



Secretary Brooke L. Rollins
**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250**

SECRETARY'S MEMORANDUM 1078-013

JUNE 30, 2025

**RESPONDING TO AND IMPLEMENTING GOLD STANDARD SCIENCE AT THE U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

1. PURPOSE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is the "People's Department," and since our inception, we have been called upon to serve the American people, including a strong commitment to ensuring the highest level of integrity in all aspects of the Department's engagement in scientific and technological activities and the use of scientific information in policy making.

This Secretarial Memorandum implements provisions of President Donald J. Trump's vision to restore a gold standard for science that ensures that federally funded research is transparent, rigorous, and impactful, and that Federal decisions are informed by the most credible, reliable, and impartial scientific evidence available as set forth in Executive Order (EO) 14303, Restoring Gold Standard Science, dated May 23, 2025.

This Secretarial Memorandum provides clear expectations about USDA's approach to implement gold standard science and directs all Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices to support our commitment to this standard.

2. BACKGROUND

Over the last 5 years, confidence that scientists act in the best interests of the public has fallen significantly. A majority of researchers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics believe science is facing a reproducibility crisis. The falsification of data by leading researchers has led to high-profile retractions of federally funded research. Unfortunately, the Federal Government has contributed to this loss of trust. Scientific integrity in the production and use of science by the Federal Government is critical to maintaining the trust of the American people and ensuring confidence in government decisions informed by science. We must restore the American people's faith in the scientific enterprise and institutions that create and apply scientific knowledge in service of the public good. Reproducibility, rigor, and unbiased peer review must be maintained. As a Department, we must do all that we can to support the restoration of gold standard science.

3. DIRECTIVES

I hereby direct all USDA Mission Areas, Agencies, Offices, and employees to adhere to the following rules governing the use, interpretation, and communication of scientific data, unless otherwise provided by law:

- (a) Employees shall not engage in scientific misconduct nor knowingly rely on information resulting from scientific misconduct.
- (b) Except as prohibited by law, and consistent with relevant policies that protect national security or sensitive personal or confidential business information, agency heads shall in a timely manner and, to the extent practicable and within the agency's authority:
 - (i) subject to paragraph (ii), make publicly available the following information within the agency's possession:
 - (A) the data, analyses, and conclusions associated with scientific and technological information produced or used by the agency that the agency reasonably assesses will have a clear and substantial effect on important public policies or important private sector decisions (influential scientific information), including data cited in peer-reviewed literature; and
 - (B) the models and analyses (including, as applicable, the source code for such models) the agency used to generate such influential scientific information. Employees may not invoke exemption 5 to the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552(b)(5)) to prevent disclosure of such models unless authorized in writing to do so by the agency head following prior notice to the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) Director.
 - (ii) risk models used to guide agency enforcement actions or select enforcement targets are not information that must be disclosed under this subsection.
- (c) When using scientific information in agency decision-making, employees shall transparently acknowledge and document uncertainties, including how uncertainty propagates throughout any models used in the analysis.
- (d) Where employees produce or use scientific information to inform policy or legal determinations they must use science that comports with the legal standards applicable to those determinations, including when agencies evaluate the realistic or reasonably foreseeable effects of an action.
- (e) Employees shall be transparent about the likelihood of the assumptions and scenarios used. Highly unlikely and overly precautionary assumptions and scenarios should only be relied upon in agency decision-making where required by law or otherwise pertinent to the agency's action.
- (f) When scientific or technological information is used to inform agency evaluations and subsequent decision-making, employees shall apply a "weight of scientific evidence" approach.
- (g) Employees' communication of scientific information shall be consistent with the results of the relevant analysis and evaluation and, to the extent that

uncertainty is present, the degree of uncertainty should be communicated. Communications involving a scientific model or information derived from a scientific model should include reference to any material assumptions that inform the model's outputs.

(h) Once the guidance on Gold Standard Science is established by OSTP and promulgated pursuant to section 3 of the E.O. 14303, it shall, among other things, form the basis for employees' evaluation of all scientific and technological information called for in this order except where otherwise required by law.

Additional guidance will be forthcoming from the Department after the OSTP Director issues guidance on implementation of "Gold Standard Science" in the conduct and management of scientific activities.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

The Under Secretary for the Research, Education, and Economics is responsible for implementing all aspects of this memorandum, in coordination with the Office of the General Counsel. In the absence of an Under Secretary, the Secretary will designate a senior official in the Research, Education, and Economics Mission Area to carry out these responsibilities.

5. EFFECTS OF THE MEMORANDUM

This memorandum is intended to improve the use, interpretation, and communication of scientific data by the Department and to assure implementation of my expectations for USDA's approach to gold standard science and is therefore not a final agency action within the meaning of such term in chapter 5 of title 5. This memorandum and any resulting report or recommendations are not intended to, and do not create, any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person. To the extent there is any inconsistency between the provisions of this memorandum and any Federal laws or regulations, the laws or regulations will control.

6. EFFECTIVE DATE

This memorandum is effective immediately.

/s/ Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture