



United States Department of Agriculture

USDA Accomplishments 2009-2012

Secretary Tom Vilsack

Top Accomplishments

Support for American Agriculture

- American agriculture remains resilient and a bright spot in the U.S. economy. Net Farm Income has reached historic highs, increasing from \$85 billion in 2008 to more than \$114 billion in 2012. Median farm family household income increased from \$51,431 in 2008 to \$57,645 today.
- To help keep American agriculture profitable and keep farmers on the farm, USDA maintains a strong safety net and responds to farmers affected by disasters across the country. Since 2009, USDA's crop insurance program has paid out more than \$28 billion in crop insurance indemnities to more than 340,000 farmers who lost crops due to natural causes. USDA expedited 2008 Farm Bill disaster assistance programs that have provided more than 400,000 assistance payments to producers totaling more than \$4 billion in disaster aid.
- Provided more than 134,000 loans to family farmers, totaling nearly \$19 billion in total credit. Over 50 percent of loans went to beginning and socially disadvantaged producers.
- Supported infrastructure, education and outreach to further local and regional food systems through the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative. 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, and streamlined program requirements to allow more farmers markets to accept EBT benefits. 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.
- Improved infrastructure and technical assistance for smaller-scale producers. Helped approximately 7,700 producers install temporary greenhouses to extend their growing season, while coordinating efforts to certify and support mobile slaughter facilities for livestock and poultry producers.
- Supported the expansion of markets for U.S. agricultural goods abroad, working aggressively to break down barriers to trade. 2009-2012 represent the strongest four years in history for agricultural trade, with U.S. agricultural product exports exceeding \$478 billion over these four years.
- 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.
- Agricultural exports for fiscal year 2013 are projected to set another new record and continue to support more than 1 million American jobs.
- 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.
- Worked with approximately 25,000 rural small businesses, farmers, and ranchers on renewable energy projects across America. Carried out more than 6,600 projects to save or create more than 7.32 billion kWh—enough energy to power 680,000 American homes annually. Invested in efforts to support 9 new advanced biofuels projects, 84 anaerobic digester projects, and more than 380 wind energy projects.

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.
- Invested in rural infrastructure. Made efforts to improve or construct more than 90,000 miles of electric line; invested in 6,700 water and wastewater projects for nearly 20 million Americans, creating or saving more than 150,000 jobs; and extended new or improved broadband service for more than 7 million Americans and 364,000 rural businesses.
- Strengthened rural communities. Carried out more than 8,000 community facilities projects reaching nearly 31 million rural Americans; helped more than 627,000 rural families to buy, refinance or repair a home; and provided grants and loans to assist nearly 60,000 rural small and mid-sized businesses in creating or saving more than 300,000 jobs.
- Helped lead efforts to promote the economic potential of the emerging biobased economy. USDA created the "USDA Biobased Product" label that now appears on more than 25,000 biobased consumer and industrial products.
- To help more than 3,000 companies currently producing biobased materials, the Obama Administration has expanded the number of biobased products for preferred Federal procurement. The Federal government has now identified 9,000 biobased products in more than 77 categories for preferred procurement.

Conserving our Natural Resources

- Stepped up conservation with 19 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.
- Accelerated the protection of critical wetlands habitats, enrolling more than 820,000 acres in a program to improve water quality and help prevent flood damage.

- Created thousands of jobs maintaining and improving more than 170,000 miles of trails and roads on National Forest lands, while reducing the threat of wildfire for tens of thousands of communities by removing flammable vegetation on 13.7 million acres of forest.
- Implemented a new planning rule for 193 million acres of National Forests that provides a framework to develop land management plans that protect water and wildlife and promote jobs and vibrant communities.

The Health of the American People

- USDA continues to provide critical nutrition assistance to millions of Americans during a time of record need. We encouraged state policy changes to eliminate barriers keeping eligible low-income working families out of the program, so that low-income Americans who need nutrition assistance 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 that, beginning this year, allowed USDA to deliver healthier school lunch and breakfast programs for 32 million children each day.
- To help families make healthier food choices, USDA and others 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.
- Better protected Americans by adopting a zero tolerance policy in June 2012 for raw beef products containing six additional strains of shiga-toxin producing E. coli.
- Implemented new and tougher standards to reduce the occurrence of the Salmonella and Campylobacter pathogens in poultry – changes that will prevent as many as 25,000 foodborne illnesses annually.
- Announced a policy that could have prevented 44 recalls between 2007 and 2009 and fully implemented this policy in 2012.

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