

## **The Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers**

### **Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement**

## **CHARTER**

### **1. Committee's Official Designation**

The Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers (hereinafter referred to as the "Committee").

### **2. Authority**

The Committee was originally established pursuant to Section 5(b) of the Agricultural Credit Improvement Act of 1992 (7 U.S.C. § 1929), as amended by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. § 8701) and the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (7 U.S.C. § 9001); and is established and managed in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, 5 U.S.C. App. 10.

### **3. Objectives and Scope of Activities**

The purpose of this Committee is to advise the Secretary on strategies, policies, and programs that enhance opportunities for new farmers and ranchers.

### **4. Description of Duties**

The Committee is to meet and review comments on beginning farmer and rancher policy and program issues and collaborate to make recommendations to the Secretary. The Committee shall advise the Secretary on matters broadly affecting new farmers and ranchers. The Committee shall consider Department goals and objectives necessary to implement prior recommendations and develop and recommend a framework and overall strategy that will encompass the following:

- Principles to leverage and maximize existing programs to assist beginning farmers and ranchers,
- Methods and strategies to amplify and improve State collaboration and participation in programs,
- Opportunity creation strategies and pilot programs to develop new farming and ranching operations, and
- Ideas to provide relief from labor and taxation challenges.

5. **Agency or Official to Whom the Committee Reports**

The Committee reports to the Secretary of Agriculture through the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement's (OPPE) Designated Federal Officer (DFO).

6. **Support**

The OPPE is responsible for the staff and support functions for the operation of the Committee.

7. **Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years**

The estimated annual operating cost for support of operations and staffing budget is estimated at \$150,000 and 1.0 full time equivalent (FTE).

8. **Designated Federal Officer**

A permanent Federal employee is to be appointed by OPPE to serve as the Designated Federal Official (DFO). The DFO will approve all committee and subcommittee meetings; prepare and approve all meeting agendas; attend all committee and subcommittee meetings; adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines adjournment to be in the public interest; and chair meetings when directed to do so by the Secretary.

9. **Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings**

The Committee will meet every year depending on the need and at the discretion of the Secretary.

10. **Duration**

Continuing.

11. **Termination**

The charter will expire two years from the filing date unless renewed by the appropriate action. The committee will not meet or otherwise conduct business in the absence of a valid charter.

12. **Membership and Designation**

- a. The Committee shall consist of a minimum of 14 and no more than 20 members appointed by the Secretary. All members will have the requisite experience in agriculture that enables them to participate fully in the work of the Committee. Among the membership of the Committee, there shall be representatives from the following:

- a) The Farm Service Agency,
  - b) State beginning farming programs,
  - c) Commercial lenders,
  - d) Private non-profit organizations with active beginning farmer or rancher programs,
  - e) The National Institute of Food and Agriculture,
  - f) Community Colleges or other educational institutions with demonstrated experience in training beginning farmers and ranchers, and
  - g) Other entities or persons providing lending or technical assistance for qualified beginning farmers and ranchers.
- b. The Committee will be balanced in its membership in terms of the points of view represented and the functions to be performed. Steps will be taken to encourage new viewpoints.
- c. The Secretary or Federal designee shall appoint a Chairperson and Vice Chair. The Chairperson will be an individual recognized for their ability to lead a group in a fair and focused manner and who has been briefed on the mission of this Committee. The Committee will not conduct a meeting in the absence of the Chairperson, or his or her designee, and the DFO.
- d. Members of the ACBFR and its subcommittees shall serve without pay, but with reimbursement of travel expenses and per diem for attendance at committee and subcommittee functions, in accordance with Standard Government Travel Regulations.
- e. Equal Employment Opportunity practices in accordance with USDA policies will be followed in all appointments to the Committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the Committee consider the needs of the diverse groups served by the Department, membership shall include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

The USDA prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, political beliefs, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). To maintain the highest levels of honesty, integrity, and ethical conduct, no Committee member shall participate in any “specific party matters” (i.e., matters that are narrowly focused and typically involve specific transactions between identified parties) such as a lease, license, permit, contract, claim, grant, agreement, or related litigation with the Department in which the member has a direct or indirect financial interest. This includes the requirement for members to immediately disclose to the DFO (for discussion with USDA’s Office of Ethics) any specific party matter in which the member’s

immediate family, relatives, business partners, or employer would directly seek to financially benefit from the Committee's recommendations. All members will receive ethics training annually to identify and avoid any actions that would cause the public to question the integrity of the Committee's advice and recommendations. Members who are appointed as "Representatives" are not subject to Federal ethics laws because such appointment allows them to represent the point(s) of view of a particular group, business sector or segment of the public.

Members appointed as SGEs and are considered intermittent Federal employees and are subject to Federal ethics laws. SGE's are appointed due to their personal knowledge, academic scholarship, background, or expertise. No SGE may participate in any activity in which the member has a prohibited financial interest. Appointees who are SGEs are required to complete and submit a Confidential Financial Disclosure Report (OGE-450 form) and, upon request, USDA will assist SGEs in preparing these financial reports. To ensure the highest level of compliance with applicable ethical standards, USDA will provide ethics training to SGEs on an annual basis. The provisions of these paragraphs are not meant to exhaustively cover all Federal ethics laws and do not affect any other statutory or regulatory obligations to which advisory committee members are subject.

13. **Subcommittees**

The OPPE has the authority to create subcommittees. The committee may propose the creation or termination of a subcommittee; however, OPPE may approve, reject, or discontinue these subcommittees at any time. All subcommittees must report back to the parent Committee and must not provide advice or work products directly to the Secretary.

14. **Recordkeeping**

The records of this Committee, formally and informally established subcommittees, or other subgroups of the committee, shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule (GRS) 6.2 or other approved agency records disposition schedule. These records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552. Information about this Committee is available online at: <https://www.usda.gov/partnerships/advisory-committee-on-beginning-farmers-and-ranchers>

15. **Filing Date**

***August 15, 2023***