

Agriculture Fact Book 1997

**U.S. Department
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Office of
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Foreword

by Dan Glickman, Secretary

When Abraham Lincoln created the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its core mission was “to provide information about agriculture in the most comprehensive and general sense of the word.” The *1997 Agriculture Fact Book* carries on with that charge, offering thousands of useful facts about U.S. agriculture and rural America.

The heart of USDA remains production agriculture, helping our farmers feed America and the world in a sustainable way. What many folks do not realize, however, is the diversity of responsibilities under the USDA umbrella:

- We run the Federal anti-hunger effort—everything from food stamps to the school lunch and breakfast programs to the WIC program.
- We are the country’s largest conservation agency—carrying out voluntary efforts to protect soil, water, and wildlife on the 70 percent of America’s lands that are in private hands.
- Nearly half of USDA employees work for the U.S. Forest Service.
- As the department of rural America, we bring housing, modern telecommunications, safe drinking water, and more to our country communities.
- We are largely responsible for the safety of the food on your plate.
- We are a research leader in everything from human nutrition to new crop technologies that allow us to grow more food and fiber using less water and less pesticides.

This book is a handy reference tool that offers convenient, one-stop shopping for information about U.S. agriculture, rural America, food, nutrition and consumer issues, trade, and more.

I am pleased to note that the *1997 Agriculture Fact Book* is high-tech, too. You can find this text and other helpful information on the Internet at USDA’s Home Page at [HTTP://www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

In today’s world, information is power. Whether you are a farmer, a rancher, or simply a curious citizen, this book holds something of value for you.

President Lincoln called USDA “the people’s department.” We work hard every day to live up to this name.

