innovative alternatives to rulemaking to achieve our aims—making sure agriculture stays healthy without always issuing regulations to do so. We are developing better, faster business processes to improve our customers' experience and deliver services more cheaply and effectively. We are also harnessing information technology solutions to make services and information available to our customers electronically and to find cost savings. Continued proactive communications with our stakeholders and partners will ensure that those who have an interest in our mission receive timely, accurate information about the Agency's programs and are able to provide perspectives to better inform our decision making. Our decisions will be data-driven and evidence-based.

APHIS employees are the Agency's most valuable resource. Their success is fundamental to the Agency's success. That is why I have chosen to emphasize the Agency's commitment to safety, health, and employee development as part of my vision for APHIS. Nothing is more basic than trying to prevent accidents and illnesses and investing in employee training and development.

Agricultural production practices, global trading patterns, and pest and disease threats will always be changing, but our core objective remains the same. It is simple but vital: to safeguard American agriculture. I have witnessed the dedication and determination of our employees. Together, we will meet the goals and objectives set out in this plan by employing both proven and new tactics in our programs. The tactics contained in this plan are examples of our work and are certainly not inclusive of all the important work that we do.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Kevin Shea". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kevin Shea, Administrator  
USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

# Turning Vision into Reality

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“As we look to develop a plan for the future, we are committed to doing all we can at APHIS to ensure the health, marketability, and profitability of American agriculture.” --**Kevin Shea, Administrator, APHIS**

## **Mission**

To safeguard the health, welfare and value of American agriculture and natural resources.

## **Overarching Driving Forces**

Agriculture and the global marketplace continue to evolve, and APHIS must evolve to keep pace. Presenting both challenges and opportunities, we have identified six driving forces that require us to take a critical look at how we strategically conduct our activities to best meet our mission.

### ***Regulatory Processes Cannot Keep Pace with Mission Needs***

In pursuing our mission, APHIS has traditionally been described as a regulatory agency. However, a strictly regulatory response may not always be the most appropriate. In addition, the way agriculture and commerce operates today means that some of the tools we have used traditionally may be more disruptive than beneficial. While we will still have a regulatory role, it won't be the only or in some cases even the primary way we contribute to animal and plant health and animal welfare.

APHIS will work closely with its stakeholders and partners to explore alternatives to rulemaking. This could include education and outreach initiatives or leveraging industry standards, among other things. We will also look at flexible approaches to apply existing regulations. This plan includes tactics which include both regulatory and non-regulatory solutions. In each instance, we believe we have identified the best tools for the job.

### ***Rapid Advances in Science and Technology***

Rapid advances in science and technology are providing opportunities for APHIS to continually change how we provide service to our customers. This includes adapting our current practices and adopting new best practices. Communications and commerce are occurring electronically—hard-copy forms are quickly becoming obsolete. Plant and animal sciences are also changing quickly with developments in the areas of genetic engineering, disease detection

and veterinary biologics, among others. These rapid advances can often result in government agencies being reactive rather than proactive, leaving customers feeling frustrated by a lack of leadership on the part of government.

APHIS is committed to making it easier and faster for customers to find the information they need. With an eye toward excellence and value, we're constantly finding new ways to accomplish our work so that APHIS' way of doing business reflects the way agriculture and commerce operate today while looking toward the future. We are using more technology to allow industry to move at the speed of commerce and keep up with demand for agricultural commodities. Our science centers will lead the way in developing and delivering science-based knowledge and methods to identify and analyze risks and mitigate threats. Along with traditional communication tools such as publications and public service announcements, we are also using new technologies to reach out to our stakeholders, partners and customers.

***Increasing global recognition that the health of animals, humans, and the environment are inextricably linked.***

There is growing national and international acknowledgement that the health of animals, the health of people, and the viability of ecosystems are intricately linked. This concept is commonly referred to as "One Health". As the link among human and animal populations, environmental changes, and global movement evolves, the risk of disease transmission between animals and people has increased. A One Health approach embraces the idea that disease problems that adversely impact the health of humans, animals, and the environment can only be solved through improved communication, cooperation, and collaboration across disciplines and institutions.

Internally, APHIS will partner with fellow USDA agencies—such as the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), and the National Institute for Food and Agriculture—whose regulatory, research, and outreach missions are essential to making progress on One Health initiatives. Externally, APHIS will partner with other U.S. government agencies—such as the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Environmental Protection Agency, and Tribal Nations—to prevent and control problems that affect animal and plant health, human health, and the environment.

***Increasing Demand for Services and Accountability***

The Federal Government is experiencing remarkable budget cutbacks, but public demand for more and better services has never been greater. Our task is to provide the maximum amount of service in line with our budget. APHIS will continue to concentrate on being efficient and more effective with available resources. This will involve a rigorous and transparent priority-setting and decision making process based on strong and timely analysis of data.

We will build our capacity in the area of data and business analytics to support new programs, improve on successful programs, or change the direction of existing programs including discontinuing programs that do not demonstrate a measureable positive return. We will seek opportunities to engage with our customers so we can better understand their needs and so they can gain a better understanding of how we are attempting to meet those needs with limited resources. APHIS will collaborate with stakeholders and partners, co-investing in situations where they have resources to devote to the problem and are willing to assist in protecting valuable resources and American economic interests. As appropriate, APHIS programs will reach out to identify and meet the unique needs of underserved communities, socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, and Tribes to aid them in developing full knowledge of and access to APHIS programs. Agency actions will consider ways to protect the economic health and viability of these stakeholders and partners during the decision making process. In these ways, APHIS is committed to ensuring environmental justice as part of all its activities. The Agency will continue to play a role in protecting the economic health and viability of these stakeholders/partners who are at risk of unduly suffering from today's economic challenges.

### ***Building and Maintaining Collaborative Efforts with other Federal Agencies, State Agencies, and Tribal Nations***

Protecting the health, welfare, and value of America's agriculture and natural resources requires coordinated and collaborative efforts spread across the Federal government, other levels of government, Tribal Nations, and private and public partners. While collaborative efforts can create challenges, they can also create opportunities. Collaborative efforts are thought to produce more public value than any single agency could produce. Key components for successful collaborations include the identification of roles and responsibilities, mutually agreed upon common outcomes, and reinforcing and joint strategies.

APHIS participates in a number of interagency partnerships, including the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS). NARMS, a partnership between FDA, CDC, and USDA, was launched as part of a multifaceted strategy to preserve the effectiveness of antimicrobial drugs that are used in food-producing animals.

To ensure we are bringing the best value to the public, APHIS must continue to build upon and maintain these collaborative relationships, improving upon our already successful efforts.

### ***Global Demand for Agricultural Products***

Increases in global trade provide an opportunity for APHIS to change its services to align with a production sector that is increasingly focused on exports rather than domestic markets. American agriculture is surging in popularity worldwide, and America's agricultural sector is a key contributor towards growing exports. In addition, U.S. agricultural exports support more than 1 million jobs in communities across the country for ranchers, growers, truckers, brokers, dockworkers, fuel and fertilizer manufacturers, and more.

To safeguard these jobs and our economy, APHIS will continue its work to broaden international trade pathways for America's agricultural animals and plants while ensuring they are protected from pests and diseases on the home front. An increase in trade may lead to an increase in pest risks, and APHIS must be prepared to address this risk. APHIS, along with its Federal partners, reduces technical trade barriers to facilitate the opening of new markets, retains and expands current markets, secures the release of U.S. shipments detained at foreign ports, and ensures the safe movement of agricultural products in a manner consistent with science and international standards.

# Goals and Objectives

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To respond to these driving forces, APHIS is no longer in a position to simply increase in size. Instead, the Agency needs to be faster and more agile to meet the needs of our stakeholders and partners. APHIS will constantly strive to improve and deliver our services in a way that is less costly, faster, and more effective for American agriculture, farmers and ranchers, and the public.

To accomplish its mission, APHIS' goals are to:

- Prevent the entry and spread of agricultural pests and diseases (Goal 1).
- Ensure the humane treatment and care of vulnerable covered animals (Goal 2).
- Protect forests, urban landscapes, rangelands and other natural resources, as well as private working lands from harmful pests and diseases (Goal 3).
- Ensure the safety, purity, and effectiveness of veterinary biologics and protect plant health by optimizing our oversight of genetically engineered (GE) organisms (Goal 4).
- Ensure the safe trade of agricultural products, creating export opportunities for U.S. producers (Goal 5).
- Protect the health of U.S. agricultural resources, including addressing zoonotic disease issues and incidences, by implementing surveillance, preparedness and response, and control programs (Goal 6).
- Create an APHIS for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that is high-performing, efficient, adaptable, and embraces civil rights (Goal 7).

These seven strategic goals articulate the Agency's priorities. These goals contain 21 objectives that include the Agency's major programmatic efforts and cover the programs and services that APHIS administers. To support the objectives of each goal, APHIS employs numerous proven tactics in the programs. The tactics contained in this plan are representative and by no means embody all the important work APHIS does to fulfill its mission.

## **Goal 1. Prevent the entry and spread of agricultural pests and diseases.**

APHIS protects U.S. livestock, poultry, specialty crops, corn, cotton, and wheat production worth more than \$167 billion. U.S. agriculture as a whole supports 1 in 12 jobs and provides U.S. consumers with 83 percent of the food we consume. The economic vitality and quality of life in rural America depends on a financially healthy agricultural production system. Farmers and ranchers face a challenging global and competitive business environment. APHIS and our partners along with foreign governments collaborate to implement offshore activities to maintain and protect the pest-free barrier for Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly) and screwworm. APHIS' pest and disease prevention efforts contribute to a secure agricultural production



system and ensure that domestic and international consumers have access to safe, nutritious food.

**Objective 1.1:** Work with foreign governments and partners to keep damaging pests and diseases from entering the United States.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Coordinate with Canada to implement an effective multi-national system that reduces the threat of tree pests arriving from Asia and other parts of the world (e.g., Asian gypsy moth).
- Collaborate with ARS and the U.S.-Panamanian Commission to maintain the screwworm barrier at the Darien Gap of Panama and to ensure the sterile screwworm rearing facility in Panama is operating well. Operating well is defined as producing 40 million sterile pupae per week which is sufficient to maintain the barrier at the Darien Gap.
- Develop emergency preparedness response for screwworm outbreaks; conduct exercises in cooperation with domestic stakeholders to assess the emergency preparedness capabilities.
- Work with the Governments of Mexico and Central America to develop regional surveillance and emergency response plans to prevent screwworm re-introduction into the barrier.
- Work with Governments of Mexico and Guatemala to maintain a barrier north of Chiapas, Mexico, and to explore options for eventually moving the barrier further south, to prevent the spread of Medfly into the United States.
- Produce and provide sterile Medfly pupae to support preventive release operations in high-risk areas in Florida and California.
- Collaborate with the Government of Mexico on other activities regarding economically significant fruit flies (including Mexican fruit fly and related *Anastrepha spp.*) with the goal of reducing risk pathways into vulnerable Border States such as Arizona, California, and Texas.
- Work with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to provide inspections of imported agricultural products at U.S. ports-of-entry to prevent the introduction of harmful agricultural pests and diseases.
- Collaborate with CBP to review and update U.S. inspection policies to address emerging risks.
- Strengthen, expand, and improve coordination of the Agency's offshore pest and disease surveillance activities and programs.
- Work with the State of Texas to maintain a permanent quarantine buffer preventing cattle fever ticks from becoming established in the United States, thereby preventing diseases such as bovine babesiosis from impacting U.S. cattle.
- Collaborate with Mexico in supporting cattle fever tick free zone(s) in Mexico, reducing risks of introduction at land border ports.

- Conduct periodic pathway reviews to ensure continued prevention of the introduction of new and emerging pathogens.
- Work with partners in Guam to control brown tree snakes on Guam to prevent this invasive pest from spreading to Hawaii or the U.S. mainland.
- Work with partners to conduct pest and disease pathway analyses and risk assessments to identify possible sources of introductions and determine protections and mitigations to prevent new introductions.
- Work with Tribal partners to assist in early detection of foreign pests and invasive species affecting offshore waters and harvest sites on both coasts and inland waterways, and create a rapid notification system specific to invasive species affecting Tribal lands.
- Provide better education and information about entry of plant and animal products for Canada and Mexico.

**Objective 1.2:** Work with foreign governments and partners to prevent the spread of damaging pests and diseases.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Collaborate with Mexico to prevent the spread of citrus greening disease.
- Cooperate with Mexico to eradicate boll weevil and the pink bollworm.
- Partner with other reference laboratories around the world to further collective expertise in diagnostics, including partnering with Canada and Mexico to harmonize diagnostic methods. This would contribute to North America becoming a model geographical region for rapid disease detection.
- Provide—through the National Veterinary Services Laboratories—both national and international leadership on diagnostic techniques, tests, and new technologies, serving as the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) reference laboratory for 13 diseases, and as USDA’s reference laboratory for all animal diseases subject to control and eradication efforts in the United States.
- Benchmark how other developed nations are gathering independent scientific information on pest and disease risks and sharing this information with consumers, industry, and academia to inform policies and decisions.
- Collaborate with Mexico and Canada to control terrestrial rabies variants along shared borders.
- Increase collaboration with other agencies to leverage infrastructures overseas to provide training and technical assistance on animal and plant issues, including zoonotic diseases.
- Collaborate with Tribal partners to reduce the incidence of rabies, potential diseases from smuggled equines from Mexico, and potential plant pests from Canada and Mexico.

## **Goal 2. Ensure the humane care and treatment of vulnerable covered animals.**

APHIS enforces the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), the Horse Protection Act (HPA), and the Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter Act to ensure the humane care and treatment of millions of animals. APHIS believes that collaborating with regulated entities is the best way to ensure compliance and help the regulated community minimize costs associated with noncompliance.

**Objective 2.1:** Improve the welfare of animals covered under the AWA.

### **Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Partner with Iowa State University to help new commercial dog breeders understand what is required of them as licensees under the AWA and how to achieve and maintain compliance.
- Strengthen the pre-license process and develop portable, online educational presentations that help standardize the process and can be referenced during inspections.
- Supplement the traditional inspection process with extensive consultation for struggling facilities. In limited cases, APHIS will offer facilities facing civil penalties the option of non-monetary settlement agreements.
- Collaborate with emergency management partners to clarify roles and develop detailed response plans to protect animals during emergencies.
- Facilitate outreach to dog breeder and dealer communities, encouraging education and discussion in more non-formal environments where topics can be freely discussed, experiences shared, and specific solutions to issues identified. Encourage State and local breeder associations, individual kennel owners, and kennel facilities to host these sessions, offering compliance specialists as experts to help facilitate continuous improvement.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to encourage development of a private sector, professional dog breeder's accreditation program.
- Build trusting, collaborative partnerships with new and old partners such as the Amish and Mennonite communities that are entering the commercial dog breeder and dealer arena in greater numbers, leveraging relationships and resources to reach unlicensed facilities. Partnerships have focused on finding unlicensed kennels, licensing these kennels, and education. These partnerships highlight the shared goal of making sure that animals receive humane care and treatment.
- Partner with States or accredited professional or industry organizations including the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International to reduce inspection frequency, within legal requirements, for facilities that have implemented and documented strong animal care and welfare programs.
- Further streamline and standardize animal welfare inspections through continual business process improvement efforts.

- Build trusting, collaborative partnerships with Tribal Nations so we can improve the welfare of animals covered under the AWA and develop detailed response plans to protect animals during emergencies.

**Objective 2.2:** Eliminate soring in the Tennessee walking horse industry.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Supplement current APHIS inspectors with additional intermittent personnel who are regionally based, allowing for increased attendance and oversight at more horse industry trainings, shows, exhibitions, and outreach events.
- Improve compliance through the use of new technologies, such as thermography, evaluation of digital radiographs of horses' legs and feet, iris scanning for horse identification, and laboratory analysis of tissue and blood samples to detect the presence of foreign substances and determine whether soring has occurred.
- Continue to focus on consistency and standardization of horse inspection practices, including using a formal decision model to select which horse shows to inspect based on risk and other factors.
- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of compliance and enforcement actions to improve strategies for gaining compliance.
- Maintain a structured training program for intermittent employees and designated qualified persons (DQPs).
- Modify existing regulations to enhance the training of DQPs and horse industry organizations, thereby increasing compliance.

**Objective 2.3:** Ensure the safe and humane commercial transport of equines for slaughter.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Proceed with inspection of conveyances and review of documents by the Slaughter Horse Transport Program and cooperating partners, while complying with current prohibitions on inspection of horses for slaughter. Plainly evident violations concerning animal health or welfare will be pursued.
- Engage in education and outreach with markets, buyers, shippers and regulatory officials.

**Goal 3. Protect forests, urban landscapes, rangelands and other natural resources, as well as private working lands from harmful pests and diseases.**

Nationwide, APHIS protects 596 million acres of forested land by preventing the spread of forest pests that have wide ranging, destructive impacts and cost local governments up to \$1.7 billion in tree damage and removal expenses and \$830 million in losses to residential property values. APHIS' survey, control, and eradication efforts prevent pest and wildlife damage to forests, rangelands, and other working lands that provide jobs, support ranches, protect and provide wildlife habitat, and create recreational opportunities.

**Objective 3.1:** Reduce damage to valuable natural and agricultural resources caused by plant pests and diseases.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Maintain the emerald ash borer regulatory framework to focus on the leading edge of infestations while minimizing impacts on regulated businesses in quarantined areas.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of releases of biological control agents in States and on Tribal lands, and combine both regulatory and education outreach activities to address the risks of moving logs, firewood, and nursery stock.
- Examine detection technologies (such as traps and visual surveys) and partner with States and Tribes to determine and apply the most effective strategies to survey and eradicate the Asian longhorned beetle, which threatens up to 30 percent of trees nationwide.
- Partner with Federal and State agencies and Tribes to enact measures such as a public outreach campaign to mitigate the movement of forest pests through firewood.
- Continue to explore options that minimize regulatory burdens.
- Conduct surveys and treatments to manage grasshopper and Mormon cricket damage, emphasizing early season treatments (using lower levels of insecticides) to reduce immature pest populations rather than stronger, more expensive pesticides required to address mature pests.

**Objective 3.2:** Reduce damage to valuable natural, agricultural, and other resources caused by wildlife.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Reduce damage to agricultural and other landscapes (e.g., forested areas) by overabundant large mammal populations (e.g., white-tailed deer, feral swine) in rural landscapes, national parks, forests, or suburban communities.
- Reduce depredation or nuisance issues caused by migratory birds, such as Canada geese, protected by Federal laws, including working with industry to further develop an existing contraceptive for managing bird populations.
- Reduce damage to landscapes or infrastructures from roosting and/or flocking birds (e.g., vultures, gulls, and waterfowl).
- Continue to work with Federal, State, Tribal, and local partners to protect livestock and wildlife from depredation by predators, and to protect transportation infrastructure, timber and agriculture resources, and fish and wildlife from flooding caused by beavers.
- Continue to work with Federal, State, Tribal, and local partners to protect aquaculture resources from migratory birds and other depredating wildlife species.
- Continue to work with Federal, State, Tribal, and local partners and respond to requests to protect natural resources, agriculture, and wildlife from invasive species.

- Continue to cooperate with the Federal Aviation Administration, the Department of Defense, and the National Association of State Aviation Officials to reduce wildlife hazards at airports across the Nation.
- Collaborate with private industry on research to develop new technologies for species recognition and contraception, new repellent compounds for managing vertebrate pest damage, and vaccines for managing threats posed by zoonotic diseases including rabies.

**Goal 4. Ensure the safety, purity, and effectiveness of veterinary biologics and protect plant health by optimizing our oversight of GE organisms.**

APHIS protects U.S. plant health by providing for the safe importation, interstate movement, and environmental release/field testing of GE organisms that may pose a plant health risk. After rigorous scientific review, APHIS' regulatory determination that a GE organism does not pose a plant pest risk is a significant step in allowing new and innovative GE products to enter commerce. APHIS' regulatory controls ensure that new GE crops will not pose plant pest risks when released into the environment and that veterinary biologics and associated products developed through biotechnology and other modern technologies are safe, pure, potent, and effective.

**Objective 4.1:** Ensure that regulated GE organisms will not pose plant pest risks when released into the environment.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Balance oversight and risk by exploring opportunities for regulatory solutions and alternative solutions to better ensure resources are allocated in accordance with risk.
- Improve processes to produce greater predictability and more timely completion of regulatory oversight.
- Continue to improve compliance through rigorous inspection and compliance assistance programs.
- Pursue alternatives to rulemaking that optimize our oversight of GE organisms.
- Continue to provide outreach to State and Tribal partners and the general public about APHIS' role regarding GE organisms.

**Objective 4.2:** Ensure pure, safe, potent, and effective veterinary biologics are available for diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of animals.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Further streamline processes of evaluating, testing, and licensing veterinary biologics products used to diagnose, prevent, and treat animal diseases to safely move important new technology to the market faster.
- Explore new veterinary biologics licensing pathways and regulatory flexibility for licensure of non-traditional products; implement more efficient methods of regulating current, low risk veterinary biologics products (e.g., antibody products).

- Deploy an electronic system for processing biologic licensing requests and for notifying manufacturers when biologic serials are approved for the marketplace.

**Goal 5. Ensure the safe trade of agricultural products, creating export opportunities for U.S. producers.**

APHIS officials located in the United States and abroad use their technical expertise in animal and plant health to resolve sanitary and phytosanitary issues and trade barriers that affect the \$140.9 billion agricultural export economy, allowing markets to be retained, expanded, or opened. Agricultural exports support more than 1 million jobs across the Nation, many of them in rural communities. Through its leadership and involvement in international standard setting bodies, APHIS helps promote and improve international animal and plant health standards. APHIS also collaborates with other Federal agencies, international organizations, and foreign nations to conduct capacity building activities that help developing countries strengthen their agricultural health infrastructure. Additionally, APHIS partners with other countries to launch and maintain offshore programs and initiatives such as the preclearance program and the Greater Caribbean Safeguarding Initiative. Collectively, these efforts help ensure that U.S. agricultural resources are protected.

**Objective 5.1:** Ensure the resolution of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) issues and trade barriers.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Identify strategic opportunities for removing or reducing trade barriers that impact market retention, access, and expansion of U.S. agricultural products.
- Take a holistic approach to resolving plant trade issues with all trading partners across the board, understanding that this is a key and expanding market.
- Work with the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS); Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA); the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR); and trading partners on issues involving low level presence of GE materials in seed and grain to reduce trade disruptions.
- Work closely with industry partners and key international counterpart officials to better understand the changing profiles of business and commerce, and their relationship to SPS issues.
- Play a leadership role in revising the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) Publication 15. ISPM 15 directly addresses the need to treat wood materials of a thickness greater than 6mm that are used to ship products between countries.
- Provide leadership and scientific expertise to OIE to ensure development of science-based standards for addressing animal health and welfare.

**Objective 5.2:** Eliminate all remaining bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) barriers to export markets.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Engage countries with restrictions on beef that are inconsistent with OIE negligible BSE risk status in coordination with USTR, FAS, and FSIS strategic priorities. Forty eight countries maintain BSE bans or restrictions on U.S.-origin products that are inconsistent with OIE standards. APHIS—along with its government partners—will actively engage with 25 percent of those 48 countries each fiscal year.
- Work with other Federal agencies (USTR, State Department, and FAS) to develop strategies to engage trading partners that continue to impose BSE-related restrictions.
- Continue to engage countries in removing BSE barriers by initiating animal health discussions. Such discussions may open doors for access for other U.S. ruminant commodities.
- Engage U.S. exporters in efforts to eliminate remaining BSE barriers to export markets.

**Objective 5.3:** Improve the export customer experience.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Fully deploy the service center concept for meeting animal and animal product exporter's certification needs, allowing for more timely and consistent service.
- Further expand electronic processing of export documentation, adding digital signature capabilities and full electronic delivery and acceptance of documentation.
- Fully develop and implement eFile, a system that will automate all of APHIS' permitting processes along with other processes like certification, registration, and licensing.
- Optimize the National Veterinary Accreditation Program through outreach and education.

**Goal 6. Protect the health of U.S. agricultural resources, including addressing zoonotic disease issues and incidences, by implementing surveillance, preparedness and response, and control programs.**

APHIS' surveillance, preparedness and response, and control activities are designed to quickly detect and address destructive animal and plant pests and diseases and reduce or prevent the billions of dollars of damage to agricultural resources that they could cause. Other countries look to APHIS' surveillance results to confirm the safety of American exports. APHIS enters into cooperative agreements with its State and Tribal partners to carry out surveillance and response programs to meet national program surveillance standards. APHIS is committed to providing greater flexibility for cooperators in addressing their most serious threats while still collecting the surveillance data necessary to provide assurance to our trading partners about the safety and health of U.S. agriculture.



**Objective 6.1:** Monitor the health, including incidences and issues related to zoonotic diseases, of U.S. agricultural resources.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Coordinate with Federal, State, Tribal, and industry partners to ensure successful functioning of an animal disease traceability program; conduct animal disease traceability training; implement a tag retirement pilot study; implement monitoring and compliance program activities; publish a proposed rule on approved livestock marketing facilities; and, conduct outreach to support the full implementation of the program.
- Expand surveillance and preparedness for the most significant foreign animal diseases as identified by stakeholders and partners (e.g. classical swine fever, African swine fever, and foot-and-mouth disease [FMD]).
- Use early detection surveys for a greater number of high-risk exotic plant pests.
- Expand surveillance of and develop response plans for emerging diseases including production and zoonotic diseases that are of economic significance to industry and consumers, and/or a risk to public health.
- Implement the National List of Reportable Animal Diseases.
- Expand plant pest and disease surveys to target high-risk hosts and commodities and provide assessments of pest distribution and pest-free areas.
- Collaborate with DHS to enhance surveillance approaches for animal diseases (e.g., Enhanced Passive Surveillance project).
- Collaborate with Federal, State, Tribal, and local partners to conduct surveillance for zoonotic diseases in wildlife that could impact domestic livestock.
- Apply new technologies to improve poultry and poultry products throughout the country under the National Poultry Improvement Program, a cooperative industry-State-Federal program.
- Optimize the National Veterinary Accreditation Program's role related to monitoring the health of U.S. agricultural resources through outreach and education.
- Support One Health goals by continuing to identify and participate in opportunities to address zoonotic disease issues and incidents; finalizing operating procedures for conducting on-farm epidemiologic investigations; conducting surveillance of antibiotic drug susceptibility of selected bacterial organisms; and, continuing to build and expand upon university partnerships to leverage international networks.
- Strengthen partnerships with Tribal Nations to develop a robust surveillance and early detection system for detecting and reporting invasive species.

**Objective 6.2:** Ensure effective preparedness and response systems.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Develop training and exercise strategies and identify agency-wide training and exercise priorities to ensure that the emergency preparedness and response mission will continue to be achieved. Design training and exercise plans to enhance the

preparedness of APHIS and its partners to respond to livestock and poultry health incidents, as well as other hazards.

- Design secure food plans to ensure business continuity during disease outbreaks. As funding allows, conduct exercises to test plans and develop supporting certification systems.
- Partner with stakeholders to evaluate response options and update response plans, adjusting for changing agricultural production systems and societal expectations (e.g., the potential for expanded use of vaccination as a response tool for FMD).
- Further enhance the National Veterinary Stockpile.
- Develop and use models for emergency preparedness and response and develop business continuity plans.
- Integrate climate change modeling into emergency preparedness and biosecurity hazard planning to respond to adverse conditions such as hurricanes, floods, droughts, and wildfires caused by climate change, thus mitigating damage to plants, animals, and humans.
- Build upon APHIS' extensive animal and plant health networks to deal with pest and disease emergencies.
- Work effectively with all stakeholders to coordinate all-hazards agriculture and natural resources response support (Emergency Support Function #11 of the *National Response Framework*) including coordination with Federal agencies for support to USDA for statutory responses. Use APHIS animal and plant health networks and structures to support State, local, territorial, and Tribal governments as they assist with animal and agricultural emergency management. Integrate response support across the preparedness spectrum.

**Objective 6.3:** Ensure effective control, eradication, management, and enforcement programs.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Prevent citrus greening disease from causing damage in California by establishing a multi-agency coordination framework to better coordinate the work of Federal, State, Tribal, and citrus industry partners.
- Eradicate boll weevil from the United States through trapping and treatment efforts.
- Eradicate the European grapevine moth, a serious threat to the grape and wine industry, from California using detection strategies and treatment protocols recommended by a technical working group comprised of Federal, State, and Tribal experts and academic scientists, with assistance from California and industry participants in funding and conducting control treatments.
- Build flexibility into regulations and develop case-specific protocols supported by current data and technologies to manage bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis, and other cattle diseases in ways that reduce producers' administrative burdens while continuing to ensure confidence in cattle health.
- Implement innovative strategies to test, identify, and remove infected animals without having to depopulate entire herds, thus enhancing industry productivity.

- Develop science-based programs in collaboration with industry and academia to jointly identify practices that will mitigate pest damage. For example, APHIS has been working with the National Plant Board and the nursery industry to improve nursery production practices.
- Collaborate with industry, Tribes, and States to develop approaches that take advantage of best management and husbandry practices to minimize the damage and spread of plant and animal diseases.
- Continue using private veterinarians to increase Federal and State animal health response capabilities through the National Veterinary Accreditation Program.
- Work with USDA and university researchers to study the impact of climate change on the emergence or spread of pests and diseases in the United States, and redesign regulatory approaches to better prevent or mitigate the impact of pests and diseases on U.S. plant and animal resources.

**Objective 6.4:** Manage conflicts caused by wildlife, detect and control wildlife diseases, and protect threatened and endangered species.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Develop and implement a national, cooperative cost-share plan, working with Federal, Tribal, and State partners, to slow and ultimately stop the spread of feral swine.
- Continue to work with Federal, Tribal, and State partners to reduce property damage and protect public safety from the dangers associated with bird strikes.
- Continue to work with State, Tribal, and local partners to prevent the spread of rabies via raccoons, coyotes, foxes, and skunks by distributing oral vaccine baits.
- Develop wildlife research protocols and conduct operational wildlife management programs that protect threatened and endangered species, agricultural resources, property, and human health by reducing or preventing negative impacts of numerous wildlife species.

**Objective 6.5:** Provide and coordinate timely diagnostic laboratory support and services.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Partner with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians to continue enhancing Federal, university, and State laboratory resources in the National Animal Health Laboratory Network.
- Provide leadership on diagnostic techniques, tests, and new technologies including greater use of genomics and bioinformatics.
- Coordinate with DHS and other partners to address timeliness of diagnostic capabilities for early detection of high consequence diseases.

**Goal 7. Create an APHIS for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that is high-performing, efficient, adaptable, and embraces civil rights.**

APHIS believes that our employees are the key to accomplishing our goals and fulfilling our mission. Investing in the workforce means nurturing a workplace where there is equity of opportunity and where everyone is not only empowered to reach their full potential but to leverage their unique talents, abilities, and perspectives. By enhancing diversity and inclusion, we can create a higher performing organization. A dynamic and efficient workplace where leaders and employees are held accountable for delivering results will increase the value of our services and maximize the taxpayers' return on investment. We will accomplish this through a number of management initiatives designed to improve organizational performance, enhance employee engagement, and increase efficiency and accountability.

**Objective 7.1:** Build and maintain a public-service oriented, inclusive, high-performing workforce by investing in and engaging employees.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Actively seek, through formal and informal means, employee feedback to improve organizational performance; employee recruitment, retention, and development; and, work life quality.
- Enhance the leadership skills of current APHIS leaders and develop a cadre of future leaders.
- Improve APHIS leadership accountability by ensuring equal opportunity accountability assessments are submitted timely, consistently, and accurately.
- Increase the percentage of APHIS employees with Individual Development Plans and Learning Contracts.
- Monitor individual development to ensure employees are benefitting from continual learning opportunities.
- Develop employees to enhance the organization's ability to meet its mission and to increase the ability of employees to achieve rewarding careers within the organization.
- Encourage employees to embrace new challenges in an environment of open innovation.

**Objective 7.2:** Build a safe, secure, and efficient workplace by leveraging technology and shared solutions across organizational boundaries.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Fully develop and implement eFile, a system that will automate all of APHIS' permitting processes along with other processes like certification, registration, and licensing.
- Increase telework participation to meet USDA's telework goals.
- Implement a strategic framework for APHIS information technology (IT) that focuses on providing all employees with the same quality of IT support; enhancing technology to better serve our customers; unifying IT service delivery and products and services;

securing IT data and systems; and, building an effective cadre of highly skilled IT professionals.

- Renew and enhance our commitment to safety and health. APHIS continues to improve the safety and security of employees performing dangerous tasks or working in areas domestically or abroad that are inherently dangerous. Activities include increasing awareness and training on safety and security issues, increasing outreach to APHIS employees, and improving working relationships.
- Provide a workplace with zero tolerance for harassing, threatening, and violent behavior.
- Focus on new strategies to improve and deliver our services in a way that is less costly, faster, and more effective for American agriculture, farmers and ranchers, taxpayers, and all those we serve.
- Seek innovative solutions to administrative projects such as strategic sourcing, workers compensation, and marketplace approaches. This includes exploring options to acquire goods and services using shared resources such as USDA-wide contracts and identifying APHIS services that could be placed on a USDA-wide marketplace menu of services. The Agency will also work with other USDA agencies to develop program efficiencies in the Office of Workers' Compensation Program and implement long-term strategies such as a department-wide safety management system.

**Objective 7.3:** Value the differences offered by a diverse workforce, and leverage those differences to better serve the Agency's customers.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Hold managers, supervisors, and other employees accountable for ensuring that the Agency's customers and employees are treated in accordance with USDA's and APHIS' civil rights policy and applicable legal requirements.
- Ensure all customers equal access to programs, activities, and services delivered or funded by USDA and APHIS.
- Provide a workplace that is free of discrimination.
- Enhance the diversity of the workforce through focused recruitment and retention efforts.
- Use the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process, whenever possible. ADR can provide effective tools to aid in the resolution of discrimination complaints. The most common tools include mediation, conciliation, coaching, and facilitation.
- Increase procurement with small businesses, small disadvantaged businesses, and minority-owned businesses.
- Implement actions items addressed in the Agency's Cultural Transformation Action Plan.
- Enhance special emphasis programs to expand diversity learning.
- Work with advisory groups and committees to ensure that we understand the needs of diverse customers, partners, and stakeholders.

- Adhere to the specific goals, performance objectives, and indicators that have been established by the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights to ensure progress. These are presented in Appendix A.

**Objective 7.4:** Maximize the return on taxpayer investment in APHIS through stewardship of resources and focused program evaluations.

**Tactics to achieve the objective:**

- Expand the Agency's use of performance data and program evaluation results to drive decisions. APHIS will use the information derived from program evaluations to identify areas for improvement and opportunities for applying limited resources to improving the quality of service provided by APHIS programs.
- Reduce the footprint of leased and owned real property assets through consolidations, co-locations, and reductions in underutilized assets.
- Increase cross-program coordination on the acquisition and use of APHIS fleet vehicles to maximize use.
- Identify and implement additional procurement opportunities suitable for strategic sourcing within the Agency and the Department.
- Explore opportunities to provide administrative support services through shared service operations, while ensuring continued excellent service to APHIS. For example, APHIS is providing administrative services to a number of USDA agencies including but not limited to the Agricultural Marketing Service; the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration; and FAS.

# Appendix A:

## CIVIL RIGHTS COMMITMENT

The following table represents the USDA Goals, Performance Objectives and Goal Indicators as they pertain to Agency Leadership commitment to improving civil rights in APHIS.

Civil Rights Performance and Accomplishment Report			
Goal	Performance Objectives		Goal Indicators
Commitment of Agency Leadership/ Strategic Integration	Leadership	Hold managers, supervisors and other employees accountable for ensuring that USDA's customers and employees were treated in accordance with USDA'S civil rights policy and applicable legal requirements.	<p>APHIS commitments to USDA's civil rights goals and obligations are included in the Strategic Plan. The commitment includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employees are notified of the requirements of Departmental Regulation (DR) 4300-010, "Civil Rights Accountability Policy and Procedures," issued January 18, 2006.</li> <li>2. Annual performance appraisals for managers and supervisors include an evaluation of their contributions to USDA's commitment to civil rights and equal opportunity, and adherence to civil rights policy.</li> <li>3. A representative sampling of performance plans (signed copy) shows evidence of EEO elements for all levels</li> <li>4. Provide a list and identify finding of each employee case where disciplinary action or corrective action was taken relating to civil rights or retaliation and indicate the timeframe in which the action was taken.</li> <li>5. APHIS submits succinct narrative rationale with documented evidence to determine compliance with the above indicators using the appropriate scoring elements.</li> </ol>
Secretary's Commitment	Secretary's Commitment	Took affirmative steps to implement each of the areas illustrated by the Secretary.	<p>APHIS implements Secretary's Commitment:</p> <p>The Secretary's commitment of successful transformation includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An inclusive workplace environment where there is equity of opportunity and all employees are empowered to reach their full potential</li> <li>2. Modernization of technology and systems that will enable us to provide the highest level of service;</li> <li>3. A commitment by USDA employees to improving USDA's past and future record of civil rights, including expanding outreach efforts to socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers;</li> <li>4. Systems of accountability that encourage all employees to achieve high standards of performance and customer service; and</li> <li>5. A renewed commitment to creating diversity in the workforce and succession planning.</li> </ol>
Implementation of Secretary's Commitment	Agency's Commitment to Diversity	Took Affirmative steps to implement each of the six (6) component areas illustrated by Diversity Road Map and ensured that goals and timelines are accomplished accordingly.	<p>APHIS Implements the Diversity Road Map to meet all requirements and timelines</p> <p>USDA's Diversity Road Map has specific goals, activities, and timelines, organized around the following (6) components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leadership Accountability and Commitment</li> <li>2. Outreach and Partnerships</li> <li>3. Recruitment and Hiring</li> <li>4. Retention and Promotion</li> <li>5. Diversity Training and Awareness</li> <li>6. Employee Development and Recognition</li> </ol>