



Fact Sheet:



Research, Education and Economics

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 the food and agricultural sciences that provide the base for global and domestic food security. The plan takes a realistic view of the needs of American agricultural science and education 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 Land Grant Universities, farmers, ranchers and rural communities. Today, American agriculture is a bright spot in the nation's economy, with record income and exports. Studies have shown that every dollar invested in agricultural research now returns over \$20 to our economy. 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 Research, Education and Economics (REE) Mission Area has worked hard to do more with less. To manage current and future budget challenges, and to ensure critical investments in science and education continue, REE took a variety of steps to cut costs and improve services, including:

- Cut travel expenses, as well as printing and supplies budgets;
- Since 2002, REE has reduced its staff years by 80;
- Made several enhancements within National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) programs and operations, including opening a new national operations center that will centralize data collection and service NASS customers;
- Moved to a paperless system of electronic customer service and recordkeeping that, for example, makes it easier to apply for research grants;
- Created the position of Chief Scientist and the Office of Chief Scientist to coordinate research from across the federal government, university and private partners, making the best use of our research investment; and
- Launched the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) in 2008, which has reorganized and streamlined how USDA administers external research funding and is building strong research programs for rural America and agriculture.

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 and recent budget decisions, REE plans:

- To close 12 Agricultural Research Service (ARS) programs at 10 locations in 2012. In November 2011, ARS received approval from Congress to make these closures.

The list below details the states, corresponding cities counties, and names of ARS programs that will be closed in 2012.

1. Alaska: Fairbanks, Fairbanks North Star Borough – Subarctic Agricultural Research
2. California: Shafter, Kern County – Western Integrated Cropping Systems Research
3. Florida: Brooksville, Hernando County – Beef Cattle Research
4. Georgia: Watkinsville, Oconee County – Southern Piedmont Conservation Research
5. Louisiana: New Orleans, Orleans Parish – Formosan Subterranean Termites Research
6. Ohio: Coshocton, Coshocton County – North Appalachian Experimental Watershed Research
7. Oklahoma: Lane, Atoka County – Genetics and Production Research
8. South Carolina: Clemson, Pickens County – Cotton Quality Research
9. Texas: Weslaco, Hidalgo County – Kika de le Garza Subtropical Agricultural Research Center
10. West Virginia: Beaver, Raleigh County – Appalachian Farming Systems Research Center

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.