



United States Department of Agriculture

USDA Accomplishments 2009-2011

Secretary Tom Vilsack

Top Accomplishments

The Health of the American People

- In 2011, USDA provided critical nutrition assistance to 1 in 4 Americans during a time of record need. Over 3 years, we encouraged state policy changes to eliminate barriers keeping eligible low-income working families out of the program, so that low-income Americans are 6% more likely to be enrolled in SNAP.
- To protect the valuable taxpayer investment in SNAP, we achieved a record level of accuracy for SNAP payments - 96.19% - and initiated aggressive new tactics to investigate illegal activity and remove bad actors from the program.
- Helped the Obama administration enact historic legislation so USDA can make real reforms to the school lunch and breakfast programs serving nearly 32 million children each day.
- To help families make healthier food choices, USDA released MyPlate, a simple, powerful visual cue to promote healthier eating at mealtimes, and updated the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, our nation's fundamental policy reflecting the latest science on diet and health.
- USDA will better protect Americans by adopting a zero tolerance policy for raw beef products containing six additional strains of shiga-toxin producing *E. coli*.
- USDA will prevent as many as 25,000 foodborne illnesses annually with new and tougher standards to reduce the occurrence of the Salmonella and Campylobacter pathogens in poultry.

- Announced a new “test and hold” policy that could have prevented 44 recalls between 2007 and 2009.

Support for American Agriculture

- American agriculture is a bright spot in our nation's economy. Since 2009, median farm family household income rose 4.9 %. Farm sector earnings reached a nominal record with net farm income of \$100.9 billion for 2011.
- To help keep American agriculture profitable and keep farmers on the farm, USDA maintains a strong safety net and responds to farmers affected by the disasters across the country. Over the past 3 years, USDA's crop insurance program has paid out about \$16.2 billion in crop insurance indemnities to more than 325,000 farmers who lost crops due to natural disasters. Other disaster assistance programs have provided nearly \$3.5 billion in aid to more than 250,000 farmers and ranchers recovering from natural disasters.
- Provided 103,000 loans to family farmers, totaling \$14.6 billion in total credit. Over 50 percent of the loans went to beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.
- Supported the expansion of markets for U.S. agricultural goods abroad, working aggressively to break down barriers to trade, and assisting U.S. businesses with the resources needed to reach consumers around the world.

- Farm exports in fiscal year 2011 reached a record high of \$137.4 billion—exceeding past highs by \$22.5 billion—and supported 1.15 million jobs here at home.
- Helped gain approval for new trade agreements with Panama, Colombia, and South Korea, which will result in an estimated \$2.3 billion in additional agricultural trade in 2012 and beyond, and support nearly 20,000 domestic jobs.

Conserving our Natural Resources

- Stepped up conservation with more than 10 landscape-scale initiatives. In the Chesapeake Bay and Mississippi River Basin, in Florida's Northern Everglades, through the Longleaf Pine Restoration project in the Southeastern states, USDA is applying the most effective conservation practices in the best places to increase agricultural and environmental returns.
- Enrolled a record number of acres of private working lands in conservation programs, working with more than 500,000 farmers and ranchers to implement conservation practices that clean the air we breathe, filter the water we drink and prevent soil erosion.
- Worked to improve water and soil quality and enhance wildlife habitat on private lands larger than the state of California.
- Accelerated the protection of critical wetlands habitats, enrolling more than 650,000 acres in a program to improve water quality and help prevent flood damage.
- Proposed a new planning rule for 193 million acres of National Forests that will provide a framework to develop land management plans that protect water, wildlife and promote jobs and vibrant communities.
- We increased the pace of restoration on our National Forests, creating thousands of jobs maintaining and improving 23,950 miles of roads and trails and reducing the risk of wildfire for over 30,000 communities by removing flammable vegetation on nearly 9.6 million acres.

Rural Economic Development

- The Obama administration and USDA have made historic investments in America's rural communities, helping create jobs today while building thriving economies for the long term.
- Provided grants and loans to assist over 50,000 rural small and mid-sized businesses in creating or saving 266,000 jobs.
- Invested in over 6,250 community facilities projects, reaching nearly 29 million rural Americans, including 736 education facilities, 433 libraries, 581 health care facilities, and 2,800 public safety facilities.
- Helped 456,000 rural families in more than 21,000 communities buy or refinance a home.
- Invested in new and improved broadband service for nearly seven million rural residents, and 364,000 rural businesses, saving or creating over 25,000 jobs.
- Helped improve and modernize rural electric infrastructure for over 25 million rural residents and businesses with more than 80,000 miles of upgraded and new electric lines.
- Invested in 5,100 water and waste water community infrastructure projects to help safeguard the health of 18 million rural residents and create or save 135,000 jobs.
- Helped lead an effort to promote the domestic production and use of advanced biofuels with the potential to create hundreds of thousands of jobs in rural communities. Invested in research, supported farmers growing bioenergy feedstocks, and helped support more than 230 bioenergy projects, including construction of 5 biorefineries to produce fuels.
- Helped approximately 25,000 rural small businesses, farmers, and ranchers, save energy and improve their bottom line by installing renewable energy systems and energy efficiency solutions that will save a projected 6.5 billion in kWh – enough energy to power 590,000 American homes for a year.

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