



# Fact Sheet:



## Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Blueprint for Stronger Service is key to building a modern and efficient service organization that is closely in tune with the long-term vitality of rural America and the success of American agriculture. The plan takes a realistic view of the needs of American agriculture in a challenging budget climate, and lays out USDA's plans to modernize and accelerate service delivery while improving the customer experience through use of innovative technologies and business solutions. Ultimately, these improvements will help producers and businesses continue to drive America's economy and respond to 21st century agricultural challenges.

USDA is proud of our work and partnership with America's farmers, ranchers and rural communities. Today, American agriculture is a bright spot in the nation's economy, with record income and exports. Over three years as USDA has made record investments in rural America, unemployment in rural America has fallen faster than in other parts of the country. During that same time, USDA has also looked closely at the way it does business. A Blueprint for Stronger Service helps to preserve this success and the USDA investments that helped to make them possible in the long term.

Over the past three years, USDA's Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services (FNCS) Mission Area has worked hard to do more with less. To manage current and future budget challenges, and to ensure critical investments in rural America continue, FNCS took a variety of steps to cut costs and improve services, including:

- Cut travel, printing, and supplies budgets;
- Since 2002, FNCS has reduced its staff years by 139;
- FNCS now requires local educational agencies to conduct direct certification for free school meals in conjunction with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), eliminating the need for paper applications for millions of low-income children. The estimated reduction in burden hours for program participants is roughly 113,000 hours per year;
- FNCS initiated aggressive new tactics to protect valuable taxpayer investments in SNAP by investigating illegal activity. In 2010, the program investigated about 850,000 cases of recipient fraud, resulting in over 44,000 persons being disqualified from SNAP and 931 retailers being permanently barred from accepting benefits;
- The SNAP program recently reached a record level of payment accuracy, at 96.19 percent. Payment errors are less than half what they were 10 years ago; and
- FNCS supports state efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of SNAP operations through a range of strategies, including a one stop "Modernization Central" intranet page that provides information on policy options, waivers, technology strategies and administrative process improvements.

A Blueprint for Stronger Service details a list of recommendations: 133 recommendations affirm processes already in place, 27 serve as initial improvements, and others are aimed at longer-term improvements. The initial improvement recommendations include the following:

- Consolidate more than 700 cell phone plans into about 10;

- Standardize civil rights training and purchases of cyber security products;
- Ensure more efficient and effective service to our employees by moving toward more centralized civil rights, human resource, procurement, and property management functions, creating millions of dollars in efficiencies without sacrificing the quality of our work.

Budget reductions, staff attrition and increased workload also necessitated a review of USDA facilities, offices and lab operations across the country. As part of the Blueprint for Stronger Service, FNCS plans:

- To close 31 field offices in 28 states. Thirty-two FNCS offices will remain throughout the United States, including the national office, seven regional offices and 24 field offices. In many cases, improved technology has reduced the need for these brick and mortar facilities. See table below.

<b>County Name</b>	<b>Office Address</b>	<b>County Name</b>	<b>Office Address</b>
Maricopa	Phoenix, AZ	Burleigh	Bismarck, ND
Los Angeles	Los Angeles, CA	Gloucester	Woodbury, NJ
Hartford	Hartford, CT	Monroe	Rochester, NY
Broward	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	Hamilton	Cincinnati, OH
Cook	Chicago, IL	Franklin	Columbus, OH
Marion	Indianapolis, IN	Oklahoma	Oklahoma City, OK
Sedgwick	Wichita, KS	Dauphin	Harrisburg, PA
East Baton Rouge	Baton Rouge, LA	Allegheny	Pittsburgh, PA
Kennebec	Augusta, ME	Richland	Columbia, SC
Kent	Grand Rapids, MI	Pennington	Rapid City, SD
Ramsey	St. Paul, MN	Davidson	Nashville, TN
Jackson	Kansas City, MO	Travis	Austin, TX
Saint Louis City	St. Louis, MO	Norfolk City	Norfolk, VA
Hinds	Jackson, MS	Kanawha	Charleston, WV
Lewis and Clark	Helena, MT	Laramie	Cheyenne, WY
Wake	Raleigh, NC		

As we move forward, USDA will continue to find ways to modernize its services, improve the customer experience, and ensure a successful, sustainable future for rural America.