I.  INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides leadership on food and agriculture issues based on public policy, the best available science and effective management. The USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) links U.S. agriculture to the world, improves foreign market access for U.S. food and agricultural products, builds new markets, improves the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in the global marketplace, and provides food aid and technical assistance to foreign countries. The International Climate Hub is led and hosted by FAS, with contributions from many agencies including the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and the Agricultural Research Service. It links U.S. research and U.S. agencies to global audiences through timely and authoritative tools and information for international agricultural producers and professionals.

Climate change presents real threats to U.S. agricultural production, forest resources, and rural economies. Producers and land managers across the country are experiencing climate impacts on their operations through shifting weather patterns and increasingly frequent and severe storms, floods, drought, and wildfire. Internationally, extreme weather events impact crop production, disrupt established trading patterns, and increase global food insecurity. This position is part of USDA’s Climate Change Fellows Program (CCFP), which provides the authority to hire highly talented individuals in the sciences into developmental positions to gain exposure to careers in the mission areas of USDA. This position works with other USDA employees to study and address connections among climate change, extreme weather events, and agricultural crop production in foreign countries.

This position requires availability for up to 10% travel, CONUS and OCONUS.

II.  MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This position works with the International Climate Hub to plan and carry out a wide variety of tasks focused on climate change and its impact on agriculture. Writes analyses regarding healthy soil, water use, animal issues, plant issues, forestry, climatic conditions, extreme weather events, and other agricultural issues impacted by climate change and conducts outreach and education activities. The incumbent gathers, analyzes, synthesizes, and communicates complex scientific, technical, environmental, economic, and other information and data on climate impacts from different sources into easily interpreted information and products. Determines data and information sources, makes inquiries, analyzes content, and presents material in a concise and usable format.
Works with the International Climate Hub to prepare data, reports, and analyses that require a high level of scientific, technical, and economic understanding of the impacts of global climate change on agricultural production and on agroforestry mitigation and adaptation principles and techniques. Provides needs analyses for USDA and relevant stakeholders and assesses the availability of current tools and information services to meet those needs. Works with senior staff to synthesize technical information into reports, web pages, publications, and articles to serve different audiences. Reviews products to ensure consistency across the program and accuracy of technical content.

Works with International Climate Hub staff to convene panels of experts, develop analytical tools and metrics, manages the development of reports and analyses, commissions and oversees work on decision support tools, and identifies options for improving tools of the International Climate Hub.

As requested and in coordination with International Climate Hub leadership, provides technical input, advice, and reports to other FAS staff on a case by case basis, on a broad array of climate change topics. Communicates with officials within and outside USDA and with internal and external customers. Develops background information on programs, policies, and internal/external issues to maintain continuity of operations. Works with senior staff to brief USDA leadership and others on issues of vital interest to ensure up-to-date information and program accomplishment. Plans and facilitates executive meetings. Provides records of key agreements and decisions. Develops operational/communication systems to ensure that informational requests from Congress, USDA, and other sources are addressed in a timely manner in consultation with International Climate Hub management.

Performs other duties as assigned.

III. EEO RESPONSIBILITIES

The incumbent is responsible for: knowing and supporting equal opportunity and civil rights policies; performing assigned duties in full compliance with the letter and spirit of equal opportunity and civil rights laws and regulations; ensuring bias-free written and oral communications; and respecting and valuing differences of other employees and clients.

IV. FACTOR LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

Factor 1– Knowledge Required by the Position, FL 1-7, 1250 pts

Scientific knowledge of the major environmental and policy issues and climate datasets surrounding climate change, adaptation, economics, and mitigation.

Skill in effective oral and written communication to include a highly developed sense of tact and diplomacy for use in dealing with individuals representing opposing viewpoints to sensitive issues.

Scientific knowledge and skill sufficient to resolve complex problems involving climate
change’s impact on agricultural production and to work on both climate adaptation and climate mitigation issues.

Ability to perform complex statistical tests and/or procedures that require using highly specialized methods or techniques or occurrences, and procedures in response to test or study findings.

Specialized, scientific knowledge of disciplines such as soils and plant science, agriculture, and biology sufficient to assist in recommendations that impact or direct daily activities.

Professional knowledge and skill in conducting research and gathering documentation in order to compile comprehensive reports with recommendations in clear, concise, and logical terms.

Skill in preparing datasets used to support decision-making, including charts, files, input and output, and sources of input. Ability to apply different techniques, revised record layout, revised output format and similar changes to a level sufficient for providing a quantitative framework.

Ability to document operational procedures, instructions, and support necessary to ensure successful operational systems. Ability to devise strategies to overcome significant resource problems.

**Factor 2 – Supervisory Controls, FL 2-4, 450 pts**

The supervisor issues general administrative guidance relative to work assignments and program objectives. The supervisor and incumbent work out deadlines and project milestones together. Incumbent independently accomplishes assignments by determining and using applicable professional techniques, working with senior team leaders when appropriate. Technical guidance is received from supervisor or designated leads on complex and controversial problems. Work is reviewed for conformance to policy and accomplishment of program objectives.

**Factor 3 – Guidelines, FL 3-3, 275 pts**

Guidelines include agency policy and regulations, approved management and long-range functional resource plans, and professional journals and publications. Incumbent uses judgment and ingenuity in applying this guidance. Independently adapts or extends the guidelines or chooses from alternative procedures in achieving optimum multiple use.

**Factor 4 – Complexity, FL 4-4, 225 pts**

Incumbent prepares, executes, and oversees the implementation of the analysis of strategies to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change in agricultural production. Incumbent must consider many variables and relevant data sources in preparing and executing recommendations. Under broad supervisory guidance, results should translate into actionable outcomes such as analytic tools and/or reports. The incumbent oftentimes must apply knowledge that is non-standard or not applicable without modification.
Factor 5 – Scope and Effect, FL 5-3, 150 pts

The position investigates, analyzes, and advises on a variety of conventional and recurring data sets and the trends that they suggest. Incumbent identifies common problems involving climate impact on crops, animals, and agronomy in general, worldwide. Resolves a variety of problems, questions, or conditions in accordance with established precedent. Incumbent suggests relevant datasets to add to the International Climate Hub website. Work results affect FAS credibility with USDA and outside partners. Findings are important to the work of FAS policy makers and global stakeholders.

Factor 6 – Personal Contacts, FL 6-3, 0 pts

Personal contacts include agency and USDA top management officials, officials of other federal, state, and private agencies and groups, universities, and other units of government and media representatives. The incumbent must interact with various stakeholders and customers, providing climate information and soliciting feedback on information needs on climate and agriculture.

Factor 7 – Purpose of Contacts, FL 7-b, 110 pts

Contacts are primarily for providing and explaining significant information, analyzing and evaluating issues, and coordinating activities. The incumbent must apply significant skill and knowledge in determining the purpose and extent of each contact.

Factor 8 – Physical Demands, FL 8-1, 5 pts

The work is sedentary.

Factor 9 – Work Environment, FL 9-1, 5 pts

Work is performed in an adequately lit, ventilated, and heated office.

V. CLASSIFICATION SUMMARY

Total Points: 2470
Point Range Conversion: 2355-2750
Final Grade: GS-11

VI. FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT (FLSA) DETERMINATION

The Office of Personnel Management has determined that positions in this occupation require advanced knowledge in a field of science customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction. This meets the Learned Professional exemption described in 5 CFR §551.208.

VII. CLASSIFICATION STANDARD(S) USED
INTRODUCTION

This is a GS-9 developmental level position designed to prepare the incumbent to fully perform the duties at the full performance level (FPL) as described in the attached position description, Climate Change Fellow, GS-0401-11. The incumbent performs the basic duties and responsibilities as cited in the FPL position description with more clear written guidance available for citation and decision making. As a result, the position affects a narrower range of outcomes, which includes avoidance of more controversial decision making. Identified below are the factor levels at the GS-9 level that differ from the next higher grade level.

EVALUATION FACTORS

Factor 1– Knowledge Required by the Position, FL 1-6, 950 pts

Professional knowledge of and skill in applying the varied sciences and science-adjacent disciplines underpinning climate change and agricultural conditions for one or more types of crops and livestock. Able to independently perform recurring, well-precedented projects using standard methods and techniques. Able to identify and resolve problems. Skill in describing scientific advice to multiple audiences. Skill in preparing routine reports and making conventional presentations. Knowledge of proper collection, storage, and use of scientific data sets sufficient to validate research conclusions based on them.

Factor 2 – Supervisory Controls, FL 2-3, 275 pts

The supervisor or designated project lead outlines possible problem areas at time of assignment, at the same time as they define objectives, plans, priorities, and deadlines. Assignments have clear precedent allowing the incumbent to accurately forecast and plan successive steps needed to carry them out. The incumbent independently plans and carries out assignments according to the guidance provided and earlier iterations provided as templates/examples. Brings controversial findings to the supervisor’s attention. Work is reviewed for results and impacts, as well as to confirm that methodology was appropriate for the circumstances presented.

Factor 4 – Complexity, FL 4-3, 150 pts

Work involves performing research in the area of climate change’s impact on agricultural production, natural ecosystems, and the complex interplay of those two subjects. Requires statistical analysis and comparison of multiple variables and use of unrelated steps, processes, methods, and procedures. Applies well established research and statistical methods and concepts, as well as mapping and time-series forecasting. Must take scientific data and conclusions and meld them with assessment of risk to the environment and (with economic support) to regional
economies and proposed policies. Must identify, interpret, analyze, and applies a range of established approaches and solutions to tests, problems, or issues.

Factor 6 – Personal Contacts, FL 6-2, 75 pts (combined)

Because the incumbent is still developing in the role, independent contacts are generally limited to other USDA staff. Other contacts are made with the participation of more seasoned staff.

CLASSIFICATION SUMMARY

Total Points: 1885
Point Range Conversion: 1855-2100
Final Grade: GS-09
Full Performance Level: GS-11