

## 2026 USDA EXPLANATORY NOTES – OFFICE OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS

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**PREFACE**

This publication summarizes the fiscal year (FY) 2026 Budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Throughout this publication any reference to the "Budget" is in regard to the 2026 Budget, unless otherwise noted. All references to years refer to fiscal year, except where specifically noted. The budgetary tables throughout this document show actual amounts for 2023 and 2024, Full-Year Continuing Resolution levels for 2025, and the President's Budget request for 2026. Amounts for 2025 estimated levels include: non-enacted amounts such as Full-Time Equivalent levels, fleet levels, information technology investment levels, recovery levels, transfers in and out, balances available end of year, and obligation levels.

Throughout this publication, the "2018 Farm Bill" is used to refer to the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. Most programs funded by the 2018 Farm Bill are funded through 2025, as extended by the American Relief Act, 2025 (P.L. 118-158, Division D). Amounts shown in 2025 and 2026 for most Farm Bill programs reflect those confirmed in the baseline.

Pursuant to the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, sequestration is included in the numbers for mandatory programs in 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026.

In tables throughout this document, amounts equal to zero (0) are displayed as dashes (-). Amounts less than 0.5 and greater than zero are rounded and shown as a zero (0). This display treatment is used to prevent the masking of non-zero amounts that do not round up to one (1).

**AGENCY-WIDE****PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) was established in 2017 to consolidate three previously separate entities: The National Appeals Division (NAD), the Office of the Administrative Law Judges (OALJ), and the Office of the Judicial Officer (OJO).

Previously, OALJ and OJO were offices under Departmental Administration, and NAD was an independent office that reported to the Secretary of Agriculture. The reorganization consolidated administrative support for the three USDA entities that adjudicate first and second-level hearings and appeals at USDA. After consolidation, NAD, OALJ, and OJO continue to conduct proceedings under their respective legal authorities.

The mission of OHA is to plan, coordinate, and provide administrative support for NAD, OALJ, and OJO. OHA promotes fairness, transparency, and consistency in NAD, OALJ, and OJO proceedings through the planning, coordination, and administration of office-wide activities and initiatives.

**AVAILABLE FUNDS AND FTEs*****Table OHA-1. Available Funds and FTEs (thousands of dollars, FTEs)***

Item	2023 Actual	FTEs	2024 Actual	FTEs	2025 Estimated	FTEs	2026 Estimated	FTEs
Salaries and Expenses:								
Discretionary Appropriations.....	\$16,503	74	\$16,703	72	\$16,703	68	\$13,000	54
Total Discretionary Appropriations.....	16,503	74	16,703	72	16,703	68	13,000	54
Total Adjusted Appropriation .....	16,503	74	16,703	72	16,703	68	13,000	54
Total Available .....	16,503	74	16,703	72	16,703	68	13,000	54
Lapsing Balances .....	-239	-	-193	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations .....	16,264	74	16,510	72	16,510	68	13,000	54
Total Obligations, OHA.....	16,264	74	16,510	72	16,510	68	13,000	54
Total, Agriculture Available .....	16,503	74	16,703	72	16,703	68	13,000	54
Total Available, OHA.....	16,503	74	16,703	72	16,703	68	13,000	54

\*This table assumes a reduced 2026 FTE baseline due to 2025 voluntary staff separations and administrative cost efficiencies.

**PERMANENT POSITIONS BY GRADE AND FTEs****Table OHA-2. Permanent Positions by Grade and FTEs**

Item	2023 Actual			2024 Actual			2025 Estimated			2026 Estimated		
	HQ	Field	Total	HQ	Field	Total	HQ	Field	Total	HQ	Field	Total
AD .....	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2
AL .....	-	3	3	-	3	3	-	3	3	-	2	2
GS-15.....	2	4	6	2	4	6	2	4	6	2	2	4
GS-14.....	8	31	39	9	29	38	6	30	36	5	24	29
GS-13.....	5	-	5	5	-	5	5	-	5	4	-	4
GS-12.....	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	-	-	-
GS-11.....	-	5	5	-	4	4	1	4	5	1	3	4
GS-10.....	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GS-9 .....	1	3	4	2	3	5	1	3	4	1	3	4
GS-8 .....	1	5	6	-	5	5	-	4	4	-	4	4
GS-7 .....	-	1	1	-	2	2	-	1	1	-	1	1
GS-6 .....	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Permanent ....	19	55	74	20	52	72	17	51	68	14	40	54
Total Perm. FT EOY .....	19	55	74	20	52	72	17	51	68	14	40	54
FTE* .....	19	55	74	20	52	72	17	51	68	14	40	54

\*This table assumes a reduced 2026 FTE baseline due to 2025 voluntary staff separations and administrative cost efficiencies.

**SHARED FUNDING PROJECTS****Table OHA-3. Shared Funding Projects (thousands of dollars)**

Item	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Estimated	2026 Estimated
<b>Working Capital Fund:</b>				
Administrative Services:				
AskUSDA Contact Center .....	2	4	4	4
General Counsel Legal Compliance.....	-	-	-	3
Material Management Service .....	6	7	6	6
Mail and Reproduction Services .....	56	62	64	65
Integrated Procurement Systems .....	6	5	4	4
Personnel and Document Security Program .....	4	4	5	5
Procurement Operations Services .....	17	15	12	9
Human Resources Enterprise Management Systems.....	1	2	5	5
Subtotal .....	92	99	100	101
Communications:				
Creative Media & Broadcast Center .....	3	11	-	4
Finance and Management:				
National Finance Center .....	290	352	205	232
Financial Management Systems.....	49	51	52	49
Internal Control Support Services .....	-	13	11	11
Subtotal .....	339	416	268	292
Information Technology:				
Client Experience Center .....	332	291	305	343
Department Administration Information Technology Office .....	182	120	101	101
Digital Infrastructure Services Center .....	10	6	6	5
Enterprise Cybersecurity Services .....	21	39	40	40
Enterprise Data and Analytics Services.....	1	2	2	2
Enterprise Network Services.....	34	177	160	202
Subtotal .....	580	635	614	693
Correspondence Management Services .....				
Office of the Executive Secretariat.....	12	13	9	6
Total, Working Capital Fund .....	1,026	1,174	991	1,096
<b>Department-Wide Shared Cost Programs:</b>				
Agency Partnership Outreach .....	5	6	5	5
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility** .....	1	2	3	3
Employee Experience .....	3	3	3	3
Medical Services .....	3	3	4	4
NCR Interpreting Services.....	3	4	4	4
Office of Customer Experience.....	2	2	2	2
Physical Security .....	3	4	2	2
Security Detail .....	4	4	4	4

Item	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Estimated	2026 Estimated
Security Operations.....	5	6	6	6
Talent Group .....	3	3	3	3
TARGET Center.....	1	1	1	1
Total, Department-Wide Reimbursable Programs .....	33	38	37	37
<b>E-Gov:</b>				
E-Training .....	13	13	13	13
Total, E-Gov .....	13	13	13	13
Agency Total .....	1,072	1,225	1,041	1,146

\*This table is based on a preliminary 2026 estimate, which will be adjusted at a later date to reflect the Department's updated posture and footprint.

\*\*In alignment with the current Administration's priorities, the 2025 amounts reflect expenses incurred prior to January 20, 2025.

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**ACCOUNT 1: OFFICE OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS****APPROPRIATIONS LANGUAGE**

The appropriations language follows (new language underscored):

Office of Hearings and Appeals

For necessary expenses of the Office of Hearings and Appeals, \$13,000,000.

**LEAD-OFF TABULAR STATEMENT****Table OHA-4. Lead-Off Tabular Statement (In dollars)**

Item	Amount
Enacted, 2025 .....	\$16,703,000
Change in Appropriation .....	-3,703,000
Budget Estimate, 2026 .....	<u>13,000,000</u>

**PROJECT STATEMENTS****Table OHA-5. Project Statement on Basis of Appropriations (thousands of dollars, FTEs)**

Item	2023 Actual	FTEs	2024 Actual	FTEs	2025 Estimated	FTEs	2026 Estimated	FTEs	Inc. or Dec.	FTE Inc. or Dec.	Chg Key
Discretionary Appropriations:											
Office of Hearings and Appeals .....	\$16,503	74	\$16,703	72	\$16,703	68	\$13,000	54	-\$3,703	-14	(1)
Subtotal .....	<u>16,503</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>16,703</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>16,703</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>13,000</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>-3,703</u>	<u>-14</u>	
Total Adjusted Approp .....	16,503	74	16,703	72	16,703	68	13,000	54	-3,703	-14	
Add back:											
Transfers In and Out,											
Rescissions .....	200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Appropriation.....	<u>16,703</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>16,703</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>16,703</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>13,000</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>-3,703</u>	<u>-14</u>	
Transfers Out:											
Working Capital Funds.....	-200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Transfers Out.....	<u>-200</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	
Total Available .....	<u>16,503</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>16,703</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>16,703</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>13,000</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>-3,703</u>	<u>-14</u>	
Lapsing Balances .....	-239	-	-193	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Obligations .....	<u>16,264</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>16,510</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>16,703</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>13,000</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>-3,703</u>	<u>-14</u>	

\*This table assumes a reduced 2026 FTE baseline due to 2025 voluntary staff separations and administrative cost efficiencies.

**Table OHA-6. Project Statement on Basis of Obligations (thousands of dollars, FTEs)**

Item	2023 Actual	FTEs	2024 Actual	FTEs	2025 Estimated	FTEs	2026 Estimated	FTEs	Inc. or Dec.	FTE Inc. or Dec.	Chg Key
Discretionary Obligations:											
Office of Hearings and Appeals ..	\$16,264	74	\$16,510	72	\$16,703	68	\$13,000	54	-\$3,703	-14	
Total Obligations .....	<u>16,264</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>16,510</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>16,703</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>13,000</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>-3,703</u>	<u>-14</u>	
Add back:											
Lapsing Balances .....	239	-	193	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Available .....	<u>16,503</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>16,703</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>16,703</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>13,000</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>-3,703</u>	<u>-14</u>	
Less:											
Total Transfers Out.....	200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Appropriation.....	<u>16,703</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>16,703</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>16,703</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>13,000</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>-3,703</u>	<u>-14</u>	

\*This table assumes a reduced 2026 FTE baseline due to 2025 voluntary staff separations and administrative cost efficiencies.

**JUSTIFICATION OF CHANGES****Office of Hearings and Appeals**

The base funds will continue to support the mission of Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) to promote fairness, transparency, and consistency in National Appeals Division (NAD), Office of Administrative Law Judges (OALJ), and Office of Judicial Officer (OJO) proceedings through the planning, coordination, and administration of office-wide activities and initiatives.

By law, 7 U.S.C. § 6991 et seq., the National Appeals Division mission is to provide USDA program customers with a fair and timely adjudication of adverse USDA Agency decisions. NAD's statute

(7 U.S.C. § 6997 (c) (4)) requires that USDA customers have a hearing in the State where they reside within specific timelines. These mission area activities are performed by Administrative Judges and Appeals Officers who are geographically dispersed throughout the United States and supported by two regional offices and a headquarters office. Similarly, the Office of Administrative Law Judges (OALJ) conducts rulemaking and adjudicatory hearings throughout the country in proceedings that are subject to the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), 5 U.S.C. § 551 et seq. under approximately 50 statutes administered by USDA agencies. The Office of Judicial Officer (OJO) is delegated authority to act as the final deciding officer for the United States Department of Agriculture in adjudicatory proceedings listed in 7 C.F.R. § 2.35.

The numbers and letters of the following listing relates to values in the Change (Chg) Key column of the Project Statement:

(1) A decrease of \$3,700,000 and 14 FTEs (\$16,703,000 and 68 FTEs available in 2025).

In pursuit of streamlining workforce efforts, facilities and other government efficiencies, the Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) has reduced staff from 68 FTEs in 2025 to 54 FTEs. While most of the funding for OHA is spent on salary and benefits, our enabling statute at 7 U.S.C. § 6992(c)(4) prohibits OHA from receiving personnel, informational technology, and other support services except on a reimbursable basis from any agency other than the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture. To gain efficiencies OHA has proactively closed one of our regional offices, has begun consolidating certain administrative functions; and has re-assigned mission critical duties to senior leadership. At this funding level, OHA will continue to provide the mission of Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) to promote fairness, transparency, and consistency in National Appeals Division (NAD), Office of Administrative Law Judges (OALJ), and Office of Judicial Officer (OJO) proceedings through the planning, coordination, and administration of office-wide activities and initiatives.



**GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF OBLIGATIONS AND FTEs****Table OHA-7. Geographic Breakdown of Obligations and FTEs for Office of Hearings and Appeals (thousands of dollars, FTEs)**

State/Territory/Country	2023		2024		2025		2026	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs
Alabama .....	\$183	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Arkansas.....	178	1	\$192	1	\$196	1	-	-
California.....	422	2	446	2	456	2	\$456	2
Colorado .....	1,519	10	1,624	9	1,649	9	1,670	9
District of Columbia .....	1,644	9	1,945	9	1,815	8	1,380	6
Florida .....	377	2	407	2	197	1	197	1
Georgia.....	-	-	-	-	218	1	-	-
Idaho.....	199	1	209	1	213	1	213	1
Indiana .....	1,113	7	1,195	7	1,186	7	577	4
Maryland.....	214	1	226	1	231	1	231	1
Minnesota .....	194	1	204	1	214	1	214	1
Mississippi .....	393	2	413	2	426	2	426	2
Missouri .....	358	2	382	2	395	2	395	2
New York .....	193	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
North Carolina .....	389	2	415	2	423	2	206	1
Ohio .....	196	1	212	1	216	1	216	1
Pennsylvania .....	189	1	445	2	214	1	-	-
South Carolina .....	-	-	203	1	207	1	207	1
Tennessee.....	1,074	7	1,085	7	1,261	7	1,261	6
Texas .....	356	2	419	2	427	2	427	2
Virginia .....	7,073	21	6,488	20	6,759	18	4,924	14
Obligations.....	16,264	74	16,510	72	16,703	68	13,000	54
Lapsing Balances .....	239	-	193	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Available .....	16,503	74	16,703	72	16,703	68	13,000	54

**CLASSIFICATION BY OBJECTS****Table OHA-8 Classification by Objects (thousands of dollars)**

Item No.	Item	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Estimated	2026 Estimated
<b>Personnel Compensation:</b>					
	Washington D.C.....	\$3,002	\$2,994	\$2,899	\$2,251
	Personnel Compensation, Field .....	7,011	7,251	7,103	5,587
11	Total personnel compensation .....	10,013	10,245	10,002	7,838
12	Personal benefits.....	3,480	3,566	3,526	2,743
13.0	Benefits for former personnel .....	16	9	358	10
	Total, personnel comp. and benefits.....	13,509	13,820	13,886	10,591
<b>Other Objects:</b>					
21.0	Travel and transportation of persons .....	159	122	123	100
22.0	Transportation of things.....	0	11	21	21
23.1	Rental payments to GSA.....	368	365	376	294
23.3	Communications, utilities, and misc. charges .....	351	329	355	355
24.0	Printing and reproduction.....	30	38	58	38
25.1	Advisory and assistance services .....	418	400	420	374
25.2	Other services from non-Federal sources.....	484	594	594	512
25.3	Other goods and services from Federal sources .....	870	786	790	665
25.5	Research and development contracts.....	3	-	-	-
26.0	Supplies and materials .....	37	44	45	30
31.0	Equipment .....	35	1	35	20
	Total, Other Objects .....	2,755	2,690	2,817	2,409
99.9	Total, new obligations.....	16,264	16,510	16,703	13,000
	<b>DHS Building Security Payments (included in 25.3)...</b>	18	20	22	22
<b>Information Technology Investments:</b>					
11	Internal Labor .....	\$0.102	\$0.104	\$0.106	\$0.108
	External Labor (Contractors) .....	\$0.410	\$0.415	\$0.419	\$0.424
	Total Major Investment .....	1	1	1	1
	Total IT Investments .....	1	1	1	1
<b>Position Data:</b>					
	Average Salary (dollars), ES Position.....	\$182,807	\$199,100	\$204,899	\$204,899
	Average Salary (dollars), GS Position .....	\$116,910	\$134,823	\$140,373	\$140,373
	Average Grade, GS Position .....	13.4	13.5	13.6	13.6

\*This table assumes a reduced 2026 FTE baseline due to 2025 voluntary staff separations and administrative cost efficiencies.

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**STATUS OF PROGRAMS**

The Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) was established in 2017 to consolidate three previously separate entities: The National Appeals Division (NAD), the Office of the Administrative Law Judges (OALJ), and the Office of the Judicial Officer (OJO).

Previously, OALJ and OJO were offices under Departmental Administration, and NAD was an independent office that reported to the Secretary of Agriculture. The reorganization consolidated administrative support for the three USDA entities that adjudicate first and second-level hearings and appeals at USDA. After consolidation, NAD, OALJ, and OJO continue to conduct proceedings under their respective legal authorities.

The mission of OHA is to plan, coordinate, and provide administrative support for NAD, OALJ, and OJO. OHA promotes fairness, transparency, and consistency in NAD, OALJ, and OJO proceedings through the planning, coordination, and administration of office-wide activities and initiatives.

**Current Activities**

NAD conducts fair and impartial administrative appeal hearings and reviews of adverse decisions by certain agencies within USDA, and issues determinations in an expeditious manner that reflect a thorough consideration of factual information that reach a proper conclusion. Adjudicative activities include:

- **Appealability Determinations:** The Director reviews hundreds of agency decisions when an agency notifies a participant that it does not believe an administrative decision is appealable.
- **Pre-Hearing Conferences:** NAD conducts pre-hearing conferences to identify and/or narrow the issues in the appeal and help parties understand the evidence they need to present at the hearing.
- **Hearings:** In the first-level appeals process, NAD Administrative Judges conduct impartial administrative hearings and issue determinations, which include decisions about attorney fees under the Equal Access to Justice Act that reflect a thorough consideration of factual and legal information.
- **Reviews:** On petition, in a second-level appeal, the NAD Director reviews Administrative Judge Appeal Determinations, renders second-level decisions about attorney fees under the Equal Access to Justice Act, and may grant equitable relief to the same extent, as such authority is provided to the Secretary.

OALJ conducts rulemaking and adjudicatory hearings nationwide under approximately 50 statutes that are subject to the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. §§ 551 *et seq.*). Adjudicative activities include:

- **Initial Decisions:** Judges issue initial decisions and orders in disciplinary and enforcement proceedings, which become final decisions of the Secretary unless appealed to the Judicial Officer.
- **Consent Decisions:** Judges approve consent decisions entered by the parties, which resolve disputes by settlement.
- **Publication of Agricultural Decisions:** OALJ publishes *Agriculture Decisions*, the official compilation of decisions and orders issued in adjudicatory proceedings conducted for the Department.

OJO is delegated authority to act as the final deciding officer for the United States Department of Agriculture in adjudicatory proceedings listed in 7 C.F.R. § 2.35. Adjudicatory activities include:

- **Review of ALJ Decisions:** On petition for review, the Judicial Officer reviews initial adjudicatory decisions issued by USDA's Administrative Law Judges. This second-level review may include Administrative Law Judge decisions about attorney fees under the Equal Access to Justice Act.

- **Reparation Decisions:** The Judicial Officer issues reparation decisions under the Packers and Stockyards Act (P&S Act) and the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA). Review of Decisions Subject to the APA: The Judicial Officer reviews decisions in adjudicatory proceedings that are subject to the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 556, 557.

In 2024, NAD:

- Processed 935 cases filed with NAD.
- Issued 43 appealability determinations when appellants challenged the agency's view that a decision was not appealable. Outcome was favorable to appellants in 93 percent of the cases.
- Conducted 440 in-person or telephonic hearings, videoconferences, and reviews of the record.
- Issued 875 determinations, of which 692 were issued by Administrative Judges and 183 were issued by the NAD Director. Outcome was favorable to appellants in 31 percent of the cases. In 59 Review Determinations, appellants were granted equitable relief.
- Increased transparency of the USDA appeals process by publishing more than 650 determinations on the NAD website in 2024; over 25,400 have been published on the NAD web site <[USDA National Appeals Division | \(entellitrak.com\)](https://entellitrak.com)> since the program began.
- Accepted more than 1,930 eFile requests, which have been processed since NAD introduced the option to electronically file requests in February 2013.
- Engaged in vigorous outreach efforts to inform all producers about the USDA Appeals systems and their appeals rights.
- Participated in approximately 15 outreach activities.
- Updated and reprinted mailers.
- Leveraged a technological development of a cloud-base file storage system known as BOX to improve the speed in which the Director Review Determinations can be accessed.
- No longer creates paper administrative records; instead, we use a cloud-based platform and implemented this platform with the parties participating in our hearings.
- Employees participate in cross-functional task forces and teams to develop organic solutions to issues critical to the mission of the agency. The Workplace Safety and Security Taskforce completed a comprehensive set of best practices and guidelines for improving safety and security for OHA's nationwide workforce, especially NAD's cadre of Administrative Judges and OALJ's Administrative Law Judges.
- Employed an Ombudsman to offer an effective bridge between Rural America and NAD to ensure that questions about our appeal process are answered and assistance is provided.

In 2024, OALJ:

- Opened 96 new cases.
- Closed 95 cases instituted under various statutes, including the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act; Animal Health Protection Act; Animal Welfare Act; Federal Meat Inspection Act; Food and Nutrition Act; Horse Protection Act; Organic Foods Production Act; Packers and Stockyards Act; Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act; Plant Protection Act; and Poultry Products Inspection Act.
  - These cases related to USDA agencies and programs such as the Agricultural Marketing Service (Fair Trade Practices Program, National Organic Program, and Specialty Crops Program); Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service; Food and Nutrition Service (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and appeals, filed by state agencies, of quality-control claims); Food Safety and Inspection Service; and Office of Human Resources Management (Federal Salary Offset/Administrative Offset).
- Conducted formal adjudicative proceedings:
  - Held numerous pre-hearing conferences to prepare parties and participants for virtual hearings, which assisted the parties in settling cases.

- The Judges signed and entered 67 consent decisions, which have the same force and effect as a decision issued after a full hearing. 7 C.F.R. § 1.138.
- Presided over seven virtual on the record hearings via Microsoft Teams and Zoom.
- Issued decisions and orders in 28 cases (not including consent decisions).
  - The Judges issued two decisions after on the record hearings; 6 decisions on the written record, via summary judgment; and 20 decisions by reason of default or admissions, upon motion by the government (based on party's failure to file timely answer and/or respond to allegations of complaint per 7 C.F.R. § 1.139).
- Conducted formal on the record rulemaking proceedings, including two in-person hearings:
  - Completed the final five weeks of national public hearing in Indiana regarding proposals to amend pricing formulas in 11 Federal milk marketing orders (Docket No. 23-J-0067), initiated by the Agricultural Marketing Service.
  - Presided over formal rulemaking hearing in Fresno, California, regarding raisins in California (Docket No. 23-J-0080) and proposals recommended by the Raisin Administrative Committee ("RAC") to amend Federal Marketing Order No. 989.
- Prepared and published Volume 80 of *Agriculture Decisions*, an official publication by the Secretary of Agriculture that consists of decisions and orders issued in adjudicatory proceedings conducted for the Department under various statutes and regulations.

In 2024 OJO:

- Continued to manage its cases pending in both the appellate docket (i.e., on appeal from decisions of ALJs) and reparation docket (i.e., claims for damages between private parties in USDA's dispute resolution program) by achieving timely resolution of proceedings before it. As a result, OJO had no appreciable backlog of cases at the end of 2024.
- Exercised sound stewardship with limited resources. During the entirety of 2024, the Judicial Officer did not have any direct reports and left open a vacant FTE for an attorney-advisor.
- Issued 219 written decisions including matters adjudicated in the appellate docket and orders in reparation cases. Decisions addressed such issues as substantive legal matters, application of the relevant Rules of Practice, procedural matters, due process, and the appropriate measure of sanctions. Matters before OJO in 2024 arose under multiple statutes including the Packers and Stockyards Act, the Animal Welfare Act, and the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act.