



Office of the Ombudsperson

The Ombudsperson can...

- ✓ Identify issues early and highlight broader concerns on access to USDA programs.
- ✓ Review information and data to search for patterns and ongoing trends on access to USDA programs.
- ✓ Listen to concerns from farmers and ranchers.
- ✓ Refer issues to other USDA resources and offices.
- ✓ Communicate shared concerns from Hispanic and female farmers and ranchers to senior USDA leaders.
- ✓ Make recommendations to resolve problems and issues.
- ✓ Advocate for fair process and administration for all the involved individuals.
- ✓ Seek internal organizational change as appropriate.

The Ombudsperson cannot...

- ✗ Advocate for any one individual or group or entity or for an outcome.
- ✗ Make, change or set aside a law, policy, operational or administrative decision.
- ✗ Compel anyone to implement the Ombudsperson's recommendations.
- ✗ Process civil rights complaints.
- ✗ Conduct formal investigations or adjudicate complaints, or accept an issue that is currently pending in legal or administrative channels.
- ✗ Act as a substitute for formal channels or participate in formal proceedings or overturn any final decisions.
- ✗ Accept claims or notice of claims on behalf of the USDA.
- ✗ Provide legal advice or determine rights.
- ✗ Testify or serve as a witness on matters brought to the Ombudsperson in any formal process or matter, unless required by law.
- ✗ Address internal human resources matters, union matters, workplace issues or individual Equal Employment Opportunity complaints.



United States Department of Agriculture

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The Ombudsperson is...

Neutral

The Ombudsperson is a neutral advocate for a fair process and does not take sides or advocate for any individual, group or entity or for an outcome.

Confidential

The Ombudsperson maintains confidentiality to the extent permitted by law and does not willingly disclose names or provide testimony even when given permission by the caller or visitor to do so. However, the Ombudsperson may need to reveal this information to the appropriate entity if there is intent to harm person or property, criminal activity or potential fraud, waste, or abuse of government resources.

Independent

The Ombudsperson is not part of USDA management and is able to operate free from the influence or control of other USDA programs.

Informal

The Ombudsperson does not formally investigate, arbitrate, adjudicate or participate in any internal or external formal process or action. Contact with the Office does not prevent an individual from pursuing formal resolution channels within the USDA. It also does not initiate a formal complaint or appeal process, or stop the clock for any of these formal processes.

Contact

Joanne Dea, Ombudsperson, USDA

Phone: 202.205-1000

Email: ombudsperson@usda.gov

www.usda.gov/ombudsperson