



**Environmental Justice
Annual Implementation Progress Report
Fiscal Year 2015**

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C**

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The following acronyms are used to describe USDA agencies in this report:

1. Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)
2. Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
3. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
4. Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP)
5. Departmental Management (DM)
6. Economic Research Service (ERS)
7. Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group (EJ IWG or IWG)
8. Farm Service Agency (FSA)
9. Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)
10. Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)
11. Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)
12. Forest Service (USFS or FS)
13. Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA)
14. National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)
15. National Appeals Division (NAD)
16. National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)
17. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
18. Office of Tribal Relations (OTR)
19. Risk Management Agency (RMA)
20. Rural Development (RD)

Pertinent USDA Terms and Definitions:

Environmental Justice: To the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law, all populations are provided the opportunity to comment before decisions are rendered on, are allowed to share in the benefits of, are not excluded from, and are not affected in a disproportionately high and adverse manner by government programs and activities affecting the environment and its impact on human health.

Environmental Justice Communities: Minority and/or low-income populations, including American Indian and Alaska Native populations.

Low-income Population: Any readily identifiable group of low-income persons who live in geographic proximity. Low-income populations may be identified using data collected, maintained, and analyzed by an agency or from analytical tools such as the annual statistical poverty thresholds from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Reports, Series P60, Consumer Income and Poverty.

Minority: A person who is a member of one of the following population groups: American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian and Pacific Islander; Black, not of Hispanic origin; or Hispanic.

Purpose

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), in support of the Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Justice, Executive Order 12898, and the USDA's Environmental Justice Strategic Plan for 2016–2020, provides the following report on implementation of its environmental justice goals. The bulk of the reporting in this report comes from FY 2015, but where appropriate it also reiterates USDA's long-standing programs that illustrate the Department's commitment to results that matter, its new chapter on civil rights, and tying environmental health to human health.

Introduction

Environmental justice (EJ) is meeting the needs of underserved communities by reducing disparate environmental burdens, removing barriers to participation in decision-making, increasing access to environmental benefits that help make all communities safe, vibrant, and healthy places to live and work, and ensuring all populations are allowed to share in the benefits of government programs and activities.

Federal attention to this issue began in 1994 with President Bill Clinton's Executive Order Executive Order 12898, charging the Federal agencies to create an Interagency Working Group (IWG), develop agency strategies to address environmental justice in their programs and policies, and to report their progress. USDA developed an EJ strategy that year, addressing research, data collection, analysis, interagency coordination, and development of model projects, as well as broader public participation, planning, outreach, communication, partnerships, sharing of information, education, and training.

The Federal IWG was reconvened in 2010 by the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Obama Administration also held a Forum on Environmental Justice that same year. As a result of these interagency meetings, 16 Federal Department and agency heads, including USDA Secretary Thomas Vilsack, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on environmental justice. The MOU required each signing Department to draft an Annual Implementation Progress Report that updated the public on interagency collaboration, the Environmental Justice Strategy, and performance measures. As such, this report will summarize how agencies are collaborating within the Department as well as the USDA's role in the IWG. It will then briefly summarize the newly released Environmental Justice Strategic Plan: 2016–2020. The bulk of this report is dedicated to assessing the Department's progress on the 38 performance measures laid out in the new Strategic Plan.

Interagency Collaboration

USDA Agencies

Over the last several years, USDA has developed a robust collaboration within the Department, and contributed to the interagency efforts of the IWG. FY 2015 efforts were led by former USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Arthur “Butch” Blazer and agency SES points of contact. A USDA Environmental Justice Team, comprised of program staff from the various agencies, met monthly to share successes and learnings about their programs and interactions with constituents. During these meetings, program staff were updated on the IWG and its sub-committees activities, learned of EJ conferences and events, and requested or shared resources. Several special-project groups helped update the Strategic Plan and Annual Report.

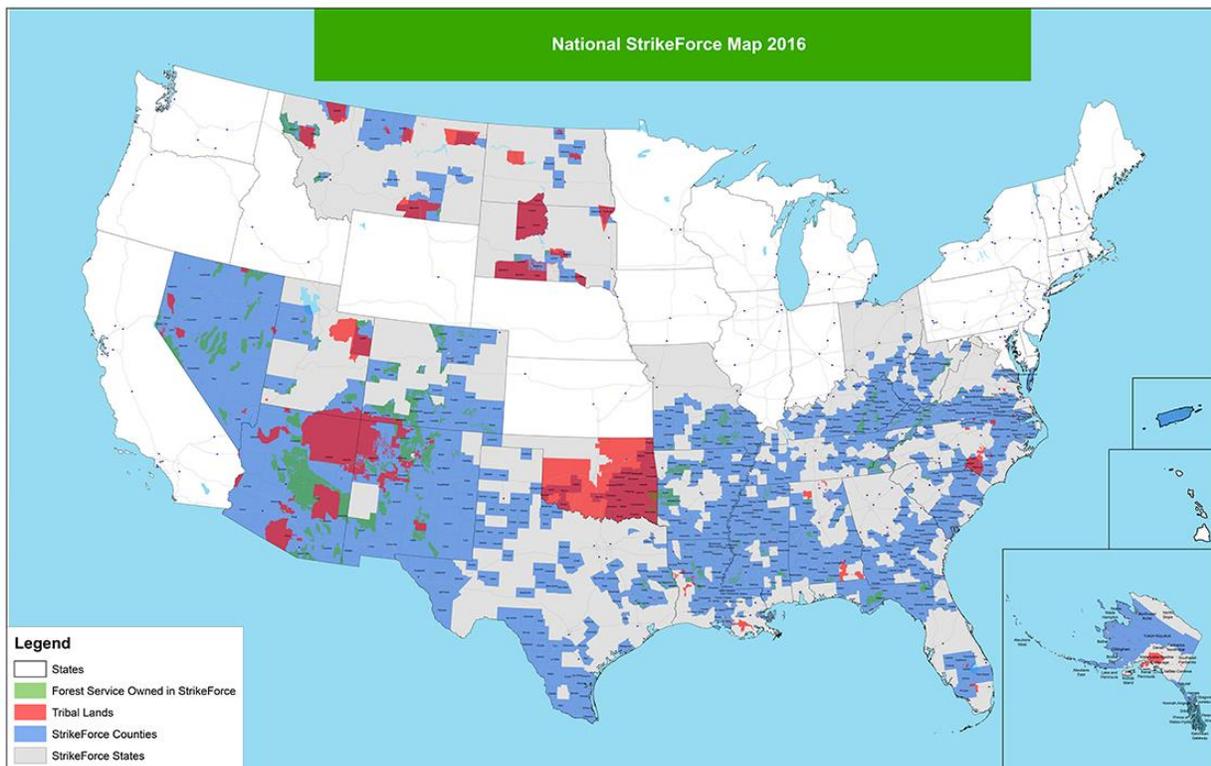


Collaboration among USDA agencies went beyond planning. Several of the substantive programs described later in this report are joint efforts. For example, USDA launched the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative (KYF2) in 2009 to better support the farmers, ranchers, food businesses and communities engaged in local and regional food systems. Through a variety of grants, loans, and other resources, USDA is helping connect farmers and consumers at the local level and supporting every step of the supply chain in between. The KYF2 initiative is a Department wide effort, channeling the strengths of USDA’s seventeen agencies to revitalize rural economies, connect rural and urban communities, create jobs, and improve access to healthy food.

USDA’s StrikeForce Initiative continues to grow. StrikeForce is a cross-agency Rural Growth and Opportunity Initiative, comprised of NRCS, FSA, RD, FNS, MRP, and NIFA. These agencies serve Americans residing in persistent poverty counties by coordinating activities among all USDA agencies, its sister agencies, institutions of higher learning, and community-

based organizations to increase Federal program access and investment and break the cycle of poverty in these areas.

In 2015, StrikeForce covered 970 counties, conducted 2,214 outreach events, coordinated 62,297 USDA projects, and received \$7.49 billion in USDA investments. For information on StrikeForce's 2015 accomplishments, visit <http://www.usda.gov/documents/strikeforce-rural-growth-opportunity.pdf>.



Interagency Working Group

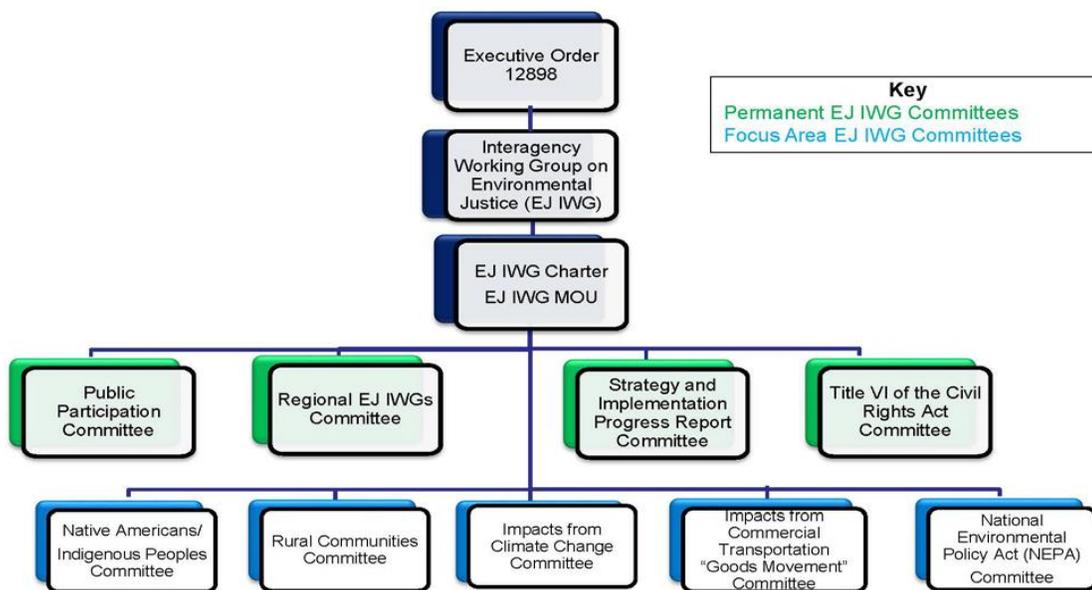
USDA actively participates with the IWG under EPA's leadership, including active participation in each of the subcommittees and five focus areas (see the chart below). The IWG meets monthly to discuss current issues, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Non-governmental partners frequently attend and collaborate in these discussions. Information about the IWG can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/federal-interagency-working-group-environmental-justice-ej-iwg>.

In March 2016, the EJ IWG revised its Framework for Collaboration, stating four goals for interagency participation over the next three fiscal years. The goals are to: (1) Enhance

communication and coordination to improve the health, quality-of-life, and economic opportunities in overburdened communities; (2) Enhance multi-agency support of holistic community based solutions to provide assistance as needed to address environmental justice issues; (3) Advance interagency strategies to identify and address environmental justice concerns in agency programs, policies, and activities; and (4) Develop partnerships with academic institutions to assist in providing long-term technical assistance to overburdened communities. The EJ IWG Framework for Collaboration 2016–18 can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-04/documents/ej_iwg_framework_for_collaboration_fy2016-2018_0.pdf.

EJ IWG Governance Structure 2016 - 2018



December 2015

USDA leads the Rural Communities subcommittee of the IWG, which is one of five substantive focus areas, providing vision and management support for interagency actions in the areas of rural youth, outreach, environmental and human health, and economic and capacity building. The Rural Communities subcommittee seeks to “ensure equity, and collaboration between federal agencies and rural environmental justice communities, develop economic opportunities so rural overburdened communities are self-sustaining and economically thriving, and coordinate federal agency investments to further holistic community-based solutions that reduce environmental justice issues.” USDA actively participates in the other focus areas and subcommittees.

USDA Environmental Justice Strategy

USDA's Environmental Justice Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 can be found at <http://www.dm.usda.gov/emd/responserestoration/EnvironmentalJustice.htm>. The plan's six goals are: (1) providing opportunities for EJ communities; (2) increasing capacity building for EJ communities; (3) expanding public participation in program and policy development; (4) ensuring there are not disproportionately high human health impacts in EJ communities; (5) increasing environmental justice awareness and training to USDA employees; and (6) reviewing and updating the agencies' policies for environmental justice.

These six goals and the programs that implement them illustrate results that matter, the Department's new chapter on civil rights, and tying environmental health to human health.

Results that matter.

Farms matter. Forests matter. Rural economic development matters. Food matters.

The Department is an integral component in the U.S. and world food systems. Its programs' effects span the food chain, including agricultural production, food business operations, and consumer products. Through implementing the six environmental justice goals, the Department takes a systemic approach to program implementation.

The Department also has major effects on place and space. Open forests, the rural heartland, and farms are integral components of America's cultural heritage. For the communities who live in or near rural and forested America, as well as the urban residents who pass through, the Department's work has meaningful effects to open and diverse spaces.

A new chapter on civil rights.

USDA programs and grant allocations are important to communities.

Program administration goes beyond grant awards. It starts with outreach. Outreach includes finding constituents in their own communities and identifying their needs and potential solutions. Many USDA agencies track EJ communities receiving grant awards. The reporting below represents some of this tracking and the agencies' desire to be transparent.

Efforts have been made to ensure internal norms consider diversity and environmental justice. For example, the Strategic plan includes enhancing EJ training to employees and members of leadership. For more information on the Obama Administration's and Secretary Vilsack's actions to internally address issues raised in past class action lawsuits, visit <http://www.usda.gov/documents/USDA%20Civil%20Rights%20Background.pdf>.

Tying environmental health to human health.

Environmental justice starts with a healthy environment.

From the national forests that capture and sequester carbon dioxide and protect drinking water, to the farmlands that provide nutritious foods—healthy lands affect human health. The USDA plays a vital role in America’s farmland, forests, grasslands, grazing lands, as well as those lands’ adjacent ecosystems and communities. Several Departmental agencies, such as Natural Resources Conservation Service, Forest Service, and Rural Development manage or assist in keeping land conserved or sustainably developed. The other agencies provide unique technical support that is necessary to a healthy environment. Together, the USDA’s agencies provide a systemic approach to supporting lands that support people.

Environmental Justice Goals & Performance Measures

This report uses the performance measures developed in the USDA Environmental Justice Strategic Plan for 2016–2020 to measure its progress for FY 2015 and establish a baseline for future reporting. The Strategic Plan was developed in collaboration with the Department’s agencies and the IWG. The Plan was open for public comment from January 15 – February 14, 2016. In response to comments received by the public, the final Plan incorporated legacy goals with new goals for the Department.

USDA’s environmental justice goals provide overall direction for continued integration of environmental justice at the Department. USDA purposely developed broad goals to guide its agencies in the development of work plans, with specific and measurable targets adapted to agency responsibilities and priorities. The six goals involve opportunities, capacity-building, public participation, civil rights, employee training, and updating regulations.

Goal 1: Ensure USDA programs provide opportunities for environmental justice communities

USDA provides targeted technical and financial assistance to aid and empower environmental justice communities in their efforts to build and sustain environmentally, economically, and climate-change resilient communities.

Measure #1: Each USDA agency will set appropriate baseline measurements to ascertain participation in new technical and financial assistance programs, and agencies will continue the evaluation of existing program participation by environmental justice communities.

AMS set its baseline target measurement to provide technical support to 300 small to mid-sized agricultural producers, businesses, and underserved communities.

More than 300 agricultural businesses, producers, and underserved communities were reached through AMS technical assistance. In partnership with NIFA and the Land-Grant University System (1862 and 1890 Universities), AMS conducted 137 grant-writing workshops across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and two U.S. territories (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands). Two workshops were held on Native American reservations (in Arizona). This outreach, the first large-scale outreach effort, trained approximately 3,000 individuals, 32.5% of which reported themselves as being minorities and the 67.5% reported themselves as being white.

NRCS based performance measures on services to historically underserved customers.

In 2015, NRCS programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Agricultural Management Assistance Program provided assistance to historically underserved customers, which include beginning, limited resource, and/or socially-disadvantaged producers. Contracts and financial assistance provided as follows:

- \$103.8 million in financial assistance on 4,162 contracts with socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to treat about 3,100,761 million acres;
- \$219.7 million in financial assistance on 9,462 contracts with beginning farmers and ranchers to treat about 1,945,958 million acres; and
- \$19.4 million in financial assistance on 1,074 contracts with limited resource farmers and ranchers to treat about 348,643 acres.

2015 Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers

Programs	Number of Contracts	Acres	FA Obligations
Agricultural Management Assistance	19	370	\$209,173
Conservation Stewardship Program	705	1,766,817	\$10,582,319
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	3,416	1,275,506	\$91,913,128
RCPP Environmental Quality Incentives Program	22	58,067	\$1,106,575
Grand Total	4,162	3,100,761	\$103,811,195

2015 Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

Programs	Number of Contracts	Acres	FA Obligations
Agricultural Management Assistance	112	592	\$ 1,169,524
Conservation Stewardship Program	1,605	993,214	\$ 16,119,073
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	7,684	917,408	\$200,954,802
RCCP - Environmental Quality Incentives Program	61	34,744	\$ 1,331,590
Grand Total	9,462	1,945,958	\$219,574,998

2015 Limited Resource Producers

Programs	Number of Contracts	Acres	FA Obligations
Agricultural Management Assistance	12	115	\$107,182
Conservation Stewardship Program	191	150,585	\$1,193,548
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	865	167,619	\$17,990,240
RCCP Environmental Quality Incentives Program	6	30,325	\$147,726
Grand Total	1,074	348,643	\$19,438,696

APHIS based performance measures on four-year increases of funds to EJ communities.

APHIS develops its baseline measurements on the four-year average on reported numbers of outreach activities from fiscal years 2012 to 2015. As future activities will be funded by program monies and individual cooperative agreements, variations are likely to reflect Congressional appropriations as well as EJ communities' needs.

Measure #2: Increase USDA program access and leverage public and private-sector resources for investments in rural, high poverty areas.

DM assessed opportunities to leverage Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) cleanup efforts.

USDA Hazardous Materials Management Program (DM HMMP) is developing environmental justice screening tools used to highlight sites that may warrant further review, analysis, or outreach for environmental justice concerns. This tool would identify potential EJ communities within close proximity of a site proposed for cleanup under the CERCLA. Once the sites are identified, best management practices could be applied to improve Community Involvement

Plans (CIP) under CERCLA. Currently, USDA is consulting EPA and DOI on the tools they use.

RMA increased access to crop insurance by waiving fees and increasing sales of insurance policies.

- RMA waived the administrative fee on 315 crop insurance policies for limited resource farmers, covering 17,818 acres and \$7,134,800 in liabilities.
- RMA entered into two cooperative agreements, totaling \$197,888: (1) Risk Management Education for Beginning, Hispanic, Livestock, and StrikeForce County Producers in RMA's Davis Region; and (2) and Risk Management Education for African American, Hispanic, Underserved, and StrikeForce County Producers in RMA's Raleigh Region.
- In 2015, RMA sold 1,085 Whole Farm Revenue Protection policies to diverse farming operations with less than \$1 million in revenue. This is an increase of 294 policies (37%) available to similar operations in 2014.

DM's Office of Advocacy and Outreach (OAO) partnered with research center.

In FY 2015, OAO provided \$400,000 to the Socially Disadvantaged Policy Research Center at Alcorn State University. This grant support USDA's efforts by providing non-matching grant funding to an 1890 educational institution research to provide policy recommendations to USDA on the protection and the promotion of the interest of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

Forest Service partnered with organizations and community members to leverage resources into new rural and low-income communities.

- Among the Forest Service's 2015 grants, the Community Forestry Program granted \$400,000 to its first project in the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico. The Río Hondo Community Forest is located in the economically depressed town of Mayaguez, which has a 50 percent poverty rate. The objectives are to protect the last 67 acres of forestland located within the city limits, and to provide organic food, recreational and education opportunities to the local community. Through matching federal grant funds with funds from other partners, the Forest Service preserves community forests by preserving public access and public participation in planning, (<http://fs.fed.us/news/releases/forest-service-announces-19-million-community-forests>).
- In 2015 the Forest Service Cooperative Forestry staff supported and participated in the following activities and partnerships, affecting and engaging environmental justice communities. Collaborations were integrated using a "Team USDA" approach to address sustainable forestry and conservation practices, and helped to promote a "working lands" infrastructure for developing economically stable communities.

National Environmental Justice Conference	Approximately 500 participants
Minority Landowner Magazine's 9 th Anniversary Conference	Approximately 350 participants
National Women In Agriculture Association's 5 th Annual Symposium	Approximately 650 participants
Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project, Inc.	Approximately 300 participants
Winston County Self-Help Cooperative, USDA and State Forestry Program (MS)	Approximately 150 participants
Winston County Self-Help Cooperative Youth Field Day (MS)	Approximately 100 participants
Mississippi Minority Farmers Alliance	Approximately 160 participants
The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund	Approximately 350 participants

- The Forest Service provided financial assistance to the 2015 Minorities in Agriculture and Natural Resources Related Sciences (MANRRS) conference, supporting student registration scholarships.
- The Forest Service provided financial assistance to the 2015 Congressional Black Caucus conference and supported personnel representation at the Forest Service programs booth in the Exhibit Hall.
- On a local level, the Forest Service continues to incorporate the local rural communities into its policy and program administration. For example, Southwestern Region (Region 3), a grazing community, continually holds public meetings in affected communities on issues such as grazing and grassland usage, climate change impacts, endangered species awareness, etc. The Region 3's Rangeland Management Staff, who are trained to provide customer service and build relationships with the public, continues to meet with grazing permit holders or, as appropriate, association representatives, to assist in understanding and complying with the terms and conditions in grazing permits and Annual Operating Instructions.

FNS invested in initiatives and new facilities for high-poverty areas to access healthy meals.

- FNS launched a \$27 million program of Child Hunger Demonstration Projects in five states to test new models and interventions to reduce child food insecurity and hunger, and a Rural Child Poverty Nutrition Center to facilitate innovative strategies to better serve children through the Child Nutrition Programs in persistently poor rural counties.
- In 2015, FNS collaborated with RD to increase the percentage of multifamily housing facilities serving as feeding sites in rural and tribal areas by 233 percent compared to same period in 2014.
- FNS's Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) increases access to school meals for children in high poverty areas, including EJ communities. CEP is currently supplying

meals in more than 18,000 schools in roughly 3,000 Local Educational Agencies, reaching more than 8.5 million children. FNS focused on promoting this program in 2015.

FSIS promoted food safety to the Hispanic/Latino and Tribal communities.

FSIS used paid advertising on Hispanic radio stations, still one of the best media to reach the Hispanic population, to reach communities. In addition, FSIS continued its direct contact with the Hispanic population through the Meat and Poultry Hotline and PregunteleaKaren.gov. Specific examples in FY 2015 include:

- Todo Cuenta Radio PSA Campaign (November 2014 through January 2015): The campaign achieved 5,363,200 on-air impressions (surpassing original goal of 4 million) and 171,308 online impressions (surpassing our original goal of 10,000).
- A media tour in Puerto Rico during February 2015 resulted in 2,503,900 impressions between radio, TV, and print.

Further, FSIS staff responded to requests for technical information and assistance from more than 18 tribes and 23 tribal organizations. Tribal governments routinely request information regarding facility development, mobile inspection units, specialty meat processing (game and bison), processing and inspection services, training for meat inspectors, food safety education, food defense, and technical assistance or referral of available resources within USDA.

Measure #3: Increase percentage of targeted USDA Rural Development investments in high-poverty areas that leverage private-sector contributions.

RD's leverage investment exceeded its goal of 10% and made 17.16% in high poverty areas.

This leverage measure is an indication of attracting private sector capital investments in rural areas, specifically high poverty areas. RD outperformed this year's target of 10%. The types of investments that RD provided included electric, telecommunication, water and waste water infrastructure, community facilities, multi-family housing, and business and industry investments. Moreover, private sector capital was attracted to high poverty areas at a rate of 17.16%.

To assist the country in addressing today's challenges, Secretary Vilsack set, in the USDA Strategic Plan for 2014-2018, Strategic Goal 1: Assist rural communities to create prosperity so they are self-sustaining, re-populating, and economically thriving. Also, RD is focused on Strategic Goal 1, Objective 1.1: Enhance rural prosperity, including leveraging capital markets to increase the Government's investment in rural America.

The table below represents three Objectives of Strategic Goal 1:

RD 2015 Key Indicators:	Target	Actual
1.1.1 Number of jobs created or saved through investments in business, entrepreneurship, cooperatives, and industry	41,202	52,697
1.1.2 Percentage of targeted RD Investment in High Poverty areas that leverage private sector funding	10%	17.16%
1.1.3 Percentage of rural residents who are provided access to new or improved services resulting from RD investments	48.57%	48.93%

RD has made investments in American Indian (AI) and Alaska Native (AN) country, as shown in the following table. For example, RD has made investments in Michigan and Wisconsin:

- When the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe in Mount Pleasant, Michigan decided to upgrade their market to a larger, permanent structure, USDA RD provided the Tribe with a \$200,000 business grant. Today, the tribe has a new farmers market with a permanent pavilion and an adjacent parking lot.
- When the health and safety of tribal members in two communities, on the Wisconsin reservation of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Ojibwa Indians, were at risk because of hazardous conditions with the public water systems, USDA RD provided assistance to enable the tribe to improve and expand its drinking water treatment facilities. In total, the tribe committed more than \$220,000 for the project enable the tribe to improve and expand its drinking water treatment facilities. In total, the tribe committed more than \$220,000 for the project.

Fiscal Year 2015 Summary	
USDA Rural Development Investments Benefitting AI/AN	
Rural Housing and Community Facilities Programs	
Tribal College Community Facilities Initiative	\$4,017,170
Community Facilities Program	\$12,314,807
Rural Community Development Initiative	\$250,000
502 Single Family Housing Direct Loans	\$18,855,609
502 Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loans	\$125,643,333
Housing Preservation Grant	\$180,290
Mutual Self - Help Housing TA Grants	\$1,364,881
504 Home Repair Loans & Grants	\$1,239,017
TOTAL	\$163,865,107
Rural Business and Cooperative Programs	
Intermediary Relending Program Loans	\$750,000
Business & Industry Loans	\$11,507,066
Rural Business Development Grant	\$9,315,555
Value-Added Producer Grant	\$837,392
Socially Disadvantaged Groups Grant	\$463,195
Renewable Energy Grants & Loans	\$500,000
Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program	\$52,012
TOTAL	\$23,425,220
Rural Utilities Programs	
Electric Loans	\$8,133,821
High Cost Energy Grants	\$6,248,012
Telecom Distance Learning Telemedicine	\$14,189,981
Telecom Community Connect Grant Program	\$8,890,178
Telecom Loans	\$26,065,000
Water & Waste (Lower 48)	\$33,920,242
Water & Waste (Alaska)	\$21,653,788
subtotal Water & Waste	\$55,574,030
TOTAL	\$119,101,022
TOTAL	\$306,391,349

Measure #4: Increase percentage of beginning, racial and ethnic minority and women farmers receiving financial assistance from USDA.

FSIS' State Meat and Poultry Inspection programs facilitated critical access to disadvantaged populations.

FSIS State Meat and Poultry Inspection programs participated in multiple workshops to include “women and minority business opportunity” and “backyard” workshops, which target small, backyard farmers. These workshops were primarily attended by women, minorities and retired part-time farmers. Some examples these programs held in FY 2015 included: Small Ruminant Management Workshop; Backyard Poultry Workshop; Dairy Goat Production and Management Workshop; Food Safety Workshop for Food Entrepreneurs; and Backyard Hog Processing Workshop.

NASS analyzed demographic and economic statistics from the 2012 Census of Agriculture to support other agencies' programs, and researched urban agriculture.

By developing and making available demographic and economic profiles of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender on a state and county level, NASS helps agencies target communities for program outreach. Information is available at [https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online_Resources/Race, Ethnicity and Gender Profiles/index.php](https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online_Resources/Race,_Ethnicity_and_Gender_Profiles/index.php).

NASS also maintains the Department's Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Program Statistics query tool, the "REGStats." The REGStats Web site provides summary information about the number of individuals and entities that apply for, and receive, Federal assistance from four USDA agencies or mission areas—FSA, NRCS, RD, and RMA. See: <http://www.outreach.usda.gov/regstats.htm>.

Recognizing the benefits of urban agriculture on EJ communities, such as contributing to the Nation's food security by providing local food sources, NASS tested the feasibility of integrating urban agriculture into future Censuses of Agriculture by conducting a small-scale urban agriculture pilot study in Baltimore, Maryland. This study was designed to help NASS determine how to more accurately collect data and account for urban agriculture in the future.

FSA accomplished its goal of increasing the amount of credit assistance provided to minority and women farmers and ranchers.

In FY 2015, FSA accomplished its goal of increasing the amount of credit assistance provided to minority and women farmers and ranchers. FSA also exceeded its targeted level of performance for lending to beginning farmers in FY 2015. Lending to beginning farmers and ranchers increased by seven percent to \$2.5 billion, continuing a long-term trend of increasing loan assistance to beginning farmers and ranchers. Similar results were achieved with respect to lending to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (women and minorities), with total loan obligations up nine percent to \$827 million.

FSA's microloan program posted a third consecutive strong year, with demand greatly exceeding expectations with 6,596 microloans obligated. Despite strong demand for FSA's loan programs, FSA accomplished its annual goals for loan processing timeliness, helping to ensure that credit is provided when the need arises. FSA obligated 9,264 direct and guaranteed farm operating and ownership loans to minorities and women, an increase of six percent from FY 2014. These loans, valued at \$827 million, help thousands of farmers and ranchers to start or maintain their farming operations.

The largest percentage changes in lending to minorities and women occurred in the direct farm ownership (FO) loan program, an increase of 19 percent in both the number of loans and dollar amount—1,223 loans valued at \$208 million in FY 2015. The microloan program is also an important source of credit for minorities and women, as FSA obligated 2,320 microloans to them

in FY 2015. As of September 30, 2015, FSA had 20,796 minority and women farmers and ranchers in its loan portfolio, a significant increase from the 16,900 at the end of FY 2008.

Additional accomplishments from FY 2015 include:

Expanding credit to new and beginning farmers by increasing the borrowing limit for the microloan program from \$35,000 to \$50,000, and also expanding the types of entities eligible for farm loans to better reflect the nature of family farms.

A total of 6,596 microloans were obligated in FY 2015. Of those, more than 70 percent went to beginning farmers and 56 percent to first time customers.

Annual Performance Goals, Indicators, and Trends	Actual				Target	Actual	Result	Target	Target
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015		2016	2017	
1.2.1 Percentage of Socially Disadvantaged Farmers (SDA) financed by USDA	13.1	13.3	13.6	14.2	13.9	15	Exceeded	14	14.1
1.2.2 Percentage of Beginning Farmers financed by USDA	64.9	68.8	70	79.2	75.5	85.6	Exceeded	76.5	77.5

USDA’s StrikeForce expands into high-poverty counties.

Through USDA’s StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity Initiative (StrikeForce), agencies coordinate marketing and outreach efforts to increase economic opportunities in rural communities suffering persistent poverty. In 2016, USDA expanded the StrikeForce areas to include Florida (36 counties), Ohio (11 counties), Missouri (46 counties), and Montana (13 counties). A total of 970 counties, parishes, boroughs, municipalities, and census areas are designated as StrikeForce counties and are receiving the necessary “intensive care” through the Initiative. The StrikeForce areas are: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia.

RD invests in StrikeForce areas through these five major investments in FY 2015:

RD Development Programs FY 2015 Yearly Totals
(largest to smallest investment)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Single-Family Housing Guaranteed | \$18,623,238,191 |
| 2. Electric | \$ 3,398,112,000 |
| 3. Community Facilities | \$ 1,841,563,959 |
| 4. Waste Water and Disposal | \$ 1,638,487,783 |
| 5. Business and Industry | \$ 1,044,112,539 |

For additional information, please refer to:

<http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/USDARDProgressReport2015.pdf>.

USDA StrikeForce Initiative:

Start to Now: Since the launch of StrikeForce in 2010, NRCS total investments have increased from \$115 million to \$318 million in FY 2015 to support conservation activities in StrikeForce target areas. Total over 5 years is \$1.3 billion. The total number of contracts has increased from 3,500 the first year to nearly 15,000 in FY 2015.

Historically Underserved: In FY 2015, NRCS invested more than \$318 million in StrikeForce areas, nearly 36 percent of the funding (\$113.5 million) supported over 5,300 contracts for historically-underserved producers (beginning, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged).

EQIP: In FY 2015, NRCS’ Environmental Quality Incentives Program investments in StrikeForce areas totaled nearly \$244 million. Nearly 42 percent of the StrikeForce EQIP financial assistance (\$101 million) and 41 percent of the contracts (over 4,200) benefitted historically-underserved producers.

CSP: In FY 2015, NRCS obligated \$74.3 million in Conservation Stewardship Program funds to support over 4,300 contracts in StrikeForce counties. Historically—underserved producers were awarded nearly 1,000 of these contracts, totaling \$12.1 million.

NRCS increased program funds to socially disadvantaged, beginning, limited-resource, and veteran farmers and ranchers.

These types of farmers and ranchers can share up to 90 percent of costs through NRCS programs. For example, socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers may access 5% set-aside for Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) payments and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) acres. These efforts provide incentives to these groups to participate and afforded them greater upfront cost capacity for conservation installations. Funding to these groups increased by 50% in 2014 and nearly an additional 10% in 2015.

RMA insured Beginning Farmers and Ranchers.

Over 13,500 beginning farmers and ranchers received additional benefits from the Risk Management Agency on more than 49,000 crop insurance policies, including more than \$14 million in financial incentives to enroll in crop insurance. Beginning farmers and ranchers insured more than 3.7 million acres in 2015 with RMA’s assistance.

RMA Assistance to Limited Resource Producers

Year	Policies	Admin Fees Waived	Net Acres	Liability
2015	315	\$43,200	17,818	\$7,134,800

RMA Assistance to Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

Year	No. of Producers	No. of Policies	Additional Premium Subsidy	Admin. Fees Waived	Total Acres
2015	13,718	49,683	\$12,833,601	\$1,663,200	3,779,902

DM’s Office of Advocacy and Outreach visited the field and listened to beginning farmers.

- The Office of Advocacy and Outreach gets staff on the ground. It participated in several field visits last year, including:
 - i. The 2015 Women In Ag annual Conference
 - ii. 1st 2501 Partnership Symposium
 - iii. Alaska Tribal Conservation Alliance
 - iv. National Women in Ag Symposium
 - v. NIFA 2015 Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant review process
 - vi. Tribal Listening Sessions
- The 2501 program awarded \$8.4 million to 54 projects in 35 states and U.S. territories in FY 2015, to enhance the accessibility of USDA programs and services. Of the \$8.4

million awarded, approximately \$5 million was allocated to 31 projects in StrikeForce communities and \$332,000 was awarded to 2 projects in Promise Zones. Both minorities and veterans attended webinars and conferences while our partners increased awareness of USDA programs. These actions are likely to lead to additional participation and improved farming, health, nutrition and economic conditions. A list of projects funded can be viewed by visiting: <http://www.outreach.usda.gov/grants/index.htm>.

FAS's Market Access Program (MAP) helped U.S. exporters, including environmental justice (EJ) communities, share the costs of marketing and promotional activities overseas to build commercial export markets for U.S. agricultural products and commodities.

- **Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC).** The IAC includes 72 Tribes located around the U.S. The IAC assists all Native American companies and Tribes to develop export markets for their agricultural products. MAP funds help companies and Tribes participate in trade missions and trade shows, and with support from MAP, the IAC has historically focused on training Indian-owned companies and business to become exporters, then introducing them to targeted markets through international promotions. In 2015, the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) received \$728,723 in MAP funds to promote products and secure export sales of American Indian agriculture and food products. In 2015, IAC companies had on-sites sales of \$4.6 million and estimated 12-month sales of \$10.4 million at the following trade shows: FOODEX, Japan, Brussels European Seafood Show, the Boston Seafood show, the National Restaurant Association show in Chicago, Asian Seafood Show in Hong Kong, and the ANUGA Cologne Germany Food Shows. Information is available at <http://www.indianaglink.com>.

AMS developed ways to support beginning and minority farmers and ranchers.

AMS Grant Activities supporting the Departments Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative:

- AMS's Organic Certification Cost Share Programs reimburse the certification cost for organic operations; not to exceed \$750 per certification scope for crops, livestock, wild crops and processed products. In Fiscal Year 2015, more than \$11.5 million was made available to financially assist organic operations with their certification costs.
- On September 4, AMS Launched a new Farm Bill grant program, the Specialty Crops Multi-State Program to award up to \$3 million to State departments of agriculture to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops by funding collaborative, multi-state projects that address the following regional or national level specialty crop issues. USDA encouraged states to submit projects related priority areas including benefitting underserved communities and veterans, improving producer capacity to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, increasing opportunities for new and beginning farmers, and developing strong local and regional food systems. AMS has

held webinars with stakeholders and state departments of agriculture to help them understand the program.

- Between February 20 and May 11, 2015, AMS facilitated a national outreach, education, and technical assistance effort to increase participation in, knowledge of, and comfort with the federal application process for its Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP). For this Technical Assistance (AMSTA) project, over 135 in-person grant-writing workshops were conducted across all 50 states, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Two workshops were held on Native American reservations in Arizona—Tohono O'odham Nation and (Hon Da) on the White Mountain Apache Nation. Special efforts were made to deliver the program in Puerto Rico (in Spanish) and the Virgin Islands. State-level AMSTA workshop records shows that 32.5% of participants reported themselves as being minorities and 67.5% reported themselves as being white (with minority-status and gender data for only just over 2,600 of the 3,000 individuals trained).

Minority vs. Non-Minority Comparisons, AMSTA Project			
Population in:	Minority	White or Non-Minority	Number
AMSTA	32.5%	67.5%	2,626
US Population	22.3%	77.7%	316.5 mn
Firms ^a	23.4%	76.4%	27.09 mn

Source: Authors' calculations using Census data and AMSTA program participation records.

- On October 2, 2015, AMS announced over \$26 million in grant funding to support American agriculture, from supporting local and regional food systems to exploring new market opportunities for farmers and ranchers across the country:
 - Awarded \$13.3 million in Farmers Market Promotion Program grants to 164 marketing and promotion projects involved with farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), and other direct-to-consumer outlets for local food. The following is a breakdown of awards.

FY 2015 Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)			
Grant Awards and Beneficiaries			
Demographics	# of Projects	Amount Funded	% of Funds Awarded
American Indian or Alaska Native	25	\$2,157,372	16%
African American	98	\$7,939,725	59%
Hispanic or Latino	97	\$8,072,565	60%
Asian/Pacific Islander	48	\$3,909,427	29%
Low Income Consumers	148	\$12,068,829	90%
Youth	94	\$7,785,629	58%
Seniors	116	\$9,202,506	69%
Beginning Farmers	133	\$10,921,242	82%
Minority Farmers	53	\$4,389,951	33%

- Awarded \$11.9 million in Local Food Promotion Program grants to 160 marketing and promotion projects for intermediary local food enterprises such as food hubs, aggregation businesses, local food processors, and farm-to-institution activities. This program offers grant funds with a 25% match to support the development and expansion of local and regional food business enterprises to increase domestic consumption of, and access to, locally and regionally produced agricultural products. The following is a breakdown of awards.

FY 2015 Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP)			
Grant Awards and Beneficiaries			
Demographic	# of Projects	Amount Funded	% of Funds Awarded
American Indian or Alaska Native	31	\$1,830,452	15%
African American	61	\$4,848,551	41%
Hispanic or Latino	9	\$804,606	7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	59	\$4,381,835	37%
Low Income Consumers	125	\$9,195,298	77%
Youth	9	\$502,746	4%
Seniors	6	\$379,659	3%
Beginning Farmers	15	\$1,214,508	10%
Minority Farmers	43	\$3,496,232	29%

- \$1 million in matching-grant funds through the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program, which included a priority for projects supporting local and

regional food systems. Eleven of the 15 awarded grants supported local/regional food system development.

- On October 5, AMS awarded \$63 million to 755 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) projects nation-wide. The grants are issued to State departments of agriculture for projects that help support specialty crop growers, including locally grown fruits, vegetables, and nursery crops.
- Many of the projects supported local/regional foods: 25 farm to school, 12 farmers markets, 10 local food distribution hubs, 139 direct marketing, 19 underserved communities, 34 youth/community gardens, 30 growing season extension, and more.
- Of the \$63 million awarded, \$1 million was allocated to 18 projects benefitting underserved communities and \$3.4 million to 54 projects aiding beginning, socially disadvantaged, and limited resource farmers. The number of projects awarded to socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers (SDBF), amount awarded and percentage of funds awarded has increased since 2011.

Fiscal Year	Projects to Socially Disadvantaged and Beginning Farmers	Dollar Amount to Socially Disadvantaged and Beginning Farmers
2011	30	\$2,200,927.98
2012	47	\$2,614,734.29
2013	59	\$3,350,470.22
2014	62	\$3,911,600.68
2015	54	\$3,357,117.59

SCBGP conducted extensive outreach efforts on funding opportunities available to minority and socially disadvantaged farming communities, including webinars, conference appearances, articles for the AMS industry newsletter and other publications. Some examples include:

- Press Release about USDA Grants—
<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=2015/03/0064.xml>
- What AMS Grant is Right for Me? —
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/Combined%20Grants%20Decision%20Trees.pdf>
- USDA Grant Announcement—<https://www.ams.usda.gov/content/stakeholder-announcement-62-million-grant-funding-available-assist-specialty-crop-industry>
- National Agriculture Sustainable Coalition—
<http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/local-food-systems-rural-development/specialty-crop-grants/>

- My Town: Specialty Crop Grant Opportunity – <http://grcentral.wzzm13.com/news/business/333483-my-town-specialty-crop-grant-opportunity>

Goal 2: Increase capacity-building within environmental justice communities

In support of this goal, USDA will provide targeted training and capacity-building within environmental justice communities to better enable them to achieve environmental justice.

The IWG Community-Based Federal Environmental Justice Resource Guide.

The Guide is a capacity-building resource compiled by the IWG and its member agencies. It is currently being updated to reflect how EJ programs are expanding and to ensure communities have up-to-date resources. USDA customers can find resources on Rural Development programs (including housing and community facilitation loans), Forest Service’s urban and forest legacy programs, and school garden grants. Until the updated version is released, the 2011 version can be accessed at <http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2016/02/f30/resource-guide.pdf>.

Measure #1: Increase the number of capacity-building projects held within environmental justice communities.

RMA was responsible for 43 different capacity-building projects in environmental justice communities.

Examples of these projects are available at the following links:

http://www.rma.usda.gov/fields/wa_rso/rmetargeted.html and http://www.rma.usda.gov/fields/ca_rso/rmetargeted.html.

AMS worked with urban communities.

- During 2015, USDA organized an internal, Urban Agriculture Working Group (UAWG). The Working Group is part of USDA’s Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (KYF2) initiative, which coordinates work across the Department to support local and regional food systems. At the outset, the Working Group began the process of taking inventory of what resources already exist at USDA and making that information readily accessible. This early work is represented in the “Urban Agriculture Toolkit” which went live in April 2016. This Toolkit is an electronic document made available on the web as a PDF that is full of information on local, state, federal and private resources available to support urban agricultural operations.
- AMS established a partnership with Union Kitchen, a DC-based food incubator, to provide DC local food businesses (i.e., food businesses that source ingredients and produce their foods locally) an opportunity to sell their local food products at the USDA Farmers Market. The partnership resulted in the USDA Farmers Market increasing its

number of vendors from 15 to 30. Customer traffic at and excitement around the market has increased and on most market Fridays, approximately 7 of the vendors sell out of product.

NRCS hosted projects with Tribes, faith-based communities, and urban food deserts.

- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)** – RCPP helps get more conservation on the ground in underserved Tribal communities. In FY 2015, RCPP obligated nearly \$40 million to 15 Tribal Nation partners in 8 states, which will be leveraged with other funds from other partners.
- **Cleveland Seasonal High Tunnel Project** – NRCS in Ohio has set aside \$150,000 EQIP dollars each year since 2012 to fund Seasonal High Tunnels in the City of Cleveland (Cleveland Seasonal High Tunnel project, or CSHT). Up to 90 percent cost-share has been made available to socially disadvantaged, limited resource and beginning farmers while the opportunity to receive advance payments has climbed from 30-50 percent for target groups beginning in 2014. The City of Cleveland provided opportunities to Urban Farmers through its zoning for urban agriculture and green space policy and MOU with Cleveland’s Dept. of Public Utilities and Dept. of Community Development for approvals to utilize water hydrant use. In the first three years since its inception, 80 contracts obligating \$330,090 have been funded. There are currently 37 seasonal high tunnels installed in Cleveland, Ohio. As part of USDA’s Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative and the Local Working Group, this project is functioning to improve access to fresh, nutritious food by focusing on installing high tunnels on the city’s vacant lots located in known food deserts. The incentive is providing economic opportunities for urban farmers, educating children about how food is grown and turning unsightly, unproductive areas into green growing landscapes with economic potential. Information on this project, and upcoming grant opportunities, which give priority to applicants in areas designated as food deserts, can be found at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/oh/programs/?cid=nrcs144p2_029508.
- **Wayne County, Michigan/Detroit Local Food Effort** – NRCS-Michigan has utilized the seasonal high tunnel (SHT) practice under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program as a way to assist residents of Detroit and Wayne County. The population of Detroit has been declining for many years, resulting in vacant properties that may be utilized for agricultural production. In the last three years, NRCS Michigan has provided \$150,000 in annual EQIP funds for SHTs as part of the local food initiative in Detroit and Wayne County. Of the 39 SHT contracts in Wayne County, 29 were obligated in 2014 and 2015. This program partners with Southeast Michigan Resource Conservation and Development Council to provide technical assistance. Information can be found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/mi/newsroom/releases/?cid=NRCSEPRD414897>.

- **Church Garden Urban Farm in Richmond, Virginia** – In historic downtown Richmond, the 31st Street Baptist Church has been a cornerstone of the community for more than a century. The church purchased three vacant city lots behind their building with a vision to plant a garden that could feed people, promote self-sufficiency, and teach skills in a community that had no close access to a grocery store. In 2014, they worked with Virginia State University Small Farm Agent to apply for EQIP funds that were used to install a high tunnel to extend the growing season and provide fresh vegetables and fruits year round. The church installed their NRCS-funded high tunnel in January 2015 and is now working with NRCS conservationists and other state and federal partners to expand their new urban farm. Information can be found at <http://blogs.usda.gov/2015/06/30/urban-garden-tackles-hunger-boosts-nutrition/>.

Forest Service works on heirs' property & African American land retention.

The loss of African-American owned farm and forestland not only impacts the well-being of black families and their communities but also the nation's forestlands. Improved practices of sustainable forest management will increase income, assets and encourage land retention, thereby improving the quality of life throughout the communities, to include the forests. The African-American Land Retention Project was established through cooperative agreements with NRCS, US Forest Service, Office of Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR), and the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities. Forest Service was represented in three one-day, land retention workshops held in Georgia, Mississippi, and Virginia. The workshops provided a detailed orientation about the Endowment, project partners, and pilot sites. The project benefits promote and encourage sustainable forestry and conservation practices on heirs' property, designed to enhance and prevent further land loss, and provide economic and social benefits impacting environmental justice communities. The Forest Service supported this project with \$350,000 in FY 2015.

RD's StrikeForce invested in 20 targeted states.

StrikeForce is part of the Obama Administration's commitment to address persistent poverty across the United States. USDA identifies census tracts for over 20 percent poverty to identify sub-county pockets of poverty. As areas of persistent poverty are identified, USDA staff will work with state, local and community officials to increase awareness of USDA programs, and help to build program participation through intensive community outreach and technical assistance. As Secretary Vilsack states, "StrikeForce has proven to be an effective, collaborative process that builds partnerships and enables USDA to bring economic opportunity directly to rural Americans where they live and helps rural communities leverage their assets." Please see the StrikeForce Web site for more information: http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=STRIKE_FORCE.

Measure #2: Develop outreach materials on USDA programs for use within environmental justice communities.

RMA translated approximately 15 different documents for use in environmental justice communities.

RMA translated approximately 15 different documents for use in environmental justice communities, including fact sheets, Farm Bill information, conservation compliance requirements, and RMA Web site pages. The RMA Spanish language Web site is available from the RMA Home page with a link at the upper right hand corner. The Farm Bill link is on the Farm Bill homepage. RMA's Spanish language Web site: <http://www.rma.usda.gov/espanol/> and fact sheet on the 2014 Farm Bill: <http://www.rma.usda.gov/news/currentissues/farmbill/2014%20Farm%20Bill%20032614%20Span.pdf>.

RMA's Language Assistance Plan (LAP) for Limited English Proficiency individuals (LEP) identifies RMA documents (brochures, fact sheets, basic crop policy and etc.) that are currently available in other languages. The RMA Regional Offices have a LAP that identifies the demographic populations and top three prominent languages in their region. Currently, Spanish, and Hmong are the most common languages dialects in outreach and program activities. However, Asian American/Pacific Islander (Cantonese, Mandarin, Mien and Punjabi) and several Native American or Alaska Native dialects have also been identified.

RMA also distributed information to environmental justice communities about financial and technical assistance in 2016 in the following ways:

- targeted presentation to the Minority Farmers Advisory Committee in Savannah, Georgia;
- targeted presentation at the Annual Intertribal Agricultural Council Membership Meeting; and
- targeted outreach at the National Small Farmers Conference.

NASS developed census outreach.

NASS is planning to conduct its fifth workshop with its community-based, academic, and non-government organization partners. These workshops are scheduled to be conducted before the quinquennial census will be mailed, and then again after the census data is released. NASS started these workshops during the 2007 census period, and attendance has increased each cycle. Early workshops attendance started with 30 participants, whereas the last workshop held in the Fall of 2014, included more than 50 participants. These workshops develop and strengthen partnerships that are essential to NASS's interactions with communities that are traditionally hard to reach.

DM developed agreements to re-invest damages awards into communities.

In FY 2015, Hazardous Materials Management Program (HMMP) entered into two agreements involving Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) claims.

The first claim involved the Fish and Wildlife Service, Missouri Department of Natural Resources and the USDA Forest Service working together as natural resource trustees to reach a settlement for injuries to natural resources with the owners of a former metals mining and smelting operation in southeast Missouri. The negotiated settlement for \$7,240,000 will address the damages caused by releases of hazardous substances from the Buick Mine and Mill and the Buick Smelter site near Bixby, Missouri in the mining district known as the Viburnum Trend. The Viburnum Trend mining district remains the largest lead production area in the United States. Mining in the Viburnum Trend began in the 1950s. The legacy of the heavy-metal mining and smelting in the district caused large-scale ecological injury to thousands of acres of terrestrial habitat and dozens of miles of streams. Bixby Missouri, located in Iron County, is approximately 100 miles southwest of St. Louis. According to 2013 census data, 24 percent of the residents within Iron County are living below national poverty levels. The recovered funds will be used to compensate the public for the loss of natural resources in southeast Missouri. Potential restoration projects include: the permanent acquisition and protection of new national forest lands, new Missouri state park lands, as well as restoration of contaminated streams, and protection and restoration of riparian corridors.

The second NRDA claim involved a \$4 million settlement to restore groundwater and natural resources habitats that were injured as a result of releases of hazardous substances from the Chevron Molycorp mine facility. The trustees included: the New Mexico Office of Natural Resources, USDA Forest Service, and the DOI. The Site is located approximately five miles east of the town of Questa, adjacent to the Red River. The town of Questa is largely Hispanic with a population of less than 2,000. The town's economy has historically been dependent on agriculture and income from the now-closed Chevron molybdenum mine. The trustees' next step will be to conduct a public information meeting that will explain the process for identifying and selecting restoration projects to offset the natural resource injuries. Future restoration work will benefit this rural community.

FSIS established its Limited English Proficiency (LEP) policy and plan for its federally-conducted programs in FY 2015.

The agency reached several milestones established within its LEP Plan. These important milestones included: creating an LEP taskforce of agency-wide representatives to determine FSIS' interpretation and translation requirements; providing LEP training to the members of the taskforce; surveying employees who interacted with LEP persons to determine language needs in terms of specific language and frequency of translation/interpretation needs; compiling vital documents to be translated; and securing training for employees who interacted with LEP customers. The agency's survey results identified that the four top languages spoken by its

customers are Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Arabic. The survey further indicated that 83% of LEP customers spoke Spanish.

Since 83% of the customers with whom agency employees interacted spoke Spanish, FSIS continued its effort to establish successful partnerships with various institutions, both locally and nationally, who can help with the dissemination of the food safety message among the Hispanic community within the U.S. Thus, FSIS continued partnerships with the following organizations: Hispanic Health Council, Hispanic Initiative of the Americas, Red Cross Mass Care NYC and League of United Latin American Citizens. Additionally, the agency established partnerships with the following organizations: National Council of La Raza, Promotoras de la Salud, Hispanic Access Foundation, La Clinica de La Familia, New Mexico's State Cooperative Extension Services, University of New Mexico's Family Health Clinic, University of Puerto Rico, Susan G. Komen Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rico Diabetes Society. The Plan can be found at: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/8090d90f-3c14-4c54-b299-2214caf4c1fe/Limited-English-Proficiency-Plan.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>.

AMS developed an outreach plan that included actions to increase outreach through partnerships.

The AMS FY 2014-2015 Outreach and Engagement Plan aligns with the AMS 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and the Department's efforts to engage low-participating and under-represented stakeholders who produce, handle, manufacture, or import a variety of agricultural commodities. AMS implemented four outreach and engagement objectives and three outreach and engagement goals for FY 2015.



AMS' Clara Rivera and Ken Petersen present a webinar on Good Agricultural Practices audits to a targeted audience from the USDA StrikeForce states.

- Held three public education and outreach meetings throughout the southeastern United States to provide information to industry stakeholders on the specific provisions impacting farmers. Of the more than 200 people attending, approximately 90 percent were small businesses.
- Expanded Research and Promotion (R&P) board diversity training for all boards. The training, held in conjunction with the Ag Outlook Forum, was attended by representatives from 20 of the 22 R&P boards and all AMS R&P staff.

- In FY 2015, AMS's Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA) Division's conducted a PACA Seminar for the Navajo Agriculture Products Industry in Farmington, N.M. to provide better understanding of the rules, regulations, and protections under the Act, as well as the PACA Trust.

On January 22, 2015, AMS Fruit and Vegetable Program. Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Division hosted a webinar about USDA's Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) audits. AMS' F&V developed the GAPs 102—What to Expect on Audit Day" webinar to provide small farmers with the latest information on how to develop and prepare for a GAPs audit. Over 250 people registered for the webinar with 129 webinar logins recorded. Outreach for the webinar focused on USDA StrikeForce counties and states in support of the USDA StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity Initiative. Since its inception, the initiative has formed over 400 community-based partnerships and supported over 80,000 projects and opportunities to strengthen America's rural economy. SCI Division supports that effort with food safety and quality assurance based services to help growers to meet today's commercial buyer requirements.

AMS's translated many resources and has translators available for meetings.

In 2015, AMS focused on making all of its information more accessible to wider audiences, including environmental justice communities, StrikeForce states, LEP stakeholders and other high-value and/or underserved communities.

In January 2015, the NOP posted the Spanish translations of the USDA Organic Regulations and NOP Handbook on its Web site at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop> (see the middle of the page under the subtitle "Organic Standards"). Several other newsletters and fact sheets have been translated into Spanish in AMS, such as the Avocado Board's newsletter, the Mango Board's Research and Promotion Background Information Form, brochures on the Country of Origin Labeling program, and GroupGAP pilot information. *USDA Insider* electronic newsletter informed stakeholders of the availability of the translations. AMS also has Spanish and Chinese speaking employees as well as sign language interpreters available to translate or interpret to stakeholders and clients during meetings and other events.

AMS developed market reports and guidance documents to support beginning and minority farmers and ranchers to support the KYF2 Initiative.

- AMS Market News is now gathering local food price data for 19 states. In September, the agency also began issuing a new report to highlight Tribal Grown, Produced, or Harvested commodities.
- The USDA working group to facilitate market opportunities for smaller-scale livestock and poultry producers, is drafting guidance documents related to small and mid-sized livestock and poultry processing and procurement in local food systems. These

documents are tailored for Farm to School participants, food hubs, and markets/direct-marketing farmers who are producing or sourcing meat products.

Forest Service invested in urban forestry.

The agency invested in program and resource development that will result in more green spaces in our nation's cities, diverse populations leading richer lives, and the engagement of future generations of environmental stewards. These investments will make it possible for the Forest Service to bring about a unique, sustainable collaboration between Forest Service employees, the national urban forestry network, and the nation's diverse education and child care networks.

- Forest Service Cooperative Forestry produced Spanish translations for all International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) publications.
- Forest Service Cooperative Forestry sponsored the annual Women in Arboriculture working lunch at the ISA National Conference.
- Forest Service management staff worked on diversity and inclusion awareness by creating a slideshow presentation, Building Your Success in Emerging Diverse and Inclusive Organizations, applicable to all staff area, organizations, agencies, and companies that work within and/or affect environmental justice communities.

Forest Service deepened partnerships with Tribal communities.

The Forest Service's commitment to building relationships with Tribal communities expands beyond the Office of Tribal Relations. Non-policy offices are also committed to building relationship with Tribes. For example, Forest Service Research & Development staff developed a Tribal Engagement Roadmap to guide collaboration and foster ethical and significant research partnerships. The Roadmap communicates six priority areas where Forest Service is working to partner with Tribes to understand our shared landscapes, expand the diversity of views reflected in R&D science, and deliver the best available science and knowledge to Tribal, Forest Service, and other land managers: <http://www.fs.fed.us/research/tribal-engagement/roadmap.php>.

NRCS translated resources, informational videos, and social media messages into non-English languages.

NRCS has made great strides in using all forms of written, social media, and traditional media to effectively communicate with our historically underserved customers. Twenty states published NRCS information in non-English languages. The most common language is Spanish, but many materials have also been translated into Russian, Hmong, Korean, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Japanese, Portuguese, and some Tribal languages. NRCS's social media presence continues to improve. YouTube videos have been produced in Spanish and Korean. The agency has used its Twitter account to post messages in Spanish, and NRCS's Facebook account can be used for messages in other languages. Information can be found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/pr/newsroom/stories/>.

In 2015, NRCS also partnered with the National Association of Resource Conservation & Development Councils (NARC&DC) to increase outreach to historically underserved farmers and landowners. This was accomplished with twenty-four 30-minute public service radio shows targeted to communities in USDA StrikeForce regions. The shows inform underserved farmers and landowners on how to access USDA conservation assistance to address their natural resource concerns. Six of these were aired in Spanish. Programs aired in Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, Utah, and Virginia. Audio files of these shows can be found at <http://narcadc.org/rcd-councils-strikeforce-radio-shows.html>. NRCS plans to continue this work in FY 2016 by investing \$2.46 million to support outreach efforts on the ground by working with these community-based organizations to set up workshops designed to increase participation in all NRCS conservation programs.

APHIS published 2015 outreach documents in multiple languages.

In FY 2015, APHIS developed several new multi-lingual publications, such as *2015 Backyard Biosecurity: Keeping Your Birds Healthy* (calendar; PA 2152) – available in Spanish; *Attention Shipowners: Where's Your Garbage Going?* (tear-off notepad/poster; PA 2023/2023B); and *Receiving Foreign Plants, Food, and Other Agricultural Products in the Mail* (black and white factsheet) – available in Spanish, Thai, Vietnamese, Russian, Traditional Chinese, and Simplified Chinese. In FY 2015, APHIS also revised and translated several outreach notifications. Information can be found at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/aphis_pubs.php.

Measure #3: In collaboration with partners, provide opportunities for training, skills development, and education within environmental justice communities, particularly focusing on career and leadership development for youth and college-age residents.

Forest Service career development programs reached Houston-area Latinos, Tribal youth, Southern and urban youth, inmates in Oregon, and economically depressed communities in California.

- **Forest Service Green Ambassadors in Houston, Texas** – The Forest Service is providing financial assistance and technical support to young conservation leaders who are situated in environmental justice communities and urban food desert settings in the underserved area of Houston, Texas.

The Green Ambassadors project was the recipient of a National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council cost-share grant award and continues to leverage its successes to obtain additional recognition, including a recent Forest Service Partnership Award. The Green Ambassadors program is hosted at Furr High School's Green Institute on behalf of Houston Independent School District's and the Houston East End Greenbelt.

Selected youth and leaders from the Greenbelt – Green Ambassador program attended the 2015 National Environmental Justice Conference and Training. The Forest Service

covered travel expenses for students' participation. The youth conservation leader group presented in a panel discussion: *PLT GreenSchools! Green Ambassadors - Transforming Houston's Urban Food Deserts into Sustainable Food Forests--in Partnership with USDA Forest Service - Latino Legacy*. Latino Legacy has been able to serve and connect with first and second generation, bilingual, low-income, underrepresented, at-risk, students of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Youth met with USDA Deputy Under Secretary Blazer and the USFS Executive Leadership Team to discuss the program and avenues for expansion.

The Latino Legacy branch of the Houston East End Greenbelt—Green Ambassadors project, with support of the Forest Service and other partners, received the 2015 Abraham Lincoln Honor Award for Diversity, Inclusion and Outreach—one of the United States Department of Agriculture's highest honors. This award recognizes employees and partnerships that demonstrate exceptional commitment to promoting and enhancing diversity, and effecting positive change to benefit the entire USDA workforce and the nation.

- **Tribal Youth.**

- **White House Tribal Youth Gathering** – Forest Service was part of the President's Generation Indigenous Initiative focusing on improving the lives of Native youth through new investments and increased engagement. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/09/fact-sheet-white-house-tribal-youth-gathering>.
- **Tribal University Student Connections** – Forest Service and The Wildlife Society partnered to place Tribal university students with Research and Development scientists to participate in research assistantships and helping scientists work on fundamental research tasks. The Forest Service placed three Tribal students in FY 2015 and have selected six students for FY 2016.
- **Tree Campus USA Initiative** – The program was expanded to all seven Tribal college campuses in Montana to engage in urban forestry management and planning in support of *Tree Campus USA* recognition. Key components of the projects include site design and planning, planting large caliper trees on each of the campuses, integrated work with partners, and the establishment of student advisory groups. The Forest Service supported this project with \$14,000 in FY 2015. <https://www.arboday.org/programs/treecampususa/>.
- **Inter-Tribal Youth Climate Congress** – The Congress was a week-long, intensive education and peer-to-peer training session held in July 2015, in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, to discuss the impacts of climate change on Tribal communities. More information at: <http://blogs.usda.gov/2015/07/14/cultivating-native-leaders-in-conservation/>.

- **Youth in Baton Rouge, Louisiana** – The Forest Service and Southern University Partnership furthers the agency’s outreach, workforce diversity, and inclusion objectives by providing opportunities for middle, high school, and college students from diverse backgrounds to gain experience and exposure to urban natural resources related education and careers. Southern University is a historically black college in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The Southern University (SU) partnership includes funding for a recruitment liaison, an educational Urban Forest Educational Demonstration Forest, and a three week summer camp called Beginning Agriculture Youth Outreach Unlimited (BAYOU). Information is available at <http://www.urbanforestry.subr.edu/introduction.htm>. In FY 2015, the Forest Service continued to support the BAYOU summer camp for high school and undergraduate students and conducted a needs assessment for future project activities in the Urban Forest Educational Demonstration area.
- **Wildfire-sensitive areas in Oregon and California**—The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) Program was authorized in the 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic and severe wildfires on high priority landscapes and promote ecological, social, and economic sustainability. In FY 2015, several project sites brought collaborative members and organizations together to develop and provide new or expanded training and educational opportunities within environmental justice communities to enhance participation and opportunities in the restoration economies that the program supports. Information is available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/restoration/CFLRP/index.shtml>.
 - The Lakeview Stewardship CFLR Project (Oregon) awarded funds to the Warner Creek Correctional Facility (Department of Corrections) to engage crews from the Correctional Facility in fuels reduction work through an agreement. The crews will learn and implement cutting and piling work to contribute to both vegetative and wildfire restoration goals within the CFLR project.
 - The Amador Calaveras Cornerstone Group CFLR Project (California) continued use of a Master Participating Agreement with the Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS). This agreement, which requires a match from CHIPS towards project costs, provides people in local, economically depressed communities with on-the-job training and payment for work completed. This training helps integrate ecological restoration with opportunities for local employment in this rural community. The CFLR Program funding has allowed CHIPS to run two crews in FY 2015.

OTR recruited tribal youth and partnered with foundations to support funding tribal youth programs.

OTR established a pilot with Indian Land Tenure Foundation to fund travel scholarships for Tribal youth attending short-term, agriculture-related workshops. OTR also included

announcements of openings on USDA Boards, Committees, and Councils in its weekly newsletter to tribal organizations.

FNS established workforce training centers in environmental justice communities.

FNS established a new SNAP Office of Employment and Training, staffed with subject matter experts in the field of workforce development. Employment and training specialists were hired in all seven regions. The team is positioned to provide guidance to states and work with partners to assist work eligible SNAP recipients, including many in EJ communities, to get jobs.

RD supported workforce training in rural communities.

RD is a trusted partner in providing program and staff support in rural areas, which make up over 90% of the persistent poverty counties. Examples of RD's commitment to support workforce training can be found in five rural school districts in Georgia. Since today's saturation of technology in most careers means that all students will require a foundation in STEM to be successful, USDA RD has been linking universities to rural K-12 public schools to provide STEM education opportunities for rural students. For example, USDA RD provided a \$99,000 Community Facilities grant in 2015 to help purchase teleconferencing and online access equipment to facilitate outreach between Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) and school districts in Clay, Colquitt, Quitman, Randolph, and Sumter counties. According to Quinton Robinson, former RD Georgia State Director, "this will exponentially expand effectiveness of educational programs and help ensure rural Georgia is workforce ready." For additional success stories like these, please see the USDA RD 2015 Progress Report:

<http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/USDARDProgressReport2015.pdf>

DM's OAO spoke with students about careers in agriculture.

OAO designated a liaison to reach out to youth ranging in age, which included: speaking with more than 39,000 1890 community K-12 youth about careers in USDA and Agriculture; recruiting 29 1890 National Scholars for the FY 2015 class; and facilitating the sponsorship of 30 students to 2015 the Ag Outlook forum.

FAS supported students through a range of direct and third-party assistance.

In FY 2015, FAS supported tuition and other aids for the 1890 National Scholars Program with \$18,180.32 of funding. The agency also allocated \$180,000 for three Centers of Excellence with the Council of 1890 Colleges (which three, however, are still to be determined). FAS third-party funding in the amount of \$51,957 supported the following Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) organizations:

- HSIs: \$11,188.00 to the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU); and

- AIANSIs: \$10,769.00 to the Washington Internships for Native Students (WINS), and AANAPISIs: \$30,000.00 to the Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership (CAPAL), AANAPISIs.

In FY 2015, FAS awarded MSIs a total of \$7,584,999.20 or 37 percent of funding to all institutions of higher education. The table below depicts the type of MSI and funding amounts are noted below. The agency's goals and objectives included: (1) Participating in MSI-related events and encouraging MSI participation in FAS programs, services and events; (2) Identify barriers to program participation and develop approaches for removal of barriers, (3) Develop a range of internet-based and other materials to support outreach efforts, (4) Hold Webinars with MSIs and other colleges and universities on the application process for participating in FAS programs, (5) Identify MSIs for on-site visits by FAS staff to exchange information and hold roundtable discussions; and, (6) Evaluate the effectiveness of outreach programs by analyzing data on MSI knowledge of and participation in FAS programs.

In FY 2015, FAS participated in several MSI-related events and provided an overview of FAS and available opportunities to participate in several of our programs and services. This resulted in an increase of 13 percent of MSIs participating in our programs compared to FY 2014.

AMS prioritized the recruiting and hiring of highly talented, diverse individuals that reflect the strength in the diversity of the American public.

As a direct result of these efforts and the recharging of AMS's Special Emphasis Employment Managers Program, the agency's race and national origin, veterans, and persons with disabilities workforce profiles have all improved compared to FY 2014. During FY 2015, AMS hired 549 new employees; 66 were persons with disabilities, 44 were veterans new to the Federal government, 139 were Latinos, and 223 were African Americans. Employment of both Veteran's and individuals with a disability are at an all-time high comprising 8.2% and 7.1% respectively of the total workforce.

NRCS reached urban and Tribal youth.

NRCS partnered with the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative (IFAI) at the University of Arkansas School of Law to bring Native youth (high school and early college aged) students together from throughout Indian Country for focused hands on training and technical assistance on topics essential to their future as food and agriculture business owners, Indian land owner conservationists, and community leaders.

APHIS partnership program educated students on environmental and agricultural awareness.

The AgDiscovery program promotes student involvement (ages 12-17) in the agricultural and biological sciences with hands-on demonstrations and classroom activities. At each location, a two to four-week summer outreach program (camp) for socially disadvantaged and minority student populations increases awareness of environmental impacts and agricultural benefits.

Through this program, students become familiar with the APHIS mission to safeguard American agriculture and protect the environment. APHIS also partnered with Historically Black 1890 Land-Grant institutions to facilitate outreach to minority farmers and ranchers and provide educational opportunities for students.

Measure #4: Partner with 1994 Land-Grants and Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Programs to facilitate outreach to Indian Tribes for assessment and planning assistance, and dissemination of USDA climate resilience strategies, practices and financial assistance.

NRCS partners with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium for all 37 land-grants to promote 2014 Farm Bill opportunities for education and community outreach.

Addressing climate Change in Indian Country is goal of the agreement. Four participating TCUs will promote sustainable agricultural and natural resource management systems, to protect culturally and economically important Tribal lands and water resources. The four TCUs are:

- Salish Kootenai College in Pablo, Montana;
- Stone Child College in Box Elder, Montana;
- Little Big Horn College, Crow Agency, Montana;
- College of Menominee Nation, Keshena Wisconsin.

DM's OAO collaborated with NRCS and the consortium representing 37 1994 Land-Grant Institutions to establish a cooperative agreement addressing climate change.

Land-grant students and faculty provide support to their Tribal agencies for resource assessment and climate change vulnerability analyses. These land-grants were recruited:

- Sitting Bull College in Fort Yates, North Dakota;
- Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College in Baraga, Michigan;
- Dine College in Tsaile, Arizona;
- Fond du Lac Community College in Cloquet, Minnesota; and
- Northwest Indian College in Bellingham, Washington.

USDA Climate Hubs are among the national climate change resources that will provide technical assistance to these schools.

RD increased outreach to Tribes.

RD is increasing outreach to Tribal communities by providing technical assistance for grant writing to Tribal Colleges, as well as set-asides for Rural Business-Cooperative Service programs. One example of RD providing assistance to tribal businesses can be found in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. When the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe in Mount Pleasant, Michigan decided to upgrade their market to a larger, permanent structure, USDA Rural Development provided the tribe with a \$200,000 business grant. Today, the tribe has a new farmers market

with a permanent pavilion and adjacent parking lot that improves community accessibility to fresh healthy foods. According to tribal Chief Steve Pego, “The response to the new farmers market has been overwhelming.” For additional information on Rural Business Development Grants (RBDG), please visit the RBDG Web page on the USDA RD Web site: <http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants>.

NIFA operates the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program.

The Federally recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) supports extension agents who establish informal education programs on Indian Reservations and Tribal jurisdictions of Federally Recognized Tribes. The focus of these programs is agricultural productivity and youth development. The FRTEP builds capacity through 4-H youth development, agriculture and resource management, entrepreneurship, and business development to the Indian Country communities across the Nation.

FRTEP extension offices have become a platform for state and federal agencies to provide resources and programming for Indian communities. Educators from FRTEP bring a wealth of community-tested and science-based best practices from the 1862 and 1890 land grants to provide informal learning to support native youth development.

Measure #5: Establish partnerships with Tribal governments and other environmental justice communities in close proximity to National Forests to manage the health of watersheds and larger forest landscapes.

Forest Service assisted mitigation projects to repair mined lands.

- **Holden Mine**— the agency assisted in a federally mandated cleanup located in a remote spot in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest above Lake Chelan in north-central Washington State. The project sits next to Holden Village, a spiritual retreat center that has operated on the site for more than 50 years. The natural resource trustees for the Holden Mine Site consist of: USDA-Forest Service (lead trustee), State of Washington, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Yakama Nation. The Trustees compiled a list of restoration projects to be funded through a settlement agreement with the party responsible for the damage. More information about the Holden mine can be found at <http://www.mining.com/holden-mine-cleanup-32891/>.
- **Riley Pass of the North Cave Hills** – This area of the Custer Gallatin National Forest’s Sioux Ranger District is approximately 25 miles north of Buffalo, South Dakota. It consists of 12 bluffs first mined in the 1950s. Human health and environmental risks are related to arsenic and gamma radiation from radium 226. The Riley Pass area is a major Lakota Sioux cultural site with various features, which include a number of possible burial sites. These are located in or near the legacy mining areas. Forest Service representatives are consulting with the five Tribes of the Lakota Sioux Nation during the various phases of this cleanup action. More information about Riley Pass cleanup can be

found at

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/custergallatin/landmanagement/resourcemanagement/?cid=stelprdb5369160>.

- **Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020** – The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project in Washington State initiated an effort to better understand plant species and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation’s cultural interests within the National Forest, using a Participatory Geographic Information Systems protocol. Culturally important places will be mapped, documented, and monitored for to examine how this compares to the treatments planned via the restoration project. Tribal representatives will consult on fire and thinning policies as well as provide input on areas that they believe need these treatments.

Measure #6: Increase alternative energy generation in rural America.

FAS promoted the bio-economy by expanding global markets for biomass and biofuels.

U.S. exports of wood pellets increased from 1.3 million metric tons (MT) in FY 2012 to 4.3 million MT, valued at \$632 million in FY 2015. In FY 2015 the U.S. exported 874 million gallons of ethanol to 83 countries valued at nearly \$2 billion. And in FY 2015 the U.S. exported 265,000 MT of biodiesel blends valued at nearly \$250 million.

RD assisted in alternative energy creation.

Two programs are the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) and the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Electric Program. Please access the following links for information on 2015 activities to increase funding of alternative energy.

- Additional information about REAP: <http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency/mo>.
- Additional information about RUS Electric Program: <http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/electric-programs>.

Measure #7: Increase new local and regional food systems supported annually by USDA investments.

Several USDA offices focused on economic benefits of local food.

- RD provided assistance in 2015 to develop infrastructure for 450 new markets for local and regional food systems through USDA’s Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food and Leveraging Investment for Network Coordination initiatives.
- OTR participated in numerous local and regional food and food sovereignty workshops for Tribes and Tribal members as well as workshops hosted by the states of Wisconsin and Alaska.
- NASS is assessing the value of the local food sectors in the U.S.

- In conjunction with NASS's valuation effort, AMS collaborated with researchers to develop a toolkit to assess the impact of local food investments, available at <http://www.localfoodeconomics.com/>.
- ERS produced a Report to Congress in FY 2015, titled "Trends in the U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems," which details the latest economic information on local food producers, consumers, and policy. The report is available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1763057/ap068.pdf>.

FNS increased snap benefits at farmers markets and local food in schools.

In FY 2015, there were 6,483 SNAP-authorized farmers markets and direct marketing farmers. This represents a 25 percent increase from 5,175 authorized markets and farmers in FY 2014. SNAP redemptions at farmers markets and direct marketing farmers were \$19.4 million in FY 2015, representing a modest increase of 3 percent from \$18.8 million redeemed in FY 2014. In FY 2015, FNS also awarded \$8.1 million in competitive grants through the Farmers Market SNAP Support Grants (FMSSG) program. FNS funded 52 projects designed to establish, expand, and promote SNAP at farmers markets.

FNS also promotes the development of Farm to School projects to connect local producers, including those in EJ communities, to school meals programs. Preliminary results of the 2015 Farm to School Census show that school districts spent approximately \$598 million on local food. This is a 55 percent increase from school year 2011-2012. The Census is on the web at <https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov/>.

AMS supported urban gardens and farmers markets on military installations.

AMS re-designed the People's Garden Database and Map for a more dynamic, interactive, and user-friendly experience with overlay maps to connect gardeners with USDA/AMS resources including local farmers markets and CSAs. AMS is launching the site on the new groundbreaking Office of Communications (OC)/Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) cost-share Drupal platform. The new system will allow AMS to provide detailed reports on: location of community gardens (urban or rural); what is being grown, including if and where the produce is being sold; how the community is benefiting from these project; how the project is being funded including USDA grants; and who is involved.

AMS established a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Defense Healthy Base Initiative to increase healthy food access to residents on military installations. To complement, AMS entered into a cooperative agreement with the Wholesome Wave Foundation to develop a comprehensive manual for military installations and participating farmers market managers to use in successfully establishing and operating a farmers market on military installations.

AMS Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP) awarded \$25.2 million to establish, improve, and support 324 local food system projects (farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSA), food hubs, etc.) within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. From February 20 – May 11, 2015, AMS facilitated a national outreach, education, and technical assistance effort to increase participation in the federal application process for FMLFPP. Eligible entities under FMLFPP include agricultural cooperatives, agribusinesses, cooperatives, CSA networks, CSA associations, producer networks and associations, local and Tribal governments, nonprofit corporations, public benefit corporations, economic development corporations, and regional farmers market authorities. Of the 324 AMS awarded projects, 68 percent were awarded to projects in low food access communities, with over \$17.1 million in investments benefitting these priority areas.

NRCS developed pre-production and production packages to small producers.

NRCS is establishing a food system program with Soul City Hospitality to provide small producers a set of turnkey pre-production and production packages designed to reduce the time and cost of starting a farm or growing an existing farm to a self-sustaining level. The packages will include start-up assistance, technical assistance, financing, equipment, installation, training, start-up labor, and a distribution contract. The package will establish with the farmer with a record-keeping system, a crop-growing plan, insurance, GAP certification, and fencing and irrigation for up to 10 acres. The goal of the packages is to help farmers to farm full-time and earn a living wage while doing so.

A partnership agreement with the Urban Transformation Network urban will expand outreach efforts to the City of Chicago to connect the local communities with local fresh foods. The goals of this partnership are to:

- Improve participation in USDA programs by local churches, residents and minority community leaders in the county focus area;
- Develop collaborative relationships between local church's, residents, minority community leaders and USDA agency personnel;
- Develop a communication network between local churches, residents and minority community leaders and USDA agencies;
- Develop the interest of urban youth to understand the principals of good conservation techniques that will enhance the environment they live in.

Forest Service has collaborated in a pilot program to revitalize a poverty stricken “food desert” with access to local fresh foods by establishing a green corridor supported by environmental education curriculum.

The poverty stricken and at-risk schools in the East End of Houston, Texas (with predominantly high rates of diet and -related obesity and associated illnesses and obesity) are linking through the creation of the Houston East End Greenbelt (HEEG), a green corridor of fruit trees, edible

understory and native pollinator gardens, which will revitalize and re-green the community through the establishment of these ecosystems. Partners include the Forest Service, National Project Learning Tree (PLT), Friends of National Forests and Grasslands in Texas—Latino Legacy (FNFGT-LL) and Arbor Day Foundation-Nature Explore (ADF-NE).

Measure #8: Create rural jobs through investments in business, entrepreneurship, cooperatives, and industry.

Forest Service programs created jobs.

- **Collaborative Forest Restoration Program** – Forest Service Forest Management staff, through the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program, created rural jobs through 23 sites across the United States.
- **Forest Products Marketing Unit** – Forest Service Forest Management staff provided financial and technical assistance to the Mescalero Apache Tribe in reopening a sawmill in Mescalero, New Mexico.

RD created jobs through the Rural Business and Cooperative Programs.

Information about Rural Business and Cooperative Program success stories, please see the USDA RD 2015 Progress Report:

<http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/USDARDProgressReport2015.pdf>.

For example, 90 percent of North Dakota’s land is dedicated to farming, making agriculture critical to the state’s economy as well as veterinarians. The West River Veterinary Clinic, in southwestern North Dakota, was in need of a much larger, and more modern clinic to meet the demand for its services. To assist in the construction of a more modern and larger clinic, USDA RD provided a \$2 million Rural Economic Development Loan to the Slope Electric Cooperative that is being used to help finance the construction of the new clinic. Now, the construction of the clinic is underway. According to Ethan Andress, a West River veterinarian, “Rural residents deserve the same animal care and access as their counterparts in urban areas. USDA helped make this project economically viable.”

Measure #9: Increase number of certified organic agricultural operations.

The organic industry continues to show remarkable growth with 19,474 certified organic operations in the United States, an increase of more than 5 percent over the last year. Since the count began in 2002, the number of domestic organic operations has increased by over 250 percent.

NASS tracked organic operations.

NASS’s 2014 Organic Survey, released in 2015 in conjunction with RMA, is an inventory of all known organic producers in the United States that are certified, exempt from certification (those grossing less than \$5,000 annually from organic sales), and those producers transitioning to

organic production. Federal and state agencies, as well as the private sector, can use this information for research, program design and improvement, and legislative initiatives, as well as for market analyses. These programs directly affect the life and communities of producers and help to improve agriculture production technologies and practices. Results for the 2014 Organic Survey can be found at:

https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online_Resources/Organics/.

RMA's Organic Crop Insurance Program covered producers of organics.

In 2015, RMA sold 6,833 crop insurance policies for organic crops (includes both Certified Organic and Transitional to Organic), which covered 1,043,403 acres and insuring \$649,701,743 in liability. Over \$64.7 million was paid to organic producers for losses due to natural disasters in 2015. Source: RMA summary of Business for Organics, May 2016. See also: USDA Expands Insurance Options for farmers transitioning to certified organic

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=2016/02/0049.xml&contentidonly=>

Measure #10: Establish at least one U.S. Forest Service Tribal Adaptation Partnership in each Forest Service Region to integrate traditional knowledge with scientific information into actions that build ecological, social, and economic resilience.

Forest Service's Tribal Flagship Adaptation Partnership Program has continued to grow.

This program charts a path for the Forest Service to assist tribal communities to prepare for and recover from the impacts of climate change. To demonstrate the potential for tribal climate resilience, scientists and foresters in each Forest Service Region/Station/Area are developing at least one Tribal Flagship Adaptation Partnership in each Region. Information is available at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/climatechange/advisor/>. Eight partnerships are in progress or were identified in 2015, including:

- The Western Klamath Restoration Partnership (WKRP) builds on multi-stakeholder conversations that seek to build trust and a shared vision for returning fire to the landscape. Partners include the Karuk Tribe, the Forest Service, the Mid Klamath Watershed Council, the Salmon River Restoration Council, and Fire Safe Councils. It institutes collaborative fire management practices that incorporate traditional Tribal land practices and stewardship, and it mentors and educates the next generation of conservation stewards to do the same. Information is available at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/srnf/news-events/?cid=STELPRD3821450>.
- In multiple Tribal Adaptation Partnerships in the Eastern Region, the Forest Service Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science (NIACS) works with Tribes throughout the upper Midwest and Great Lakes regions. As a Forest Service consortium, universities, nonprofits, and the NIACS works with Tribes to design adaptation actions

for Tribal lands to reflect Tribal values. Information can be found at:
<http://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/niacs/>.

Goal 3: Expand public participation in program operations, planning activities, and decision-making processes to benefit environmental justice communities

USDA will continue to make public participation, outreach, and collaboration fundamental components of all program operations, planning, and decision-making activities.

Measure #1: Update USDA agency public participation guidelines to include environmental justice.

AMS developed strategic outreach plans for stronger stakeholder engagement in educational and career opportunities.

This plan included:

- conducting roundtables and listening sessions with local food system stakeholders across the country, sharing results, and connecting local businesses, farmers, and advocacy groups with valuable resources and technical assistance;
- strategic placement of Op-Eds, interviews with diverse media, and engagement of Latino media also helped reach communities with target-stakeholders;
- AMS commodity purchasing staff working with tribal communities to identify food and nutrition needs, seeking and awarding contracts to supply culturally important foods like blue corn and ground bison through the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations program;
- participation in USDA tribal consultations throughout the year to increase awareness and participation in agency programs; and
- increasing diversity on the boards and committees that we oversee, as well as within our own recruitment efforts, which yielded several appointments of women and minority representatives to the Research & Promotion program boards that AMS oversees, and a very diverse set of appointments to the Plant Variety Protection Board.

The plan is available at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/strategic-plan>.

Measure #2: Encourage environmental justice communities to become involved in the public participation process for Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements.

Forest Service engaged communities on the ground.

- **Ross-Adams Mine** – The Ross-Adams Mine is a former uranium mine located in the Tongass National Forest near the southern end of Prince of Wales Island in Alaska is an

example of how the Forest Service engages the local community and other stakeholders. The Forest Service is leading the cleanup process in conjunction with other stakeholders through public engagement meetings. Additional information on the Ross Adam Mine can be found at <http://www.ross-adams-eecca.com/>.

- **Southwestern Region, Rangeland Public Involvement Effort** – The Forest Service Southwestern Region conducted extensive outreach to Forest users, in particular low-income and minority communities reliant on National Forests. The Carson Forest Plan Revision meetings (14 held in 2015) continue to be held in surrounding communities dependent on the National Forest with members of the public including grazing permittees and livestock industry, Tribal entities, and New Mexico Land Grants.
- **Forest Resources Coordinating Committee (FRCC)** – The Forest Service Cooperative Forestry staff has increased outreach to native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and Alaskans, Hispanics, Latinos, and Asian Americans to diversify the membership of the FRCC. The call for nominations was translated into Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Hmong and circulated among various organizations and associations. Information can be found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/cooperativeforestry/frcc/>.

APHIS considered environmental justice within all NEPA analyses.

The public may participate through the comment period and the scoping process. APHIS includes sign language translators at public meetings, and makes transcripts of listening sessions available to the public. APHIS documents the determinations from the EJ considerations and identifies appropriate mitigations within the NEPA documentation. Metrics on the NEPA documentation also serve as a proxy for estimating interagency cooperation (see table below).

Metrics on the NEPA documentation prepared by APHIS in FY 2015.	
Number of DEIS and FEIS completed during the fiscal year	6
Number of EISs started by the agency during the fiscal year	0
Number of those EISs prepared with cooperating agencies	5
Names of Agencies Cooperating on EISs: Army Corps of Engineers (lead agency) U.S. Department of Defense, Navy (lead agency) U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service State Departments of Agriculture (or Agriculture and Markets), or Fish and Wildlife, and Natural Resources Other USDA Services (e.g. NRCS, FS, ARS)	

Various Universities or Colleges	
Number of EAs completed by the agency during the fiscal year	89
Number of those EAs prepared with cooperating agencies	83

Measure #3: Encourage environmental justice communities to become involved in the public participation process for development of new and revised rules and policies.

OAO managed two advisory groups: the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Advisory Group and the Minority Farmers Advisory Group.

These groups provide the Secretary with recommendations for improving access to USDA programs through the revision of rules and policies. OAO collaborates with NASS send HEI staff out into the community to make house to house calls and provide NASS Census briefings to SDVFRs, 1890 land-grants, 1994 land-grants, and Hispanic community gatherings at churches, schools, and other community meeting events. These meetings and briefings were to encourage the communities to participate in the Ag Census.

NRCS included environmental justice as part of the public participation process.

General Manual Title 400 Part 400, Public Participation Policy, the internal guidance on the public participation process includes environmental justice as part of the public participation process and encourages special efforts to reach all segments of the population. See <http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=18932>.

Measure #4: Develop and distribute USDA portfolio of financial and technical assistance programs for consideration by environmental justice communities.

The USDA Environmental Justice Team is tasked with developing this portfolio.

Measure #5: Invite other members of the Federal environmental justice interagency working group to participate in USDA initiatives and Service First agreements, including StrikeForce priority areas.

The USDA Environmental Justice Team is collaborating with the IWG and developing opportunities for future partnership.

Measure #6: Use existing methods for the reporting of Tribal consultations and activities, as described in DR 1350-002, to streamline the compilation of environmental justice reports.

- OTR and FS reviewed the on-line consultation reporting tool that is currently in Beta testing and recommended (again) that other agencies beta test the tool.

- AMS reported Tribal consultations and activities in the following three documents.
 - FY 2015 Agency Civil Rights Performance Plan and Accomplishments Report;
 - AMS FY 2015 Outreach Plan;
 - AMS FY 2015 Accomplishments Report.

Goal 4: Ensure USDA’s activities do not have disproportionately high and adverse human health impacts on environmental justice communities and resolve environmental justice issues and complaints

In support of this goal, USDA will integrate environmental justice strategies with its enforcement responsibilities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, especially with regard to recipients of Federal financial assistance. USDA will also endeavor to resolve issues and complaints relative to discrimination by working with environmental justice communities.

Measure #1: Identify and review Title VI complaints related to environmental justice and seek resolution.

Forest Service conducted Title VI training.

The Forest Service instructed forest-level and program administrators, such as those in the Southwestern Regional Office, to clearly post USDA nondiscrimination policy through posters and notifications on public materials. Recent training was provided on Equal Opportunity notice and outreach responsibilities. Title VI training was provided to regional Forest Service and other federal employees at the Western Forest Legacy Program Managers Meeting in Tucson, AZ on April 21, 2015. In addition, Rangeland Management for Line Officers training was provided on April 27–May 1, 2015, which included civil rights training and resources.

Measure #2: Include environmental justice in Civil Rights Compliance Reviews (CRCR) and Civil Rights Impact Analyses (CRIA).

NRCS regularly assessed environmental justice in civil rights assessments.

NRCS conducts 10 CRCRs annually to: ensure that policies and procedures are being followed for all USDA federally-conducted and assisted programs and activities; evaluate employment and program delivery processes, policies, and functions; determine Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity compliance; and provide direction, guidance, and technical assistance to NRCS managers and supervisors to correct any Civil Rights and/or Equal Opportunity compliance deficiencies. As a part of the NRCS CRCR process, a document request is submitted to the states, requesting that the states identify specific environmental justice considerations addressed when implementing NRCS federally conducted and/or assisted programs.

APHIS’s Civil Rights Impact Analyses included a review of the scope and impact of a proposed program to determine whether there is an adverse civil rights impact on any person(s) in a protected class or any protected class of persons.

These program CRIAs consist of two components: (1) the inclusion of an outreach plan making information about the proposed action available to members of EJ communities, and (2) where appropriate, the identification of mitigating actions to address the impact on members of EJ communities. Based on these reviews, the APHIS National Civil Rights and Diversity Advisory Committee revised key documents to increase consistency among the program units. None of these reviews indicated disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects of these programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.

Civil Rights Compliance/Impact Analyses Activities and EJ Issues		
Title of review	Description of EJ consideration in the review process	Milestones
Civil Rights Compliance Reviews	APHIS offices randomly selected by OCRDI to participate in Civil Rights Compliance Review Desk Audits included: Florida (Miami and Gainesville), Hawaii / Guam (Kauai, Maui, Molokai, Lanai, Oahu), Minnesota (Minneapolis and St. Paul), and Maryland (Frederick).	February April August September
Regulatory Civil Rights Impact Analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conditions of Payment for High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza Claims ▪ National Environmental Policy Act Inventory Procedures ▪ Virus Serum Toxin Act—Packaging and Labeling of Biological Products and Single Label Claim for Veterinary Biological Products ▪ Thresholds for de minimis Activity/Exemptions License under the Animal Welfare Act ▪ Importation of Sheep, Goats, Other Ruminants ▪ Importation of Beef from a Region in Brazil ▪ Importation of Fresh Beef from Northern Argentina 	Completed in FY 2015

APHIS submitted nearly 83 regulatory workplans for regulatory support, 49 were administrative actions that did not trigger an environmental justice analysis and 34 were potential candidates for such a review. APHIS reviewed 8 of these for environmental justice concerns. One review focused on rulemaking for establishing regulations for swine enteric coronavirus diseases that caused the death of millions of piglets since the viruses were identified in 2013 and 2014.

Other reviews focused on trade actions to determine if there are potential EJ concerns, such as the importation of lemons from Argentina, peppers from Peru, and the interstate movement of

allium leaves from Hawaii into the continental United States. Additionally, APHIS revised the introductory language used in the EJ evaluations to decrease redundancy and efficiently and concisely presents the conclusions. None of these reviews indicated disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects of these programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.

Measure #3: Identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.

Forest Service responded to lead contamination in small rural communities.



Impacts of climate change, intense storm events, and rising sea levels are becoming factors in establishing priorities for CERCLA environmental cleanup actions. For example, a September 2014 storm released iron and heavy metals from the abandoned Lead Queen mine site into the Harshaw Creek watershed, about six miles south of Patagonia, Arizona. The town of Patagonia has a population of approximately 1,000. The US Forest Service

Southwestern Regional Office issued an action memo for “time critical” cleanup of the abandoned Lead Queen Mine. The cleanup plan was approved in July 2015 and started soon after, continuing into 2016 to address the rural community’s concerns about USDA’s speedy response to this storm event. More information can be found at:

<http://www.tucsonnewsnow.com/story/30514066/cleanup-begins-at-contaminated-lead-queen-mine-site>.

In another example, the US Forest Service Alaska Regional Office coordinated with the Federal Aviation Administration to ensure parameters for successful cleanup of Strawberry point, a mixed-ownership site containing National Forest System land in Alaska. The acceleration of this cleanup was necessary to ensure cleanup of the petroleum before rising advancement of the ocean washed the contamination toward a nearby marine sanctuary. Lack of action would have caused contamination of local fisheries, particularly subsistence fisheries.

USDA’s Hazardous Materials Management Program (HMMP) continued its long-term support for contamination cleanup.

In FY 2015 the HMMP contributed \$250,000 to the cleanup of the Akron Mine near White Pine, Colorado. The US Forest Service is cleaning up the Akron Mine and several nearby mines in collaborative partnership for reclamation efforts with the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety and Trout Unlimited, and EPA in the historic Tomichi Creek Mining District & the Tomichi Creek Watershed. The lead contaminated material posed a danger to those recreating in the area and the rural community of White Pine, which is located about 1,000 feet north of the site.

RD's Water & Environmental programs focused on human health and water quality improvements.

In FY 2015, WEP invested \$1.66 billion in direct and guaranteed loans and grants to provide technical assistance and training to assist rural communities in developing 959 water and waste disposal (WWD) projects that have helped safeguard the health of 2,380,303 rural residents.

One of the many communities assisted by WEP was the city of Folkston, Georgia. The city of Folkston's sewer system was installed in the 1960's. Currently, the city has limited sewer capacity, and, just within the past two years, has been cited for several violations and a major spill. However, with recent assistance from WEP, Folkston was awarded an \$8.21 million dollar loan and \$3 million dollar grant to improve its sewer system. The awarded funds will fund the construction costs, equipment, and engineering and legal fees.

For additional information on Water and Environmental (WEP) programs for FY 2015, please see the RUS WEP Annual Progress Report:

<http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/WEPAnnualProgressReport2015.pdf>.

Measure #4: Incorporate environmental justice evaluations into Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements, as appropriate, along with potential avoidance, minimization and mitigation options, and agencies will provide any necessary outreach.

NRCS followed up findings in environmental assessments with Civil Rights Impact Statements.

Under the Title VI Farm Bill Program rules that are codified in the *Code of Federal Regulations*, the NRCS Civil Rights Division reviews the entire Farm Bill program rule package for the program rules slated to be published. Included in the rule package is a *Programmatic Environmental Assessment* that is prepared by the NRCS National Environmental Coordinator. The NRCS Civil Rights Division will include in all applicable program CRIAs an "Environment Justice Impact Statement" in accordance with the Programmatic Environmental Assessment's findings and conclusion.

Measure #5: Continue research on diet and nutrition impacts on human health.

ARS's research on soy formula versus milk can be used by EJ communities.

Not all infants can consume or access milk. ARS-funded conducted at the Arkansas Children's Research Center in Little Rock, Arkansas, demonstrated that soy milk can substitute for cow's

milk without any negative effect on infants' health and development outcomes¹. that the researchers studied sexual development in three groups of 5-year old children who had been exclusively either breastfed, given cow's milk, or given soy formula for the first 4 to 6 months of life. While continued follow-up through puberty is planned, these data provide initial evidence that soy formula has no measurable adverse effect on reproductive organs and can be safely consumed by infants who cannot tolerate cow's milk. Parents of infants in EJ communities who need an alternative to breast milk or cow milk, can now feed their children soy formula without worry about negative effects on infant health.

Measure #6: Review proposed or existing USDA regulations to assess environmental justice impacts (DR-5600-2 will be reviewed separately).

The USDA Environmental Justice Team is looking into developing this measure.

Goal 5: Increase the awareness, skills, and abilities of USDA employees regarding environmental justice

In support of this goal, USDA ensures that Responsible Officials are aware of the provisions of Executive Order 12898 and are enabled to identify and amend programs, policies, and activities under their purview that may provide targeted grants or technical or financial assistance to environmental justice communities. Additionally, officials should be able to identify and amend programs, policies, and activities that have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on environmental justice communities.

Measure #1: Establish training program for all Responsible Officials at USDA.

OASCR led training efforts.

- OASCR disseminated USDA Departmental Regulation on Environmental Justice to OASCR leadership.

Measure #2: Provide training for USDA environmental justice SES-level points of contact.

The USDA Environmental Justice Team is looking into developing this measure.

¹. Andres A, Moore MB, Linam LE, Casey PH, Cleves MA, Badger TM. Compared with feeding infants breast milk or cow-milk formula, soy formula feeding does not affect subsequent reproductive organ size at 5 years of age. *Journal of Nutrition*. 2015; 145:871-875.

Measure #3: Train Responsible Officials (includes Office or Program Managers)—e.g., Cultural Transformation and environmental justice Web training.

RMA provided the following web trainings:

RMA Cultural Transformation; USDA Cultural Transformation Initiative; and Cultural Competency: Working with Tribal leaders, Governments and Communities. In addition, 109 employees participated in the RMA Kansas City Summer Cultural Transformation Event.

APHIS trained program managers before they prepared NEPA documents.

When program managers address environmental justice through the NEPA process, the agency administers an informal peer-to-peer mentoring approach to reach those directly involved with the environmental justice analyses. During 2015, APHIS staff created a presentation on ways to use the EPA's EJ screening tool, which is available at <http://www2.epa.gov/ejscreen>.

Presentations for staff are planned for FY 2016.

Measure #4: Provide an environmental justice briefing (course through AgLearn) for all USDA employees. The course would familiarize employees with environmental justice concepts and affirm the Department's commitment to achieving environmental justice in all programs and activities.

The ARS National Agricultural Library established a DigiTop automated search service for environmental justice.

USDA employees thus have access to current research and literature on environmental justice from both the Scopus and Navigator database resources. Scopus is "the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature: scientific journals, books and conference proceedings." Scopus has more than 57 million records from journals and 120,000 books expected by the end of 2015.

ARS plans to develop a live Webinar training opportunity for using DigiTop to increase knowledge on evidenced-based environmental justice information for USDA employees. NAL will record the Webinar, as we do it live, and have the recording made available on the NAL DigiTop Training Web Page, <https://digitop.nal.usda.gov/digitop-help/training>. NAL plans to provide at least one training in FY 2017 with an opportunity to provide additional training in FY 2017 on an as-needed basis. NAL will set up the training to register through AgLearn in order to attend the course.

Measure #5: Develop and maintain an environmental justice Web Page for USDA employees and the public.

Tools and research have been collected by key agencies.

- DM's Environmental Management Division Response and Restoration office maintains a Web page linking the public to key EJ documents at <http://www.dm.usda.gov/emd/responserestoration/EnvironmentalJustice.htm>. It provides links to the USDA EJ Strategic Plan and Progress Report, as well as information on site cleanup, emergency response, and Brownfields.
- NRCS maintains an environmental justice Web site at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/about/justice/>. It includes environmental justice tools, success stories, and relevant executive orders.
- Forest Service's Community Forestry program area has collected environmental justice tools on its Urban Research Web page, <http://www.fs.fed.us/research/urban/environmental-justice.php>. Tools include weekly webinars in urban forestry (<http://www.fs.fed.us/research/urban-webinars/>), decision tools to plan urban tree planting (<http://www.fs.fed.us/research/urban/tools.php>), and research briefs.

Measure #6: Identify agency programs that can impact or benefit environmental justice communities in order to target current and future training for environmental justice communities.

RMA funded training through its Risk Management Education Division.

Funding is available to environmental justice communities, or entities working with environmental justice communities, who wish to learn more about effective risk management strategies. In 2015, more than 13,500 beginning farmers and ranchers saved \$14 million on more than 49,000 crop insurance policies. These financial benefits allowed these beginning farmers and ranchers to insure more than 3.7 million acres. Information is available at <http://www.rma.usda.gov/aboutrma/agreements/>. AMS trained its Research and Promotion (R&P) Board on diversity and inclusion.

The training session, held in Northern Virginia prior to the 2015 Agricultural Outlook Forum, was part of the agency’s ongoing efforts to increase the diversity of AMS R&P boards. Meeting participants – including more than 50 board members and board staff from 21 of the 23 R&P boards that AMS oversees, AMS employees, and representatives of Certified Nominating Organizations—gathered to talk about recruiting talented and diverse board members who are representative of the industries they serve.



Figure 1. Trevor Wilson (far right), global diversity, inclusion, and human equity strategist and CEO of TWI, Inc. discusses human equity with AMS and MRP staff.

Two community-focused results are visible as a direct result of the inclusion and diversity training held in conjunction with USDA’s Agricultural Outlook Forum in 2015. First, several R&P Boards instituted new outreach initiatives designed to make serving on the boards more attractive to prospective board members. For example, the Softwood Lumber Board created a leadership and mentoring program to help recruit new and diverse talent. In June, the Cotton Board organized and hosted a “Women in Agriculture” tour of Cotton Incorporated headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina. Second, in April 2015, more than 30 AMS R&P specialists and 20 AMS and Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) leaders attended training on “Human Equity” and the “Human Equity Continuum,” (see the “Cultural Transformation” section below).

Measure #7: Incorporate environmental justice content into agency handbooks and manuals as appropriate.

The USDA Environmental Justice Team is developing this measure.

Measure #8: Facilitate placement of USDA sub-agency staff on Environmental Justice Intergovernmental Working Group standing committees and focus area teams.

- APHIS staff volunteered and serve on the EJ IWG standing committees, including the Native American/Indigenous Peoples EJ IWG Select Committee, the climate change committee, and the NEPA and its education sub-committee. As part of their service to these groups, they summarize committee activities for the USDA EJ Team upon request.
- OAO delegated three employees from the grants staff and the HEI to participate in periodic meetings with the EJ Working Group.

- The Forest Service provides representatives from multiple disciplines to several standing committees of the EJ Interagency Working Group, including:
 - **Climate Subcommittee** staffed by the Office of Sustainability & Climate Change, Office of Tribal Relations, and Research & Development;
 - **Native Americans/Indigenous Peoples Committee** staffed by Office of Tribal Relations;
 - **NEPA Subcommittee** staffed by National Forest System, Ecosystem Management Coordination; and
 - **Rural Communities Subcommittee** staffed by National Forest System and State & Private Forestry.

Measure #9: Encourage employee participation in the development of environmental justice training materials by interagency working groups.

APHIS staff contributed to the NEPA education sub-committee by assisting in the development of an EPA course on EJ.

While still under development, this educational product is anticipated to form the basis for APHIS EJ training materials that will become available through AgLearn. The educational product includes real-world NEPA examples and is closely linked to the Promising Practices document that was vetted throughout the Federal government during FY 2015.

Measure #10: Include environmental justice metrics in internal USDA performance assessments.

The USDA Environmental Justice Team is working to incorporate EJ into the agencies' reporting. For example, the RMA 2015-2018 Strategic Plan measures efforts related to Risk Management Education in StrikeForce states and compliance with civil rights statues by employees and partners. See: <http://www.rma.usda.gov/aboutrma/what/2015-18strategicplan.pdf>.

Goal 6: Review, Update and/or Develop Departmental and Agency Policies and/or Regulations to Address Environmental Justice

In support of this goal, the Department and its agencies will formulate, review, and/or update their environmental justice regulations, directives, and policy documents.

Measure #1: Review and consider issuing new and/or revised regulations, and/or policies on environmental justice.

The USDA Environmental Justice Team is developing this measure.

Measure #2: Amend, as appropriate, other regulations, directives, manuals, handbooks, and/or policies where aspects of environmental justice can or should be accomplished.

Forest Service incorporated Tribes and rural ranchers in policy development.

- **Proposed Directives on American Indian and Alaska Native Relations Manual** – Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations published a proposed policy for tribal relations, designed to expand the mutually beneficial work it conducts with American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, and Alaska Native Corporations. Information at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/news/releases/forest-service-seeks-comments-proposed-policies-guiding-agencys-working-relationship>. The proposed policy would expand agency work beyond consultation to encourage staff to work closely with Native Hawaiians, American Indian and Alaska Native individuals, communities, inter-tribal organizations, enterprises and educational institutions.