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# U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA): Structure and Proposed Changes

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## U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA): Structure and Proposed Changes

The Act of May 15, 1862, established the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). While agricultural research was USDA's initial focus, its size and responsibilities expanded over its more than 160 years. Newly created agencies within the department covered areas such as agricultural marketing, rural development, and conservation. Since then, USDA has undergone organizational changes; it established, consolidated, or eliminated agencies, offices, and presidentially appointed positions. Reorganization activities also have changed the shape, size, and location of the workforce and physical footprint of USDA and its agencies. As part of the second Trump Administration's reorganization and workforce reduction efforts throughout the executive branch, the Secretary of Agriculture released a memorandum in July 2025 proposing further reorganization plans for USDA.

Congress may organize the USDA through authorizing and appropriations legislation. For example, the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (1994 USDA Reorganization Act; Title II of P.L. 103-354) established a structure that resembles the department's current organization. Through appropriations legislation, Congress can direct or limit USDA's ability to use discretionary appropriations to reorganize the department. Further, the Secretary of Agriculture has existing authorities to determine how the department will be structured to perform its statutory duties. For example, Section 4 of the Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (7 U.S.C. §2201 note) allows the Secretary to delegate USDA statutory functions to any office or agency within the department.

The Secretary of Agriculture is a presidential Cabinet member. USDA's agencies are overseen by Under Secretaries (currently eight) who oversee the department's specific mission areas. USDA's mission areas are: Farm Production and Conservation; Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services; Food Safety; Marketing and Regulatory Programs; Natural Resources and Environment; Research, Education and Economics; Rural Development; and Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs. The mission areas are carried out by the agencies in the department, which administer programs and promulgate regulations. For example, four agencies carry out the Farm Production and Conservation mission area: the Farm Production and Conservation Business Center, the Farm Service Agency, the Risk Management Agency, and the Natural Resources and Conservation Service. USDA staff offices cover functions such as communications, legal functions, and budget. The Office of Personnel Management estimated that USDA employed approximately 71,000 employees as of February 2026. USDA estimates that approximately 4,600 of these employees are in the National Capital Region (NCR)—the Washington, DC, area. Most USDA staff are located in regional, area, and county office locations across the country. For example, some agencies, such as the Economic Research Service and National Institute for Food and Agriculture, locate their staff primarily in Kansas City, MO. The Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service locate their employees mostly in state and county offices.

On July 24, 2025, the Secretary of Agriculture released a memorandum titled "Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan." The memorandum includes proposals to reduce the number of USDA employees in the NCR, vacate facilities in the NCR, reduce regional and area offices for some USDA agencies, and consolidate various administrative functions in the department. On August 1, 2025, USDA announced a public comment period for the plan. In December 2025, the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture was reported to state that USDA's reorganization would be complete by the end of calendar year 2026.

Congress has conducted oversight hearings on the reorganization plan, and some Members have introduced legislation that may affect it. On July 30, 2025, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry held an oversight hearing to discuss the plan. In addition, agricultural appropriations legislation for FY2026 (P.L. 119-37, Division B) contains provisions that could affect USDA reorganization efforts, such as limits on the ability of the executive branch to use funds to move an office or agency outside of its mission area and limits on the department's ability to close county offices. The Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 (H.R. 7567) proposes amendments to the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act that would create new offices within USDA and amend or expand the functions of existing ones. Additionally, some introduced legislation would codify positions at USDA (e.g., the Chief of the Forest Service, H.R. 1762/S. 1061) or create new offices within the department (e.g., H.R. 2638, H.R. 3470, and S. 2692).

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The Act of May 15, 1862, established the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)<sup>1</sup> as a federal department “to acquire and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the most general and comprehensive sense of that word, and to procure, propagate, and distribute among the people new and valuable seeds and plants.”<sup>2</sup> USDA is overseen by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture.<sup>3</sup> Its agencies are divided into eight mission areas, each overseen by an Under Secretary. The mission areas represent areas of focus, such as farm production and conservation and agricultural marketing and regulatory programs. USDA also has three Assistant Secretaries of Agriculture and other administrative officers.

USDA has evolved in size and responsibilities over its more than 160 years. Successive authorization and appropriations acts, as well as administrative actions, have altered its organization and distribution of functions in response to changing needs and policy preferences. For example, several USDA agencies were established in the 1930s when the department’s role expanded as additional federal authorities and programs were created in response to the Great Depression and Dust Bowl.<sup>4</sup>

Reorganization in the federal government can consist of the establishment, consolidation, or elimination of agencies, offices, and presidentially appointed positions. Reorganization may also refer to changes to the shape, size, and location of the workforce and the physical footprint of a department and its agencies. Generally, one or more of these actions comprise a reorganization.<sup>5</sup>

Reorganization of USDA can occur through statutorily established administrative authorities or through legislative actions by Congress.<sup>6</sup> Section 4 of the Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (1953 reorganization plan) is an example of administrative authority that USDA has used to establish organizational arrangements of the department.<sup>7</sup> This authority has been used to create different offices and agencies, such as the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) and the Economic Research Service (ERS) in 1961, and is still used by the department for reorganization.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, when enacting the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (1994 USDA Reorganization Act; Title II of P.L. 103-354) Congress acted directly to delineate the agency’s organizational structure as it largely remains today.

The second Trump Administration has continued reorganization efforts across the executive branch. On July 24, 2025, the Secretary of Agriculture released a memorandum titled

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<sup>1</sup> 12 Stat. 387.

<sup>2</sup> 7 U.S.C. §2201.

<sup>3</sup> 7 U.S.C. §§2202, 2210. Prior to 1889, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was led by a Commissioner of Agriculture, who was not a Cabinet member. USDA was made an executive department by the Act of February 9, 1889, which established the position of the Secretary of Agriculture as a member of the President’s Cabinet. See 25 Stat. 659.

<sup>4</sup> This expanded role included price support programs for farmers, food assistance, soil and water conservation, and rural development. For instance, the Soil Conservation Act of 1935 (P.L. 74-46) created the Soil Conservation Service.

<sup>5</sup> References to the term *reorganization* may apply more narrowly in some circumstances, and may account for one or multiple of these changes.

<sup>6</sup> CRS Report R48523, *Organizing Executive Branch Agencies: Structure and Delegations of Authority*, by Daniel T. Shedd and Jared P. Cole.

<sup>7</sup> 7 U.S.C. §2201 note. “The Secretary of Agriculture may from time to time make such provisions as he shall deem appropriate authorizing the performance by any other officer, or by any agency or employee, of the Department of Agriculture of any function of the Secretary, including any function transferred to the Secretary by the provisions of this reorganization plan.”

<sup>8</sup> Secretary’s Memorandum No. 1446, Supplement 1, of April 3, 1961, under Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (1953 reorganization plan) and other authorities. See, USDA, “FY2026 Explanatory Notes—National Agriculture Statistics Service,” p. 19-3, <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/19-2026-CJ-NASS.pdf>.

“Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan” (2025 USDA reorganization plan). The plan proposes to relocate USDA staff out of the National Capital Region (NCR) to five hub locations across the United States.<sup>9</sup> The 2025 USDA reorganization plan also proposes to reduce the number of field offices for some agencies and consolidate functions within the five hub locations. Additionally, the plan proposes the consolidation of agency support functions. The memorandum states that USDA is not conducting a “large-scale workforce reduction” as part of the plan.<sup>10</sup> Beyond the proposed reorganization plan, other workforce reshaping initiatives during the second Trump Administration have decreased USDA’s workforce from about 91,000 for FY2025 to approximately 71,000 for FY2026, according to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).<sup>11</sup>

The 119<sup>th</sup> Congress has conducted oversight hearings on the 2025 USDA reorganization plan, such as the hearing *Review of the USDA Reorganization Proposal*, conducted by the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry in July 2025.<sup>12</sup> In November 2025, Congress passed the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agency Appropriations Act, 2026 (Division B of P.L. 119-37), which includes direction related to reorganization of USDA offices and agencies, such as requiring notification and approval from the agriculture committees to vacate USDA research facilities.<sup>13</sup> Some Members have introduced legislation in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress that would affect the organization of USDA through various means. The Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 (H.R. 7567), for example, would create new offices at USDA and amend or expand the functions of existing offices codified in the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act.

This report describes reorganization tools available to Congress, the President, and the Secretary of Agriculture and provides examples of their use to reorganize USDA. The report also provides an overview of USDA’s organizational structure prior to the 2025 USDA reorganization plan. Additionally, the report discusses the 2025 USDA reorganization plan and legislation and oversight activities in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress related to the department’s proposed reorganization.

## Reorganization Tools and Implementation

Congress, the President, and department heads each play a role in determining the organization and structure of agencies within the executive branch.<sup>14</sup> Congress, in enacting statutes and setting

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<sup>9</sup> Memorandum from Brooke L. Rollins, Secretary of Agriculture, “Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan,” July 24, 2025, <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/sm-1078-015.pdf> (hereinafter Rollins, “Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan”).

<sup>10</sup> Rollins, “Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan.”

<sup>11</sup> Office of Personnel Management (OPM), “Workforce Size and Composition,” <https://data.opm.gov/explore-data/analytics/workforce-size-and-composition>. Data as of February 2026. This report refers to data from OPM unless specified otherwise. According to OPM, values for previous years (i.e., FY2025) is the employee count as of September for that year. The value for the current year is the most recent monthly “snapshot” available. For a discussion of the changes in USDA staffing, see USDA, Office of the Inspector General (OIG), *U.S. Department of Agriculture Staffing Levels*, December 17, 2025, [https://usdaoig.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2025-12/USDA%20Staffing%20Levels%20Final%20Report%20-%20Dec%2017\\_508-signed.pdf](https://usdaoig.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2025-12/USDA%20Staffing%20Levels%20Final%20Report%20-%20Dec%2017_508-signed.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, *Review of the USDA Reorganization Proposal*, hearing, 119<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., July 30, 2025, S. Hrg. 119-132, <https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/hearings/review-of-the-usda-reorganization-proposal>.

<sup>13</sup> Courts generally have upheld congressional notification requirements, sometimes called “report and wait” provisions (see *INS v. Chadha*, 462 U.S. 919, 935 n. 9 (1983)), however, the requirement to obtain committee approval prior to completing a reorganization raises legal issues concerning Congress’s use of a “legislative veto.” *Chadha*, 462 U.S. at 959.

<sup>14</sup> This section provides a brief overview of these authorities and how they have impacted USDA. For a more (continued...)

appropriations, can establish how it desires an agency to be structured. Executive officials, such as the President and the heads of departments, can exercise authority granted by Congress to reorganize the structure of an agency within the limits set by statute.

The role of USDA has evolved, leading to the creation of new agencies and offices, workforce and office relocations, and general reorganization. Congress, the President, and the Secretary of Agriculture have initiated USDA reorganization efforts through various tools.

Congress, throughout the years, has enacted legislation to shape the structure and organization of the USDA. An example is the creation of the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs and the Trade and Foreign Affairs mission area. The Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 farm bill; P.L. 113-79) required USDA to propose a reorganization plan pertaining to agricultural trade functions in USDA, which would include the creation of an Under Secretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs.<sup>15</sup> USDA submitted the plan in 2017, and the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 farm bill; P.L. 115-334) codified the new Under Secretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Affairs.<sup>16</sup> One example of using appropriations as a reorganization tool is found in the Rural Development, Agriculture, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1988 (Title I of P.L. 100-202), which shifted funding and functions for the Assistant Secretary of Natural Resources to the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture.<sup>17</sup> Appropriations laws may also provide direction on the size of agencies depending on the funding levels provided.

Between 1932 and 1984, Congress periodically delegated authority to the President that allowed Administrations to develop reorganization plans for portions of the federal government and present those plans to Congress for consideration under special expedited procedures.<sup>18</sup> Generally, once a President submitted a reorganization plan to Congress, the plan would take effect unless Congress affirmatively rejected the proposal.<sup>19</sup> President Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, used this “presidential reorganization authority” to transfer to USDA the Farm Credit Administration, the Federal Farm Mortgage Corporation, and the Commodity Credit Corporation pursuant to Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 1939.<sup>20</sup> The 1953 reorganization plan, put in place pursuant to presidential reorganization authority, has significantly influenced the organization of USDA in the decades since. Under Section 4 of the 1953 reorganization plan, the Secretary may

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comprehensive overview, see CRS Report R44909, *Executive Branch Reorganization*, by Henry B. Hogue, and CRS Report R48523, *Organizing Executive Branch Agencies: Structure and Delegations of Authority*, by Daniel T. Shedd and Jared P. Cole.

<sup>15</sup> USDA, Report to Congress: Report on the Proposed 2017 Reorganization of the Department of Agriculture to Establish an Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs, May 11, 2017, <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/report-proposed-2017-reorg-usda-under-secretary-trade-foreign-ag-affairs.pdf> (hereinafter USDA, 2017 report to Congress on reorganization to establish an Under Secretary for TFAA).

<sup>16</sup> 7 U.S.C. §7007.

<sup>17</sup> For more, see “Agriculture, Food Programs Given \$56 Billion,” in *Congressional Quarterly (CQ) Almanac 1987*, 43<sup>rd</sup> ed. (CQ Press: 1988), p. 461, <https://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/document.php?id=cqal87-1145512>; and “Appropriations as a Tool of Reorganization,” in CRS Report R44909, *Executive Branch Reorganization*, by Henry B. Hogue.

<sup>18</sup> 5 U.S.C. §§901-912. For a more detailed overview of this authority, see “Congressional Grants of Presidential Reorganization Authority, 1932-1984,” in CRS Report R48763, *Presidential Reorganization Authority: Potential Approaches for Congressional Consideration*, by Henry B. Hogue.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the legal implications of this process, see CRS Report R48523, *Organizing Executive Branch Agencies: Structure and Delegations of Authority*, by Daniel T. Shedd and Jared P. Cole.

<sup>20</sup> The President, “Reorganization Plan No. 1,” 4 *Federal Register* 2730, July 1, 1939 (53 Stat. 1429).

delegate functions of the USDA to any officer or agency within the department.<sup>21</sup> Section 4 of the 1953 reorganization plan is codified at 7 U.S.C. §2201 note. The Secretary used this authority to establish, for example, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) in 1969.<sup>22</sup> USDA Secretary Rollins cited the 1953 reorganization plan as authority for issuing the 2025 USDA reorganization plan.<sup>23</sup>

Congress has also granted the Secretary of Agriculture some authority to control the structure and organization of the USDA. For example, the heads of executive departments may prescribe regulations governing the conduct of business and distribution of the work of their departments.<sup>24</sup> The Secretary of Agriculture has used this authority to create and reorganize agencies and offices, such as the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) which was created in 1981 from a reorganization of existing food safety agencies and functions in USDA.<sup>25</sup> As noted previously, the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act consolidated USDA programs and functions and expanded the ability of the Secretary to create additional agencies and offices within USDA to realize efficiencies. The act restructured USDA to resemble much of its current organizational structure; in the years following enactment, it also reduced staff across USDA. Since its passage, subsequent farm bills have amended the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act to initiate new offices and structural changes.<sup>26</sup> The Secretary's authority to conduct reorganization pursuant to the USDA Reorganization Act of 1994 expired on October 13, 1996 (7 U.S.C. §7014(a)). The termination of authority does not apply to the authorities of the 1953 reorganization plan codified in 7 U.S.C. §2201 note (7 U.S.C. §7014(b)(2)).<sup>27</sup>

The 2018 farm bill (P.L. 115-334) codified the most recent statutory changes to the structure of USDA and its mission areas. Prior to the 2018 farm bill, USDA had seven mission areas: Food Safety; Marketing, and Regulatory Programs (MRP); Natural Resources and Environment (NRE); Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services (FNCS); Rural Development (RD); Research, Education, and Economics (REE); and Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services.<sup>28</sup> The 2017 reorganization plan that restructured the agricultural trade functions at USDA also moved the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) out of the NRE mission area and into a restructured Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) mission area.<sup>29</sup> The move of NRCS into the FPAC mission area was codified in the 2018 farm bill by formally transferring NRCS to the oversight of the Under Secretary for FPAC.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The 1953 reorganization plan was prepared by the President and transmitted to the Senate and the House of Representatives in Congress assembled March 25, 1953, pursuant to the provisions of the Reorganization Act of 1949, approved June 20, 1949, as amended (5 U.S.C. §§901 et seq.).

<sup>22</sup> The authorities used to create the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) were 5 U.S.C. §301 and the 1953 reorganization plan (7 U.S.C. §2201 note) by Secretary's Memorandum No. 1659, Supplement 1.

<sup>23</sup> Rollins, "Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan."

<sup>24</sup> 5 U.S.C. §301.

<sup>25</sup> Memorandum from John R. Block, Secretary of Agriculture, "Reorganization of Department," June 17, 1981.

<sup>26</sup> The farm bill is an omnibus, multiyear law that governs an array of agricultural and food programs. For more on the farm bill, see CRS In Focus IF12047, *Farm Bill Primer: Background and Status*, by Jim Monke and Megan Stubbs.

<sup>27</sup> 7 U.S.C. §7014(b) shows the exceptions to the termination of authority.

<sup>28</sup> Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services consisted of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), and Risk Management Agency (RMA). Natural Resources and Environment at the time consisted of the Forest Service (FS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

<sup>29</sup> USDA, 2017 report to Congress on reorganization to establish an Under Secretary for TFAA. USDA also created the Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center to provide support functions to the restructured mission area. USDA, "2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Farm Production and Conservation Business Center," <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/25-2026-CJ-FPAC-BC.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> The 2018 farm bill (P.L. 115-334) transferred NRCS from 7 U.S.C. §6962 to 7 U.S.C. §6936. The name designation (continued...)

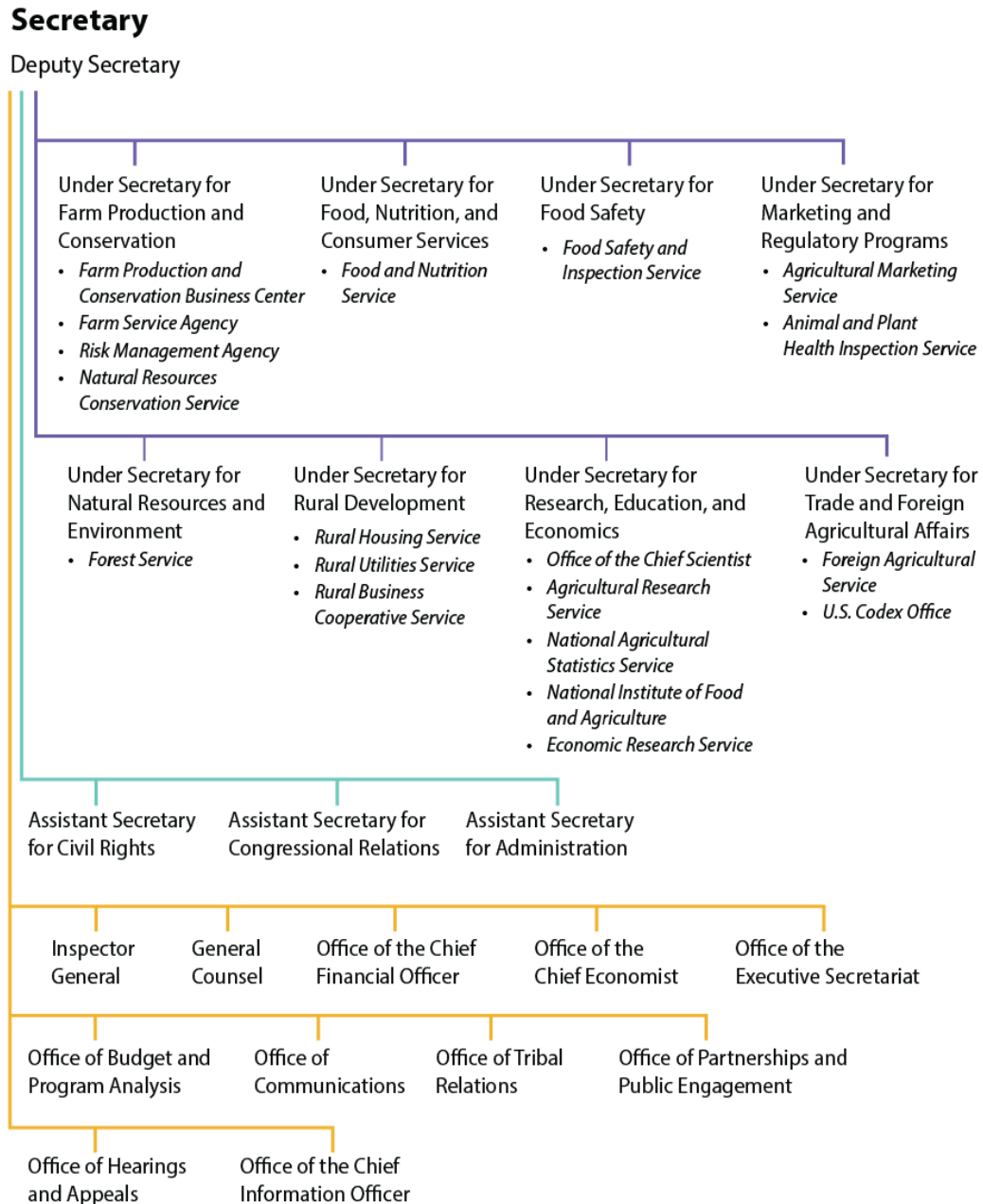
## **Current Organizational Structure of USDA**

This section details the organization and structure of USDA prior to the release of the 2025 USDA reorganization plan. **Figure 1** provides a high-level organizational chart of USDA, and the text box discusses the physical footprint of USDA. The subsections provide details about the responsibilities of the various officers within USDA, USDA's mission areas, and agencies responsible for implementing USDA programs and operations.

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was changed from the Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services in 7 U.S.C. §6931 to the Under Secretary for FPAC in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141).

**Figure I. USDA Organization Chart 2025**



**Source:** Figure created by CRS from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), “USDA Organization Chart,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-organization-chart.pdf>.

**Notes:** Organization chart as of January 2025. The purple lines denote the mission areas, and each Under Secretary reports to the Secretary of Agriculture. The green lines denote the Assistant Secretaries reporting to the Secretary. The yellow lines denote administrative and support offices that report to the Secretary. Offices and agencies in italics report to the officer above.

**U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Physical Footprint**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has many different office locations, both foreign and domestic, covering states, territories, areas, and regions. Office locations generally vary on the basis of purpose and mission. Presidential appointees, agency administration, and support staff for those functions generally are located in

headquarters offices in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, also known as the National Capital Region (NCR). At the release of the July 2025 Secretary’s Memorandum titled “Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan,” USDA reported an estimated 4,600 employees in the NCR.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) estimates that USDA employed approximately 71,000 staff as of February 2026. This estimate accounts for staff departures during calendar year 2025. Most USDA staff are located in the field at service centers, county offices, and other regional offices across the country. These locations are where customers of USDA programs can meet with agency staff. Other agencies maintain regional offices or central offices outside the NCR. Examples of agencies that maintain local offices for program support include the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rural Housing Service, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, and Rural Utilities Service. Additionally, agencies, such as the Food Safety and Inspection Service, have inspection agents across the country located where producers are. An example of an agency that maintains most of its staff in regional offices is the Farm Production and Conservation Business Center which has regional offices in Kansas City, MO; Raleigh, NC; Fort Worth, TX; Fort Collins, CO; Salt Lake City, UT; and Portland, OR. Other agencies maintain most of their staff in a central location outside the NCR, such as the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, which have most of their staff located in USDA regional offices in Kansas City, MO. Additionally, agencies that perform international work, such as the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), have staff located in foreign offices.

**Sources:** National Capital Planning Commission, “About NCPC,” <https://www.ncpc.gov/about/>; Memorandum from Brooke L. Rollins, Secretary of Agriculture, “Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan,” July 24, 2025; OPM, “Workforce Size and Composition,” <https://data.opm.gov/explore-data/analytics/workforce-size-and-composition>; USDA, “Get Started at Your USDA Service Center,” <https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/USDA-service-centers>; USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Food Safety and Inspection Service,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/24-2026-CJ-FSIS.pdf>; and FAS, “International Offices Directory,” <https://www.fas.usda.gov/international-offices>.

## Secretary of Agriculture and the Office of the Secretary

USDA is an executive department under the “supervision and control” of the Secretary of Agriculture.<sup>31</sup> The Secretary is appointed by the President, confirmed by the Senate, and serves in the President’s Cabinet.<sup>32</sup> Congress established the position of the Secretary in 1889.<sup>33</sup> As the head of an executive department, the Secretary has authority to prescribe regulations concerning USDA governance, employee conduct, distribution and performance of agency business, and recordkeeping.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the Secretary may delegate authority to any agency, office, officer, or employee of USDA to perform functions that have been transferred to the Secretary, including but not limited to functions provided by the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act.<sup>35</sup>

Directly under the Secretary is the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, who is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Congress established the Deputy Secretary position in 1934.<sup>36</sup> The Deputy Secretary serves as the first assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture and performs duties that may be required by law or by direction of the Secretary.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> 7 U.S.C. §2202.

<sup>32</sup> 7 U.S.C. §2202; White House, “The Cabinet,” <https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/the-cabinet/>.

<sup>33</sup> The codification of the Secretary and the department’s functions are defined in §7, Chaps. 55 and 55a, of the *U.S. Code*.

<sup>34</sup> 5 U.S.C. §301; 7 C.F.R. Part 2.

<sup>35</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6912. Other delegation authorities are found in 5 U.S.C. App., under the 1953 reorganization plan.

<sup>36</sup> 7 U.S.C. §2210.

<sup>37</sup> The Deputy Secretary’s authorities and duties are codified in 7 U.S.C. §2211. As the Secretary’s designated first assistant, the Deputy Secretary would serve as Secretary in an acting capacity, if the Secretary is unable to perform the functions of the office, unless the President directs another eligible individual to serve in such acting capacity. 5 U.S.C. §3345.

The management of USDA is conducted through the Office of the Secretary (OSEC). This office includes the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Chief of Staff, Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Executive Secretariat, and the immediate staff of these officers. The primary functions of OSEC are overseeing USDA operations and policies, developing policy, maintaining relationships with stakeholders, and liaising with the Executive Office of the President and Members of Congress.<sup>38</sup> Most OSEC staff are located in the Washington, DC, headquarters.

### **Support Offices in the Office of the Secretary**

OSEC houses support offices, such as the Office of the Executive Secretariat (OES) and the Office of Tribal Relations (OTR). OES handles and preserves USDA's official records. OES also manages the "official correspondence of the immediate Office of the Secretary, maintains the official records, and assists the Office of the Secretary with special projects."<sup>39</sup> OTR is responsible for government-to-government relationships between USDA and Tribes.<sup>40</sup> In addition, OTR provides policy advice to USDA on tribal issues; coordinates programs involving assistance to American Indians and Alaska Natives; and supports 1994 land-grant institutions (tribal colleges and universities) and programs.<sup>41</sup> The 2014 farm bill established OTR.<sup>42</sup> Both OTR and OES are headquartered in Washington, DC.

### **Assistant Secretaries of Agriculture**

USDA has three Assistant Secretaries of Agriculture: the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, and the Assistant Secretary for Administration.<sup>43</sup>

#### ***Civil Rights***

The Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights oversees the Office of Civil Rights. The office "provides leadership and direction for the fair treatment of all USDA customers and employees while ensuring the delivery of quality programs and enforcement of civil rights."<sup>44</sup> The office also works on issues involving compliance with laws, regulations, and policies related to civil rights. The Office of Civil Rights is headquartered in Washington, DC, with some staff located in the

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<sup>38</sup> USDA, "2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Office of the Secretary," <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/01-2026-CJ-OSEC.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> USDA, "Office of Executive Secretariat," <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-executive-secretariat>.

<sup>40</sup> USDA, "Office of Tribal Relations," <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-tribal-relations>.

<sup>41</sup> For more, see USDA, Office of Tribal Relations (OTR), "About Us," <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-tribal-relations/about-us>. The 1994 institutions are tribal colleges and universities that belong to the U.S. land-grant university system. For information about how OTR supports them, see USDA, OTR, "Tribal College Program," <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-tribal-relations/tribal-college-program>. For more on 1994 land-grant institutions, see CRS In Focus IF12009, *1994 Land-Grant Universities: Background and Selected Issues*, by Eleni G. Bickell.

<sup>42</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6921.

<sup>43</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6918.

<sup>44</sup> USDA, "Office of Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights," <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-assistant-secretary-civil-rights>.

field.<sup>45</sup> The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-171) established this assistant secretary position and office.<sup>46</sup>

### ***Congressional Relations***

The Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations oversees the Office of Congressional Relations (OCR), which works with Members of Congress, congressional staff, and congressional committees to communicate the legislative agenda and budget proposals of USDA. Additionally, OCR houses the Office of External and Intergovernmental Affairs, which is the liaison for USDA to state, county, local, and tribal governments, as well as USDA stakeholders.<sup>47</sup> OCR is headquartered in Washington, DC.

### ***Administration***

The Assistant Secretary for Administration oversees USDA’s administrative offices. These offices provide support to USDA and its agencies and work on issues such as human resources, procurement, property management, emergency preparedness and response, and programs for small and disadvantaged business utilization.<sup>48</sup> Offices in departmental administration include the Office of Human Resource Management, the Office of Property and Environmental Management, the Office of Contracting and Procurement, the Office of Operations, and the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization.<sup>49</sup> Other offices within departmental administration are the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) and the Office of Safety, Security, and Protection (OSSP). Departmental administration is headquartered in Washington, DC, with some staff located in the field.

OHS oversees USDA’s plans and responses to “major natural and terrorist emergencies and threats.”<sup>50</sup> OHS is responsible for USDA’s national security policy and emergency operations. The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 farm bill; P.L. 110-246) originally established OHS, and this authority was revised by the 2018 farm bill.<sup>51</sup> OSSP works on facility

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<sup>45</sup> USDA, “2026 Explanatory Notes—Office of Civil Rights,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/11-2026-CJ-OCR.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> Government Accountability Office, “U.S. Department of Agriculture: Recommendations and Options to Address Management Deficiencies in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights,” GAO-09-62, October 22, 2008, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-09-62>.

<sup>47</sup> USDA, “Office of Congressional Relations,” <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-congressional-relations>.

<sup>48</sup> USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Departmental Administration,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/04-2026-CJ-DA.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> For more on these offices, see the links at USDA, “Departmental Administration,” <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/departmental-administration>.

<sup>50</sup> USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Office of Homeland Security,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/02-2026-CJ-OHS.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> Agriculture appropriations acts had funded a USDA homeland security staff as early as FY2004. The 2008 farm bill codified the office at 7 U.S.C. §8911 (2012). The 2018 farm bill repealed the statute from the 2008 farm bill (P.L. 110-246) and transferred it to 7 U.S.C. §6922 as part of the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act.

emergency management and response, which includes physical security and procedures at USDA's Washington, DC, offices.<sup>52</sup> USDA administrative actions established OSSP in 2019.<sup>53</sup>

## Mission Areas and Agencies

USDA's agencies are organized according to eight mission areas.<sup>54</sup> The Secretary finalized the current mission areas in a reorganization during the first Trump Administration through executive authorities; that reorganization created the FPAC mission area and realigned various agencies and offices under certain missions.<sup>55</sup> Congress codified the mission areas in their current structure in the 2018 farm bill. An Under Secretary appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate oversees each of the mission areas.

## Farm Production and Conservation

FPAC agencies and offices administer farm support, risk management, and conservation programs. The agencies in the FPAC mission area are the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Risk Management Agency (RMA), and NRCS. Additionally, the FPAC mission area includes the FPAC Business Center, which provides support to these agencies. The Under Secretary for FPAC oversees this mission area.<sup>56</sup>

### *Farm Service Agency*

FSA administers various programs for farmers, ranchers, and agricultural partners, including programs that provide income support, disaster assistance, conservation assistance, loans, and other assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers.<sup>57</sup> FSA programs are delivered through USDA service centers, state offices, and area offices in all states and U.S. territories. FSA headquarters is located in Washington, DC, but most staff are located in field offices.<sup>58</sup> Congress created FSA in 1935 as the Resettlement Administration, and the agency was restructured over the years. Congress codified the agency as the Consolidated Farm Service Agency in the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act, and USDA renamed it FSA in 1995.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> USDA, "Office of Safety, Security, and Protection," <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/departmental-administration/office-safety-security-and-protection-osspp>; and USDA, "2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Office of Safety, Security, and Protection," <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/14-2026-CJ-OSSP.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup> USDA, "2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Office of Safety, Security, and Protection."

<sup>54</sup> USDA, "Mission Areas," <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/mission-areas>.

<sup>55</sup> USDA, "Secretary Perdue Announces USDA Improvements for Customer Service & Efficiency," press release, September 7, 2017, <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2017/09/07/secretary-perdue-announces-usda-improvements-customer-service-efficiency>; and USDA, "Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) at a Glance," [https://www.fsa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fpac\\_at\\_a\\_glance\\_22\\_final.pdf](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fpac_at_a_glance_22_final.pdf). See discussion in "Reorganization Tools and Implementation."

<sup>56</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6931. Congress codified the name "Farm Service Agency" in the 2018 farm bill (P.L. 115-334).

<sup>57</sup> For more on FSA programs, see USDA, FSA, "Find a Program," <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/resources/programs>; CRS Report RS21212, *Agricultural Disaster Assistance*, by Christine Whitt; CRS In Focus IF12218, *Farm Bill Primer: Farm Safety Net Programs*, by Stephanie Rosch; and CRS Report R40763, *Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs*, by Megan Stubbs.

<sup>58</sup> USDA, "2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Farm Service Agency," <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/26-2026-CJ-FSA.pdf>.

<sup>59</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6932. USDA, FSA, "History of USDA's Farm Service Agency," <https://dts.fsa.usda.gov/about-fsa/history-and-mission/agency-history/index>; and USDA, "2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Farm Service Agency."

### ***Natural Resources Conservation Service***

NRCS administers most USDA conservation programs and provides conservation technical assistance on private lands.<sup>60</sup> NRCS programs fund the implementation of practices to address natural resource concerns, farmland protection, wetlands restoration, emergency assistance, and watershed improvement projects.<sup>61</sup> NRCS also houses the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, which invests in grants to support urban agriculture and awards cooperative agreements that support composting and food waste reduction.<sup>62</sup> NRCS headquarters is located in Washington, DC, though most staff are located in field and regional offices.<sup>63</sup> Congress established the Soil Conservation Service in 1935. The 1994 USDA Reorganization Act restructured the agency as NRCS.<sup>64</sup>

### ***Risk Management Agency***

RMA administers the Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIP).<sup>65</sup> RMA employees are located in its Washington, DC, headquarters; the Kansas City, MO, national office; and other regional offices.<sup>66</sup> Congress established FCIP in 1938. The Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-127) amended the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act to create RMA.<sup>67</sup>

### ***FPAC Business Center***

The FPAC Business Center is a centralized administrative operations office that has responsibilities such as financial management, budgeting, and human resources for the FPAC mission area and its agencies.<sup>68</sup> FPAC is headquartered in Washington, DC, though a majority of staff are located in regional hub offices in Kansas City, MO; Raleigh, NC; Fort Worth, TX; Fort Collins, CO; Salt Lake City, UT; and Portland, OR.<sup>69</sup> The FPAC Business Center became operational in 2018 and was created through USDA administrative action.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> USDA, NRCS, “About NRCS,” <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about>.

<sup>61</sup> For more on conservation programs, see CRS Report R40763, *Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs*, by Megan Stubbs.

<sup>62</sup> The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP) was established by the 2018 farm bill (P.L. 115-334) amending P.L. 103-354. OUAIP is codified in 7 U.S.C. §6923. USDA, NRCS, “Urban Agriculture,” <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/other-topics/urban-agriculture>.

<sup>63</sup> USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Natural Resources Conservation Service,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/28-2026-CJ-NRCS.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> NRCS is codified in 7 U.S.C. §6936. USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Natural Resources Conservation Service.”

<sup>65</sup> For background on crop insurance, see CRS Report R46686, *Federal Crop Insurance: A Primer*, by Stephanie Rosch.

<sup>66</sup> USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Risk Management Agency,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/27-2026-CJ-RMA.pdf>. For more on RMA regional office locations, see USDA, RMA, “Contact Us,” <https://www.rma.usda.gov/about-rma/contact-us>.

<sup>67</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6933. USDA, “FY2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Risk Management Agency.”

<sup>68</sup> USDA, “2026 Explanatory Notes—Farm Production and Conservation Business Center,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/25-2026-CJ-FPAC-BC.pdf>; and USDA, FPAC Business Center, “Farm Production and Conservation Business Center,” <https://www.fpacbc.usda.gov/>.

<sup>69</sup> USDA, “2026 Explanatory Notes—Farm Production and Conservation Business Center.”

<sup>70</sup> USDA, “2026 Explanatory Notes—Farm Production and Conservation Business Center.”

## Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

The FNCS mission area addresses food and nutrition security while supporting American agriculture.<sup>71</sup> Its sole agency is FNS, which administers federal domestic nutrition assistance programs. The Under Secretary of Agriculture for FNCS oversees this mission area.<sup>72</sup>

### *Food and Nutrition Service*

FNS administers federal domestic food and nutrition assistance programs,<sup>73</sup> including household nutrition programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.<sup>74</sup> Other programs include child nutrition programs such as the National School Lunch Program. FNS is headquartered in Washington, DC, though most employees are located in regional and field offices.<sup>75</sup> Regional offices are located in Robbinsville, NJ; Chicago, IL; Denver, CO; Boston, MA; Atlanta, GA; Dallas, TX; and San Francisco, CA.<sup>76</sup> USDA established FNS in 1969 using the authority of the 1953 reorganization plan and other authorities in statute.<sup>77</sup>

## Food Safety

The Food Safety mission area works on public health issues related to the safety of meat, poultry, and egg products.<sup>78</sup> The sole agency is FSIS. The Under Secretary of Agriculture for Food Safety oversees this mission area.<sup>79</sup>

### *Food Safety and Inspection Service*

FSIS works to prevent foodborne illnesses and related to meat, poultry, and egg products and to ensure the humane handling of animals covered under the Humane Slaughter Act.<sup>80</sup> FSIS oversees and inspects regulated products, ensures labels are truthful and not misleading, and makes sure that these products are suitable for commercial distribution and human consumption.<sup>81</sup> FSIS also provides guidelines for food handling and preparation, recalls of animal products, and food safety research. FSIS headquarters is located in Washington, DC, with 10 district offices and

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<sup>71</sup> USDA, “Mission Areas.”

<sup>72</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6951.

<sup>73</sup> USDA, FNS, “Food and Nutrition Service,” <https://www.fns.usda.gov/>.

<sup>74</sup> A full list of programs can be found at the FNS web page, available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/>. Additional overview can be found at CRS Report R42353, *Domestic Food Assistance: Summary of Programs*, coordinated by Kara Clifford Billings.

<sup>75</sup> USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Food and Nutrition Service,” p. 34-6, <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/34-2026-CJ-FNS.pdf>.

<sup>76</sup> For more on regional offices, see USDA, FNS, “FNS Regional Offices,” <https://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>.

<sup>77</sup> FNS was created by Secretary’s Memorandum No. 1659, Supplement 1 citing the authorities of 5 U.S.C. §301 and the 1953 reorganization plan (7 U.S.C. §2201 note) as discussed in USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Food and Nutrition Service,” p. 34-3.

<sup>78</sup> USDA, “Mission Areas.”

<sup>79</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6981.

<sup>80</sup> USDA, Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), “About FSIS,” <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/about-fsis>.

<sup>81</sup> For more on functions at FSIS, see CRS In Focus IF12784, *Federal Inspection of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products*, by Laura Pineda-Bermudez; and CRS Report R48427, *Meat, Poultry, and Egg Product Labeling*, by Laura Pineda-Bermudez.

laboratories in Athens, GA; St. Louis, MO; and Albany, CA.<sup>82</sup> Most FSIS employees are located in the field as a nationwide network of inspection personnel.<sup>83</sup> USDA created FSIS in 1981 using the authority of the 1953 reorganization plan and other statutory authorities.<sup>84</sup>

## Marketing and Regulatory Programs

The MRP mission area works on issues related to domestic and international marketing of U.S. agricultural products, plant and animal health, regulations pertaining to genetic engineering, animal welfare, and wildlife management.<sup>85</sup> MRP agencies are the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The Under Secretary of Agriculture for MRP oversees this mission area.<sup>86</sup>

### *Agricultural Marketing Service*

AMS oversees commodity-specific programs (e.g., for dairy or specialty crops) and commodity marketing programs. AMS also provides regulatory oversight for research and promotion programs.<sup>87</sup> It enforces federal regulations that govern the standards of commodities, such as the Packers and Stockyards Act, the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act, the Seed Act, and the U.S. Grain Standards Act.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, AMS purchases domestically produced and processed commodities for domestic food assistance programs.<sup>89</sup> AMS is headquartered in Washington, DC, though most staff are located in field offices throughout the United States.<sup>90</sup> USDA established AMS in 1972 using the 1953 reorganization plan and other authorities.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Food Safety and Inspection Service,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/24-2026-CJ-FSIS.pdf>. For more on FSIS offices, see USDA, FSIS, “FSIS Programs and Offices,” <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/contact-us/fsis-offices>.

<sup>83</sup> USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Food Safety and Inspection Service.”

<sup>84</sup> FSIS was created through the authority of 5 U.S.C. §301 and the 1953 reorganization plan by Secretary’s Memorandum 1000-1, issued June 17, 1981 (see the *Federal Register* web page, “Food Safety and Inspection Service,” <https://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/food-safety-and-inspection-service>). FSIS derives its inspection authorities from the Federal Meat Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. §§601 et seq.), the Poultry Products Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. §§451 et seq.), the Egg Products Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. §§1031 et seq.), and the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (7 U.S.C. §§1901 et seq.). Prior to FSIS, other services performed similar work in USDA. For more information, see USDA, FSIS, “Our History,” <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/about-fsis/history>.

<sup>85</sup> USDA, “Mission Areas.”

<sup>86</sup> 7 U.S.C. §7005.

<sup>87</sup> USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), “Research and Promotion Programs,” <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/research-promotion>.

<sup>88</sup> The Packers and Stockyards Act is codified in 7 U.S.C. §§181-229. The Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act is codified in 7 U.S.C. §§499a-499t. The Seed Act is codified in 7 U.S.C. §§1551-1611. The U.S. Grain Standards Act is codified in 7 U.S.C. §§71-87k. USDA, AMS, “About AMS,” <https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams>; and USDA, AMS, “Grain Standards,” <https://www.ams.usda.gov/grades-standards/grain-standards>. For background on grain standards and inspections, see CRS Report R48577, *U.S. Grain Standards Act: Overview and Issues for Possible Reauthorization*, by Stephanie Rosch.

<sup>89</sup> Authority to make such purchases is provided in §32 of the Act of August 24, 1935 (P.L. 74-320, 7 U.S.C. §612c), commonly referred to as “Section 32.” CRS In Focus IF12193, *Farm and Food Support Under USDA’s Section 32 Account*, by Jim Monke.

<sup>90</sup> USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Agricultural Marketing Service,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/23-2026-CJ-AMS.pdf>.

<sup>91</sup> *Federal Register*, “Agricultural Marketing Service,” <https://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/agricultural-marketing-service>. The origins of AMS can be traced to consolidation efforts by the department in 1939; see USDA, AMS, “About AMS.”

## ***Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service***

APHIS works on issues related to plant and animal health, animal welfare, biotechnology, wildlife damage management, and global trade.<sup>92</sup> APHIS provides oversight and regulations for sanitary and phytosanitary trade issues, animal and plant health, animal welfare, wildlife management, and biotechnology. APHIS also funds programs related to pest and disease management, such as the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program and the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program.<sup>93</sup> APHIS headquarters is located in Greenbelt, MD, and Washington, DC, with hub offices in Fort Collins, CO; Minneapolis, MN; and Raleigh, NC.<sup>94</sup> Most APHIS staff are located in the field. APHIS also has international staff.<sup>95</sup> USDA established APHIS in 1972 under the authority of the 1953 reorganization plan and other executive authorities.<sup>96</sup>

## **Natural Resources and Environment**

The NRE mission area works on issues related to U.S. forests and grasslands.<sup>97</sup> The Forest Service (FS) is the sole agency under NRE. The Under Secretary of Agriculture for NRE oversees this mission area.<sup>98</sup>

### ***Forest Service***

FS has three formal program units: State, Private, and Tribal Forestry; Research and Development; and the National Forest System (NFS). Through the State, Private, and Tribal Forestry program unit, FS provides forest-related financial and technical assistance, primarily to state governments. Through the Research and Development program unit, FS conducts and funds forest and rangeland research, statistical collection, and analysis. Through NFS, FS manages a system of federal lands, consisting of 193 million acres of national forests, national grasslands, and other land designations in 43 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.<sup>99</sup> FS is also the lead federal agency for wildfire coordination and response.<sup>100</sup> FS is headquartered in Washington, DC, with regional offices, laboratories, and field staff throughout the United States.<sup>101</sup> Congress established the modern FS in 1905 through the Transfer Act of 1905 (P.L. 58-33) and the

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<sup>92</sup> USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), “About APHIS,” <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/about>.

<sup>93</sup> USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/22-2026-CJ-APHIS.pdf>.

<sup>94</sup> USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.”

<sup>95</sup> Locations outside the United States include Mexico, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, Western Europe, Asia, and Africa. USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.”

<sup>96</sup> USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.” A statement on the creation of APHIS can also be found at USDA, “Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Agricultural Marketing Service,” 37 *Federal Register* 60, March 28, 1972.

<sup>97</sup> USDA, “Mission Areas.”

<sup>98</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6961.

<sup>99</sup> USDA, FS, *Land Areas Report (LAR)—as of September 26, 2025*, Table 1, <https://usfs-public.app.box.com/s/rhq1lm3rq3wauhtz6yulanuzoizaaqsw/file/2146452409272>.

<sup>100</sup> CRS In Focus IF12384, *Federal Interagency Wildfire Response Framework*, by Anne A. Riddle.

<sup>101</sup> USDA, FS, “About the Agency,” <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency>. For more information on regional offices, see USDA, FS, “Regional Offices,” <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/contact-us/regional-offices>.

Agricultural Appropriations Act of 1906 (33 Stat. 872), although its component activities began in the late 1800s.<sup>102</sup>

## Research, Education, and Economics

The REE mission area works on agricultural research, analysis, and education issues.<sup>103</sup> Four agencies carry out REE responsibilities: the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), ERS, NASS, and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).<sup>104</sup> The Under Secretary for REE oversees this mission area.<sup>105</sup> The Under Secretary for REE also serves as the Chief Scientist.<sup>106</sup> The Office of the Chief Scientist coordinates and advises the research conducted across USDA.<sup>107</sup>

### *Agricultural Research Service*

ARS is USDA's intramural scientific research agency.<sup>108</sup> ARS organizes research into 15 national programs within 4 categories: Nutrition and Food Safety/Quality, Animal Production and Protection, Crop Production and Protection, and Natural Resources and Sustainable Agricultural Systems.<sup>109</sup> ARS collaborates with state agricultural experiment stations, state and federal agencies, and private organizations to conduct research.<sup>110</sup> ARS headquarters is located in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, with field activities managed by area offices in Beltsville, MD; Peoria, IL; Stoneville, MS; Fort Collins, CO; and Albany, CA.<sup>111</sup> ARS research is conducted throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and select foreign countries.<sup>112</sup> USDA established ARS using the 1953 reorganization plan and related authorities.<sup>113</sup>

### *Economic Research Service*

ERS conducts research related to economic trends and issues in agriculture, food, the environment, and the rural United States.<sup>114</sup> ERS research topics include agricultural economy, food and nutrition, food safety, global markets and trade, resources and environment, and rural

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<sup>102</sup> For an overview of these activities prior to the formation of FS, see Gerald W. Williams, *The USDA Forest Service: The First Century*, USDA, FS, revised April 2005, [https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/2015/06/The\\_USDA\\_Forest\\_Service\\_TheFirstCentury.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/2015/06/The_USDA_Forest_Service_TheFirstCentury.pdf). For an overview of the history, organization, and management of the National Forest System, see CRS Report R43872, *National Forest System Management: Overview and Issues for Congress*, by Anne A. Riddle.

<sup>103</sup> USDA, Research, Education, and Economics, "Mission Statement," <https://www.ree.usda.gov/about-ree/mission-statement>.

<sup>104</sup> CRS Report R40819, *Agricultural Research: Background and Issues*, by Eleni G. Bickell.

<sup>105</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6791.

<sup>106</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6791.

<sup>107</sup> Congress established the Office of the Chief Scientist in the 2008 farm bill (P.L. 110-234) as an amendment to the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act. The Office of the Chief Scientist is codified in 7 U.S.C. §6971(e).

<sup>108</sup> USDA, Agricultural Research Service (ARS), "About ARS," <https://www.ars.usda.gov/about-ars/>.

<sup>109</sup> See USDA, ARS, "National Programs," <https://www.ars.usda.gov/research/programs/>.

<sup>110</sup> See USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), "State Agricultural Experiment Stations," <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/capacity-grants/state-agricultural-experiment-stations>.

<sup>111</sup> USDA, "2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Agricultural Research Service," <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/20-2026-CJ-ARS.pdf>; and USDA, ARS, "Find a Location," <https://www.ars.usda.gov/people-locations/find-a-location/>.

<sup>112</sup> USDA, "2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Agricultural Research Service."

<sup>113</sup> As stated in *Federal Register*, "Agricultural Research Service," <https://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/agricultural-research-service>.

<sup>114</sup> USDA, Economic Research Service (ERS), "About ERS," <https://www.ers.usda.gov/about-ers>.

economy.<sup>115</sup> ERS headquarters is located in Washington, DC, and Kansas City, MO.<sup>116</sup> USDA established ERS in 1961 under the authority of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C. §§1621-1627), the 1953 reorganization plan, and other authorities.<sup>117</sup>

### ***National Agricultural Statistics Service***

NASS conducts surveys and prepares official statistics on U.S. agriculture. NASS programs include the Agricultural Estimates Program and the Census of Agriculture. NASS collects and reports data on topics such as agricultural production, commodity prices, farm labor and wages, and farm finances.<sup>118</sup> NASS headquarters is located in Washington, DC. The agency has a national operations center in St. Louis, MO, and 12 regional field offices.<sup>119</sup> USDA established NASS in 1961 using the 1953 reorganization plan and other authorities.<sup>120</sup>

### ***National Institute for Food and Agriculture***

NIFA is USDA's extramural research agency funding agricultural research, education, and extension.<sup>121</sup> It primarily supports agricultural, nutrition, and other research at land-grant universities and other U.S. colleges and universities.<sup>122</sup> NIFA provides funding through two main mechanisms: capacity (formula) funding using formulas set in statute that is distributed to land-grant institutions, schools of forestry, and schools of veterinary medicine; and competitive grants that support agricultural research, education, and extension at institutions nationwide.<sup>123</sup> NIFA headquarters are located in Washington, DC, and Kansas City, MO.<sup>124</sup> Congress formally established NIFA in the 2008 farm bill (P.L. 110-246, §7511), which amended the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act. NIFA replaced the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.<sup>125</sup>

## **Rural Development**

The RD mission area supports improvement projects that provide investments in rural communities in the United States. RD is administered by three agencies: the Rural Business-

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<sup>115</sup> USDA, ERS, "About ERS."

<sup>116</sup> USDA, "2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Economic Research Service," <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/18-2026-CJ-ERS.pdf>.

<sup>117</sup> Memorandum from Orville L. Freeman, Secretary of Agriculture, "Secretary's Memorandum No. 1446, Supplement 1," April 3, 1961. The predecessor to ERS was the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. For additional information, see USDA, "2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Economic Research Service."

<sup>118</sup> USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), "About NASS," [https://www.nass.usda.gov/About\\_NASS/index.php](https://www.nass.usda.gov/About_NASS/index.php).

<sup>119</sup> USDA, "2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—National Agricultural Statistics Service," <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/19-2026-CJ-NASS.pdf>; and USDA, NASS, "Statistics by State," [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/RFO/index.php](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/RFO/index.php).

<sup>120</sup> Freeman, "Secretary's Memorandum No. 1446, Supplement 1"; and USDA, "2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—National Agricultural Statistics Service."

<sup>121</sup> Agricultural extension provides nonformal education to the nonuniversity public.

<sup>122</sup> USDA, NIFA, "Who We Are," <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/about-nifa/who-we-are>. For more on land-grant institutions, see CRS Report R45897, *The U.S. Land-Grant University System: Overview and Role in Agricultural Research*, by Eleni G. Bickell.

<sup>123</sup> USDA, NIFA, "About Grants," <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants>.

<sup>124</sup> USDA, NIFA, "Visit NIFA," <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/about-nifa/visit-nifa>.

<sup>125</sup> USDA, "2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—National Institute of Food and Agriculture," <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/21-2026-CJ-NIFA.pdf>.

Cooperative Service (RBCS), Rural Utilities Service (RUS), and Rural Housing Service (RHS). The Under Secretary of Agriculture for RD leads and coordinates this mission area.<sup>126</sup> RD headquarters is located in Washington, DC, and most employees are in the field.<sup>127</sup>

### ***Rural Business-Cooperative Service***

RBCS provides loans, loan guarantees, grants, and technical assistance to support the development and expansion of businesses and cooperatives in rural areas.<sup>128</sup> RBCS also administers programs that support the production of renewable energy and products derived from agriculture-based feedstock.<sup>129</sup> Congress established RBCS in the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act.<sup>130</sup>

### ***Rural Housing Service***

RHS provides loans, loan guarantees, and grants to support single-family housing, multifamily housing, and community facilities in rural areas.<sup>131</sup> Single-family housing programs include loans to purchase homes, loans and grants to repair homes, and grants to support self-help housing programs (i.e., programs where families contribute their own labor to the construction of their homes).<sup>132</sup> Multifamily housing programs include loans to develop or rehabilitate rental housing, loans and grants to finance housing for farm laborers, and associated rental assistance.<sup>133</sup> Community facilities programs provide loans and grants to the building, repair, or modernization of essential community facilities in rural areas (i.e., facilities that provide a public service typically offered by local governments).<sup>134</sup> Congress established RHS in the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act.<sup>135</sup>

### ***Rural Utilities Service***

RUS provides loans, loan guarantees, grants, and technical assistance to support utility systems in rural communities.<sup>136</sup> RUS administers programs that support rural broadband, electricity,

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<sup>126</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6941.

<sup>127</sup> USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Rural Development Salaries and Expenses,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/30-2026-CJ-RD.pdf>.

<sup>128</sup> For more information, see CRS Report R47438, *Federal Credit Assistance and Grant Programs for Rural Businesses: In Brief*, coordinated by Lisa S. Benson.

<sup>129</sup> For more information, see CRS In Focus IF10288, *Overview of the 2018 Farm Bill Energy Title Programs*, by Kelsi Bracmort.

<sup>130</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6944. Through the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act, Congress consolidated USDA business programs authorized under the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. §940c and §§950aa et seq.), Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. §1926(a)(1) and §1932), and others under a single agency. See 7 U.S.C. §6944(b).

<sup>131</sup> USDA, Rural Development (RD), “Rural Housing Service,” <https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/agencies/rural-housing-service>.

<sup>132</sup> For more information, see CRS Report R47044, *USDA Rural Housing Programs: An Overview*, by Katie Jones and Maggie McCarty.

<sup>133</sup> For more information, see CRS Report R47044, *USDA Rural Housing Programs: An Overview*, by Katie Jones and Maggie McCarty.

<sup>134</sup> For more information, see CRS Report R48462, *Rural Community Facilities: A Guide to Programs*, by Lisa S. Benson.

<sup>135</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6943. Through the act, Congress consolidated USDA housing and community facilities programs authorized under the Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. §§1471 et seq.), Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. §1926(a)(1) and §1932), and others under a single agency.

<sup>136</sup> USDA, RD, “Rural Utilities Service,” <https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/agencies/rural-utilities-service>.

telephone, drinking water, and wastewater disposal systems.<sup>137</sup> Congress established RUS in the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act.<sup>138</sup>

## Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs

The TFAA mission area works on issues related to international agriculture. These issues include U.S. agricultural trade policy, promotion of U.S. agricultural exports, gathering of market intelligence on international agricultural markets, building of trade capacity, and participation in setting international food standards.<sup>139</sup> TFAA includes the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) and the U.S. Codex Office. The Under Secretary of Agriculture for TFAA oversees this mission area.<sup>140</sup>

### *Foreign Agricultural Service*

FAS works on issues related to international agriculture trade policy, international market development and export assistance, data and analysis related to foreign agricultural markets, and international food and technical assistance.<sup>141</sup> Some examples of FAS programs include market development programs (e.g., the Market Access Program and the Emerging Markets Program) and import licensing programs (e.g., the Dairy Import Licensing Program). FAS supports U.S. agriculture under existing trade agreements through policies to reduce trade barriers related to agriculture, such as foreign tariffs or phytosanitary barriers, and trust funds to “reduce economic injury” from tariffs for domestic manufacturers.<sup>142</sup> Most FAS employees are based in the Washington, DC, headquarters, though staff are located in the field throughout the world.<sup>143</sup> USDA created FAS in its current form in 1953 through executive authorities.<sup>144</sup>

### *U.S. Codex Office*

The U.S. Codex Office (USCO) works on issues related to international food standards and the global agricultural system related to the Codex Alimentarius.<sup>145</sup> USCO coordinates the U.S.

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<sup>137</sup> For more information, see CRS Report R47017, *USDA’s ReConnect Program: Expanding Rural Broadband*, by Lisa S. Benson; and CRS Report R46471, *Federally Supported Projects and Programs for Wastewater, Drinking Water, and Water Supply Infrastructure*, coordinated by Jonathan L. Ramseur.

<sup>138</sup> 7 U.S.C. §6942. Through the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act, Congress consolidated USDA business programs authorized under the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. §940c and §§950aa et seq.), Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. §1926(a)(1) and §1932), and others under a single agency. See 7 U.S.C. §6942(c).

<sup>139</sup> USDA, “Mission Areas.” For more on the creation of the Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs mission area, see the section, “Current Organizational Structure of USDA.”

<sup>140</sup> 7 U.S.C. §7007.

<sup>141</sup> USDA, FAS, “About FAS,” <https://www.fas.usda.gov/about-fas>. For more overview on FAS programs, see CRS In Focus IF12155, *Farm Bill Primer: Trade and Export Promotion Programs*, by Benjamin Tsui. For more on the role of FAS in trade agreements and trade barriers, see “Role of FAS in U.S. Trade Policy,” in CRS Report R47836, *USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service: An Overview*, by Benjamin Tsui.

<sup>142</sup> *Phytosanitary* refers to plant health measures. For more on these programs and terms, see CRS Report R47836, *USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service: An Overview*, by Benjamin Tsui.

<sup>143</sup> USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Foreign Agricultural Service,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/35-2026-CJ-FAS.pdf>.

<sup>144</sup> USDA formed the agency in its current form in 1953, from Secretary’s Memorandum 1320, Supplement 1. Prior to Memorandum 1320, predecessor agencies within USDA carried out functions related to foreign agricultural matters. For more on the history of USDA’s foreign agricultural functions see discussion in CRS Report R47836, *USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service: An Overview*, by Benjamin Tsui.

<sup>145</sup> USDA, “U.S. Codex Office,” <https://www.usda.gov/trade-and-markets/policies-and-procedures/us-codex-office>. For (continued...)

government’s involvement in the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), which is a joint Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization Food Standards Program established in 1963.<sup>146</sup> CAC formulates voluntary international food standards, codes of practice, and guidelines that constitute the Codex Alimentarius.<sup>147</sup> USCO is located in Washington, DC. The United States’ involvement in CAC began in 1963. FSIS housed USCO until it moved to the TFAA mission area in 2017 pursuant to authority from the 1953 reorganization plan.<sup>148</sup>

## Support Offices

USDA support offices provide different services for the department (see **Table 1**), including functions related to areas such as program analysis, legal services, and public communications. The administrators of these offices report to the Secretary of Agriculture. All of these offices are headquartered in Washington, DC.

**Table 1. USDA Support Offices**  
as of January 2026

| Office                      | Description                                                                                                                                                                                              | Year Created      | Authority                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Communications              | Manages the communications of USDA to the media and public.                                                                                                                                              | 1913              | Executive                                                                                    |
| General Counsel             | Provides legal advice and services to USDA regarding legal issues such as civil rights, labor and unemployment law, international affairs, and regulatory law.                                           | 1956              | 70 Stat. 742; 7 U.S.C. §2214                                                                 |
| Ethics                      | Implements USDA’s ethics programs and services. Provides ethical advice, guidance, and training for USDA.                                                                                                | 1978              | Ethics in Government Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-521)                                               |
| Inspector General           | Independent office that conducts audits, investigations, and inspections of USDA programs and operations.                                                                                                | 1978 <sup>b</sup> | Inspector General Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-452).                                                 |
| Budget and Program Analysis | Provides centralized coordination of USDA’s budget, strategic planning, and performance management functions.                                                                                            | 1981 <sup>b</sup> | Executive                                                                                    |
| Chief Economist             | Conducts research on economic issues related to agricultural markets, policy, and programs impacting rural communities.                                                                                  | 1994              | Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-354, Title II)                |
| Chief Financial Officer     | Assists USDA in financial management, financial management systems, accounting, and financial management training across USDA. The office oversees the Working Capital Fund and National Finance Center. | 1995              | Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 and the Chief Financial Officer Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-576) |

more on Codex Alimentarius, see Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), “About Codex Alimentarius,” <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/about-codex/en/#c453333>.

<sup>146</sup> FAO, “About Codex Alimentarius.”

<sup>147</sup> USDA, “The Codex Alimentarius Commission and the United States Codex Program,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/codex-at-a-glance.pdf>.

<sup>148</sup> USDA, “Secretary Perdue Announces USDA Improvements for Customer Service & Efficiency.”

| Office                            | Description                                                                                                                                                                                    | Year Created      | Authority                                           |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Chief Information Officer         | Coordinates information technology functions for USDA.                                                                                                                                         | 1996              | Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-106)            |
| Hearings and Appeals              | Provides administrative support and coordinates appeals and judicial functions between the National Appeals Division, Office of Administrative Law Judges, and Office of the Judicial Officer. | 2017 <sup>c</sup> | Executive                                           |
| Partnership and Public Engagement | Works on issues related to access to USDA programs and performs outreach on behalf of USDA.                                                                                                    | 2018              | Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334) |

**Source:** Compiled by CRS using USDA websites, public laws, and reorganization plans.

**Notes:** *Executive* refers to authority granted to the President or Secretary of Agriculture through an authorizing statute or appropriations laws.

- a. The Office of Inspector General's predecessor was created in 1962.
- b. The Budget and Accounting Act of 1921 created the predecessor office.
- c. Prior to 2017, the Office of Administrative Law Judges and Office of the Judicial Officer were under departmental administration, and the National Appeals Division was an independent office that reported to the Secretary of Agriculture.

## 2025 Trump Administration Proposal

The second Trump Administration has proposed numerous reorganization changes throughout the executive branch. On July 24, 2025, the Secretary of Agriculture released an memorandum titled “Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan.”<sup>149</sup> The memorandum states that the purpose of the plan is “to effectuate the consolidation, unification, and optimization of functions” within USDA.<sup>150</sup> These goals are to be met through relocation of personnel, consolidation, and function realignment. The memorandum was effective as of July 24, 2025, and is to be implemented by the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture.<sup>151</sup>

The first stated goal of the 2025 USDA reorganization plan is to align the size of the workforce with the financial priorities of the Administration, including by reducing federal spending.<sup>152</sup> The memorandum states that USDA’s workforce had been reduced by 15,364 individuals since January 2025.<sup>153</sup> USDA OIG states that from January 2025 to June 2025, most of these employees left USDA through the Deferred Resignation Program, which gave employees the opportunity to

<sup>149</sup> Rollins, “Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan.” The Secretary has cited authorities of the 1953 reorganization plan and the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act to issue the 2025 USDA reorganization plan.

<sup>150</sup> Rollins, “Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan.”

<sup>151</sup> “This memorandum delegates to the Deputy Secretary all authorities necessary to implement the USDA Reorganization Plan.” The memorandum is effective until “the earlier of the completion of the USDA Reorganization Plan or the revocation of the memorandum.” See Rollins, “Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan.”

<sup>152</sup> Rollins, “Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan.”

<sup>153</sup> Rollins, “Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan.” USDA OIG reports that 20,306 employees left the department. USDA, OIG, *U.S. Department of Agriculture Staffing Levels*, December 17, 2025, [https://usdaoig.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2025-12/USDA%20Staffing%20Levels%20Final%20Report%20-%20Dec%202017\\_508-signed.pdf](https://usdaoig.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2025-12/USDA%20Staffing%20Levels%20Final%20Report%20-%20Dec%202017_508-signed.pdf).

resign from their positions and retain pay and benefits through September 30, 2025.<sup>154</sup> Some employees departed USDA through termination, retirement, resignation, external transfers, and other means.<sup>155</sup> According to USDA OIG, the agencies that had the most resignations were FS, NRCS, and agencies in the RD mission area.<sup>156</sup> The report mentioned that staff in field offices and the NCR have left USDA.<sup>157</sup> As of February 2026, OPM estimates that USDA employs approximately 71,000.<sup>158</sup>

Another aspect of the 2025 USDA reorganization plan is to relocate USDA resources out of the NCR and “bring USDA closer to its customers.” USDA states that it plans to reduce its NCR workforce to “no more than 2,000 employees” and that it had approximately 4,600 employees in the NCR as of July 2025. USDA plans to relocate some of these employees out of the NCR and into five “hub locations” in Raleigh, NC; Kansas City, MO; Indianapolis, IN; Fort Collins, CO; and Salt Lake City, UT. USDA also states that it plans to vacate some of its current facilities in the NCR. USDA’s stated plans for the facilities in the NCR are to retain the Whitten Building (DC), Yates Building (DC), and National Agricultural Library (MD); temporarily use and eventually vacate the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (MD) and George Washington Carver Center (MD); and vacate the South Building (DC) and Braddock Place (VA).<sup>159</sup> This reorganization has some resemblance to the relocation of NIFA and ERS in 2019 as described in the text box.

### **Relocation of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Economic Research Service**

In 2018, the first Trump Administration proposed to move employees of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Economic Research Service (ERS) from the National Capital Region (NCR) to Kansas City, MO, and to reorganize ERS from the Research, Education, and Economics mission area to the Office of the Chief Economist. The realignment of ERS to the Office of the Chief Economist did not occur. Most of the employees for the agencies (547 out of 644 combined employees) were given relocation orders to Kansas City, MO, with a minority remaining in the NCR. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that in FY2019, 278 employees chose to leave the agencies rather than relocate. In FY2020 and FY2021, the agencies hired 323 employees to replace departed employees.

In 2018, two Members requested that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) review USDA’s legal and budget authority for the proposals and whether the department adhered to any established procedures related to agency realignment and relocation. The OIG report found that USDA had legal authority to move the agencies under Section 4 of the Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (7 U.S.C. §2201 note). However, the OIG report stated that USDA had not sought committee approval for the relocation as specified in the FY2018 Appropriations Act (P.L. 115-141, §717(a)). In response to the draft of the OIG report, USDA’s Office

<sup>154</sup> The Deferred Resignation Program (DRP) occurred across the executive branch agencies from January 28, 2025, to February 12, 2025. A second round of deferred resignations occurred at USDA from April 1, 2025, to April 8, 2025. More on the initial DRP can be found at OPM, “Original Email to Employees,” <https://www.opm.gov/about-us/fork/original-email-to-employees/>. The dates for USDA’s second round of DRP can be found at FSA, “New Activity Reporting System Program and Activity Code for Deferred Resignation Program,” [https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA\\_Notice/ao\\_1897.pdf](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_Notice/ao_1897.pdf).

<sup>155</sup> USDA, OIG, *U.S. Department of Agriculture Staffing Levels*.

<sup>156</sup> USDA, OIG, *U.S. Department of Agriculture Staffing Levels*. The OIG report does not distinguish between the agencies in the Rural Development mission area.

<sup>157</sup> The report states that all 50 states, Washington DC, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands saw attrition of employees. Appendix A in USDA, OIG, *U.S. Department of Agriculture Staffing Levels*, details the attrition in the states and territories.

<sup>158</sup> OPM, “Workforce Size and Composition,” <https://data.opm.gov/explore-data/analytics/workforce-size-and-composition>.

<sup>159</sup> Rollins, “Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan.”

of the General Counsel asserted that its actions complied with all applicable laws and that the committee approval requirements in P.L. 115-141 were unconstitutional (see **Notes**).

In 2022, GAO released two reports on the relocation of ERS and NIFA. The first report, released in April 2022, found some limitations in the economic analysis employed by USDA in the decision to move NIFA and ERS. The second report, released in December 2022, provided a description of the legal authorities the USDA relied on to conduct the relocations. The report also found that the agencies' workforce and productivity temporarily declined following the move from Washington, DC, to Kansas City, MO. Additionally, GAO reported a decline in the proportion of employees from protected groups, such as Black or African American staff at NIFA. GAO offered recommendations regarding the strategic planning of future agency reforms.

**Sources:** USDA, "USDA to Realign ERS with Chief Economist, Relocate ERS & NIFA Outside DC," press release, August 9, 2018, <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2018/08/09/usda-realign-ers-chief-economist-relocate-ers-nifa-outside-dc>; USDA, OIG, *USDA's Proposal to Reorganize and Relocate the Economic Research Service and National Institute of Food and Agriculture*, August 2019, <https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/documents/reports/2020-05/91801-0001-23.pdf>; GAO, *USDA's Decision to Relocate Research Agencies to Kansas City Was Not Fully Consistent with an Evidence-Based Approach*, GAO-22-104540, April 2022, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-104540.pdf>; and GAO, *Following Leading Practice Will Better Position USDA to Mitigate the Ongoing Impacts on Its Workforce*, GAO-23-104709, December 2022, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-104709.pdf>.

**Notes:** Courts generally have upheld congressional notification requirements, sometimes called "report and wait" provisions (see *INS v. Chadha*, 462 U.S. 919, 935 n. 9 (1983)); however, the requirement to obtain committee approval prior to completing a reorganization raises legal issues concerning Congress's use of a "legislative veto." *Chadha*, 462 U.S. at 959.

The 2025 USDA reorganization plan states that some USDA agencies are to reduce their regional and area offices to be "co-located in the hub locations."<sup>160</sup> Agencies listed include ARS, NASS, FNS, FS, and NRCS. The plan states that ARS is to eliminate its area offices, and any residual functions are to be performed in its Office of National Programs. The 12 existing regions of NASS are to be reduced to the 5 USDA hubs. FNS is to reduce its number of regions from seven to five and align its locations with the new hub and service center locations. FS is to "phase out" its nine regional offices and consolidate its research stations into one location in Fort Collins, CO. NRCS is to align its regional structure with the five hubs. The plan states that the time frame for these consolidations and movements will vary from a one- to multi-year period.

The 2025 USDA reorganization plan indicates that USDA is to "consolidate support functions."<sup>161</sup> Many USDA agencies have intra-agency offices that perform similar functions to the offices in **Table 1**. The plan states that USDA is to remove "duplicate" functions and generally plans to consolidate functions into single offices for the department. Some examples of consolidations include civil rights functions into the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights and legislative affairs functions into OCR.<sup>162</sup>

USDA opened a public comment period on the plan on August 1, 2025.<sup>163</sup> In December 2025, USDA reported that 82% of comments received expressed negative sentiment.<sup>164</sup> In December 2025, the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture stated that the reorganization will be completed by the end of 2026.<sup>165</sup> On February 25, 2026, USDA along with the General Services Administration

<sup>160</sup> The information in this paragraph was derived from Rollins, "Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan."

<sup>161</sup> Rollins, "Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan."

<sup>162</sup> Rollins, "Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan."

<sup>163</sup> USDA, "USDA Opens Public Comment Period on Department Reorganization Plan," press release, August 1, 2025, <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/08/01/usda-opens-public-comment-period-department-reorganization-plan>.

<sup>164</sup> USDA, *USDA Reorganization: Summary and Analysis of Feedback*, December 8, 2025, <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-reorg-comments-analysis-12082025.pdf>.

<sup>165</sup> Agri-Pulse Communications, Inc., "Agri-Pulse Newsmakers: Dec 5, 2025: Farm Aid, Trade, Reorganization with Dep. Ag Sec. Stephen Vaden," YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIBzPBi8eGA&t=143s>.

announced the planned disposal of two USDA facilities in the NCR: the South Building and Braddock Place.<sup>166</sup>

In addition to the 2025 plan, the Trump Administration has explored other reorganization proposals regarding USDA. Other executive announcements have indicated that further coordination between USDA and other departments may be ongoing. For example, following an executive order directing the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to consolidate their wildland fire programs, the FY2026 President’s budget request proposed consolidation of federal wildland fire services between the Department of the Interior (DOI) and FS into a new agency that would be called the U.S. Wildland Fire Service, for which Congress did not appropriate funds.<sup>167</sup> In addition, media reports have indicated that the Administration has considered moving selected USDA functions to other departments, such as to the Small Business Administration.<sup>168</sup>

## Oversight and Legislation in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress

The 119<sup>th</sup> Congress has conducted oversight of the 2025 USDA reorganization plan. On July 30, 2025, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry held a hearing titled *Review of the USDA Reorganization Proposal*.<sup>169</sup> The hearing topics included collaboration with Congress with respect to the implementation of the reorganization plan and its potential impact on USDA functions. Additionally, some Members discussed the potential impacts of USDA workforce reductions on the functions of the department. Other topics included the decisionmaking process for the five USDA hub locations and the potential impacts of the plan on the states represented by the various Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.<sup>170</sup>

Congress addressed the 2025 USDA reorganization plan in appropriations legislation. On November 12, 2025, Congress passed the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agency Appropriations Act, 2026 (Division B of P.L. 119-37). This law contains some provisions that may impact reorganization of USDA, and some provisions have appeared in prior appropriations laws.

- Section 716 requires the Secretary to notify and receive approval from appropriations committees in both chambers at least 30 days in advance of using appropriated funds to relocate offices or employees or to reorganize offices.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> USDA, “Rollins, Vaden, and Forst Announce Disposal of Dilapidated USDA Facilities,” <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2026/02/25/rollins-vaden-and-forst-announce-disposal-dilapidated-usda-facilities>.

<sup>167</sup> For example, Executive Order 14308 of June 12, 2025, “Empowering Commonsense Wildfire Prevention and Response,” 90 *Federal Register* 26175, June 18, 2025; and USDA, “2026 USDA Explanatory Notes—Forest Service,” <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nre-fs-fy26-cj-final.pdf>.

<sup>168</sup> Marcia Brown, “Trump Considers Moving Some USDA Programs to Small Business Administration,” *Politico*, June 20, 2025. CRS In Focus IF13062, *Moving USDA Programs to the Small Business Administration: Authorities and Considerations*, by Lisa S. Benson, Matthew D. Trout, and Anthony A. Cilluffo.

<sup>169</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, *Review of the USDA Reorganization Proposal*, hearing, 119<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., July 30, 2025, S. Hrg. 119-132, <https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/hearings/review-of-the-usda-reorganization-proposal>.

<sup>170</sup> Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, *Review of the USDA Reorganization Proposal*, hearing.

<sup>171</sup> Courts generally have upheld congressional notification requirements, sometimes called “report and wait” provisions (see *INS v. Chadha*, 462 U.S. 919, 935 n. 9 (1983)), such as the one found in §716. The requirement to obtain committee approval prior to completing a reorganization raises legal issues concerning Congress’s use of a “legislative veto.” *Chadha*, 462 U.S. at 959. This provision has appeared in other appropriations acts, such as the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-42, Division B, §716).

- Section 745 prohibits USDA from using appropriated funds to move any staff office, or agency from the mission area in which it was located on August 1, 2018, to another mission area or office within USDA unless legislation is enacted to permit the action.<sup>172</sup>
- Section 771 prohibits USDA from closing or consolidating resources or locations of ARS laboratories and facilities without prior notification and approval from both appropriations committees.<sup>173</sup>
- Section 779 prohibits the use of appropriated funds to close NRCS or RD field offices or to relocate field-based employees that would leave an office with two or fewer employees unless prior notification and approval is granted by both appropriations committees.<sup>174</sup>

The explanatory statement for P.L. 119-37 requests that USDA provide a summary of the comments on the 2025 USDA reorganization plan within 60 days of the end of the comment period.<sup>175</sup> The House Committee on Agriculture report (H.Rept. 119-172), written prior to the announcement of the reorganization plan, stated that the committee “looks forward to working with the authorizing committees of jurisdiction” on potential organizational changes. The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry did not discuss reorganization in its report (S.Rept. 119-37).

On January 23, 2026, Congress enacted the Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior and Environment Appropriations Act, 2026 (P.L. 119-74). This law provides appropriations for both DOI and FS in Division C. Congress provided appropriations to wildland fire services in both DOI and FS but did not support the proposed consolidated agency requested in the President’s budget. The explanatory statement accompanying the act directs the Secretary of Agriculture and Secretary of the Interior to consult with an independent, nonpartisan research organization to conduct a study on the potential impacts of the proposed consolidation of wildland fire management operations. Congress also directed the agencies to consult with the appropriations committees to consider the study’s framework.<sup>176</sup>

The Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 (H.R. 7567, as ordered reported) would create new offices at USDA. For example, it would create the Office of Biotechnology Policy, which would coordinate departmental activities with respect to biotechnology, biomanufacturing, synthetic biology, and other related technologies.<sup>177</sup> The bill also would expand the duties and reporting requirements of OHS and allow the office to detail employees from USDA and the intelligence community to assist in its duties. H.R. 7567 would reauthorize appropriations for the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement.<sup>178</sup> The bill also would expand the functions of

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<sup>172</sup> This provision has appeared in other appropriations acts, such as the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-42, Division B, §750).

<sup>173</sup> See text accompanying note 171.

<sup>174</sup> See text accompanying note 171. Similar provisions have appeared in prior appropriations acts, such as the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-42), but for other USDA agencies such as FSA.

<sup>175</sup> Rep. Mike Johnson, remarks in the House, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 171, part 189 (November 9, 2025).

<sup>176</sup> House debate, “Explanatory Statement Submitted by Mr. Cole, Chair of the House Committee on Appropriations Regarding H.R. 6938, Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; And Interior and Environment Appropriations Act 2026,” *Congressional Record*, vol. 172, no. 5, book II (January 8, 2026), p. H471.

<sup>177</sup> S. 2692, introduced prior to H.R. 7567, also would create an Office of Biotechnology Policy.

<sup>178</sup> For more on the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement see **Table 1**.

OTR to oversee self-determination contracts and self-governance compacts entered into between USDA and Tribes.<sup>179</sup>

In addition, some Members have introduced legislation that would establish new USDA offices. H.R. 1762/S. 1061 would codify the position of the Chief of FS and make the position a presidential appointment rather than an appointment by the Secretary of Agriculture. H.R. 3685 would make changes to the functions of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. Among these changes would be the creation of an Office of Legal Advisor for Civil Rights that would “be the sole office within the Department responsible for providing legal advice to the Assistant Secretary” on civil rights issues. H.R. 3470 would create a USDA Office of Agritourism to promote and support agritourism activities and businesses. Additionally, S. 2692, introduced prior to H.R. 7567, also would create an Office of Biotechnology Policy.

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<sup>179</sup> For more on self-governance compacts and self-determination contracts, see CRS Report R48256, *Tribal Self-Determination Authorities: Overview and Issues for Congress*, coordinated by Mariel J. Murray.