



July 2018

USDA SCIENCE COUNCIL & USDA SECURITY COUNCIL
JOINT COMMITTEE ON BIORISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

CHARTER

March 2015 (Revised July 2018)

I. PURPOSE

The technical nature of biosafety and biosecurity issues combined with the national security implications associated with potential threats, consequences, and vulnerabilities creates an interconnectedness between scientific expertise and national security policy. This relationship requires comprehensive biorisk management policies to address the issues of biosafety, biosecurity, biocontainment, physical security, information security, and personnel reliability.

The purpose of the Joint Committee on Biorisk Management Policy (Committee) is to oversee biorisk management policy at the department level, provide a forum to discuss best practices, review inputs for national-level reports, and serve as a conduit for bi-directional information sharing between United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) senior leadership and all other levels of personnel. The Committee will also facilitate effective biorisk management across the USDA through more frequent standardization of department policies, more effective trend identification and analysis, and heightened awareness of critical areas for strategic focus.

II. BACKGROUND

The Science Council and the Security Council established the Committee in 2015 to institutionalize a harmonized USDA approach for informed decision making, policy development, and oversight practices in the areas of biorisk management. It is critical that government laboratories maintain high standards with regard to their work with hazardous biological agents. Furthermore, authorities such as the *National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats*, Executive Order 13546 – *Optimizing the Security of Biological Select Agents and Toxins in the United States*, and Presidential Policy Directive 2 (PPD-2) – *Implementation of the National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats* define biorisk management initiatives and routine reporting requirements for life sciences research.

III. OBJECTIVES

The Committee shall review and provide clearance on USDA inputs to relevant national

reports (e.g., Dual Use Research of Concern, PPD-2 Report) before they are delivered to The White House or interagency partners.

The Committee shall advise on USDA implementation efforts for biorisk management initiatives directed or recommended by The White House, the Government Accountability Office, the Federal Select Agent Program, and/or other expert advisory panels.

The Committee shall establish and oversee the activities of a permanent sub-committee implementing the USDA Biosafety Program (hereafter the Sub-Committee). The Sub-Committee shall:

1. Serve as a department-wide resource for biosafety and biosecurity-related issues as they relate to laboratory operations and other field or facility-based operations as appropriate, and provide oversight to help ensure USDA compliance with applicable laws, regulations, standards, and guidance.
2. Facilitate discussion to assist USDA agencies in developing and updating agency-specific biosafety and biosecurity-related policies which are relevant to laboratory and other field or facility-based operations, as appropriate, and identify best practices which should be standardized across all agencies.
3. Provide agency biorisk-related reporting on incidents, inspections, etc. to the larger Committee as directed through departmental regulation; the Committee will share these reports and critical analyses with USDA senior leadership.

IV. SPONSORSHIP and MEMBERSHIP

The USDA Science Council and USDA Security Council will provide administrative support for the Committee. The Committee will be co-chaired by the Director (or designee) of the Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) and the Director (or designee) of the Office of Homeland Security (OHS). The Co-Chairs will identify, request, and receive support from appropriate agencies, subject matter experts, and other stakeholders to address biosafety and biosecurity policy concerns. Members serve without compensation beyond their regular salaries; thus, there will be no cost of operation.

The working composition of the Committee includes:

Co-Chairs:	Director, OCS (or designee)
	Director, OHS (or designee)

Membership shall consist of:	Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
	Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)
	Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)
	Forest Service (FS)
	National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)
	Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA)
	Office of Communications (OC)
	OCS
	Office of the General Counsel (OGC)
	OHS
	Any other agency or office designated by the Co-Chairs

V. COMMITTEE OPERATIONS

The Committee will meet as necessary to achieve the objectives defined in this Charter.

The Committee Co-Chairs may assemble sub-committees as necessary to address specific gaps or fulfill critical roles in support of USDA biosafety and biosecurity policies or in the implementation of mandates or recommendations directed at the department.

This charter shall be evaluated and updated at least every three years or as members deem appropriate.