



USDA SCIENCE COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON STATISTICS CHARTER

I. PURPOSE

The USDA Science Council facilitates and supports cross-Department coordination and collaboration among all USDA agencies. The Council advises the Secretary and Chief Scientist on the priorities for USDA's science agenda. The USDA science agenda relies on official statistics produced by the National Agricultural Statistics Service and the statistical information and analyses produced by the Economic Research Service. A USDA Statistics Committee under the Science Council will provide a basis for closer collaboration across agencies on statistical efforts and assure consistency in statistical data on similar variables collected across USDA Agencies.

II. OBJECTIVES

The USDA Statistical Committee will:

1. Provide a forum to prioritize needs for new statistics.
2. Facilitate agency initiatives to develop performance indicators, to determine eligibility for programs based on data, or to implement new programs requiring data (e.g. renewable energy programs).
3. Provide a platform to develop best practices for use of new data products and tools. Such data might include program or administrative data, geospatial data, or merged data. Challenges exist in authorization to receive such data, and in developing appropriate uses of the data. The Statistics Committee will coordinate activities with the Science Council's Scientific Data Management Committee which has a mandate to create synergies and new approaches to enhance value of scientific data.
4. Form working groups of interested Agencies to develop common standards for similar data (e.g. land use).
5. Be a focal point for USDA relevant statistical initiatives, news and requests from the statistical community outside USDA as well as international statistical efforts. The Committee will provide a mechanism by which USDA's officially designated federal Agencies – the National Agricultural Statistics Service and the Economic Research Service – can more broadly represent USDA on the OMB Interagency Council on Statistical Policy.

III. SPONSORSHIP and MEMBERSHIP

The Undersecretary for Research, Education and Economics and the Chief Scientist will provide administrative support for the Statistics Committee. The Committee will be chaired by the Administrator of the National Agricultural Statistics Service or the Economic Research Service on an alternating year basis.

Members of the Committee will consist of USDA Senior Executives from the REE Agencies, USDA Program Agencies appointed by the Administrator of each Agency, and the Chief Economist. Members serve without compensation beyond their regular salaries; thus, there will be no cost of operation.

IV. COMMITTEE OPERATIONS

The Statistics Committee will meet quarterly.

The Statistics Committee will develop recommendations to be presented to the Chief Scientist on high priority statistical issues. Recommendations of the Committee will be determined by consensus so long as 70 percent of the members are in attendance. If a member is absent, a designated representative from the same member organization may participate.

The Committee will submit an annual report to the Chief Scientist that includes activities undertaken and statistical priorities for USDA.

This charter shall be evaluated and updated every two years or as members deem appropriate.