



Biography of Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Kathleen A. Merrigan

Kathleen A. Merrigan is the Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Working alongside Secretary Tom Vilsack, Merrigan oversees the day-to-day operation of USDA's many programs and spearheads the \$149 billion USDA budget process.

She serves on the President's Management Council, working with other Cabinet Deputies to improve accountability and performance across the federal government.

Merrigan brings a wealth of knowledge to USDA from a decades-long career in policy, legislation, and research related to the many missions of USDA.

Deputy Secretary Merrigan has managed the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food effort to highlight the critical connection between farmers and consumers and support local and regional food systems that increase economic opportunity in Rural America.

In November 2009, she made history as the first woman to chair the Ministerial Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Recognizing that most employees work outside of Washington, D.C., Merrigan has visited USDA field offices nationwide to ensure top-flight program delivery that meets constituents' needs.

Recognizing the history and scope of her work, Time magazine named Dr. Merrigan among the "100 Most Influential People in the World" in 2010.

Before becoming Deputy Secretary, Merrigan served for eight years as Assistant Professor and Director of the Agriculture, Food and Environment graduate program at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, Boston, Massachusetts.

Under an appointment by President Bill Clinton, Merrigan was Administrator of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service from 1999 to 2001. She served for six years as a senior staff member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, working for Senator Patrick Leahy (VT).

Merrigan has also been engaged in agricultural policy in positions at the FAO, the Henry A. Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture, the Texas Department of Agriculture, and the Massachusetts State Senate.

Merrigan holds a Ph.D. degree in environmental planning and policy from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a Master of Public Affairs degree from the University of Texas, and a B.A. degree from Williams College.

She and her husband Michael Selmi have two children in elementary school.