

USDA



FY 2024 Annual Performance Report
U.S. Department of Agriculture

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About the U.S. Department of Agriculture

On May 15, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed legislation to establish the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA or the Department). Two and a half years later in his final message to Congress, Lincoln called USDA “The People’s Department.” At that time, about half of all Americans lived on farms, compared with about two percent today. But through its work on food, agriculture, economic development, science, natural resource conservation, and a host of other issues, USDA continues to fulfill Lincoln's vision—serving millions of Americans every day.

The agriculture and food industry contributes \$1.1 trillion to the U.S. gross domestic product and represents nearly 11 percent of total U.S. employment. Furthermore, USDA over the years has gained more authorities to expand its support not only in agriculture but the support infrastructure that give all producers better access to market and its surrounding communities and natural resources to also thrive.

Today, USDA is comprised of 29 agencies organized under eight Mission Areas and 16 Staff Offices. The Department employs nearly 100,000 persons who serve the American people at more than 6,000 locations across the country and abroad (see USDA Organization Chart).

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

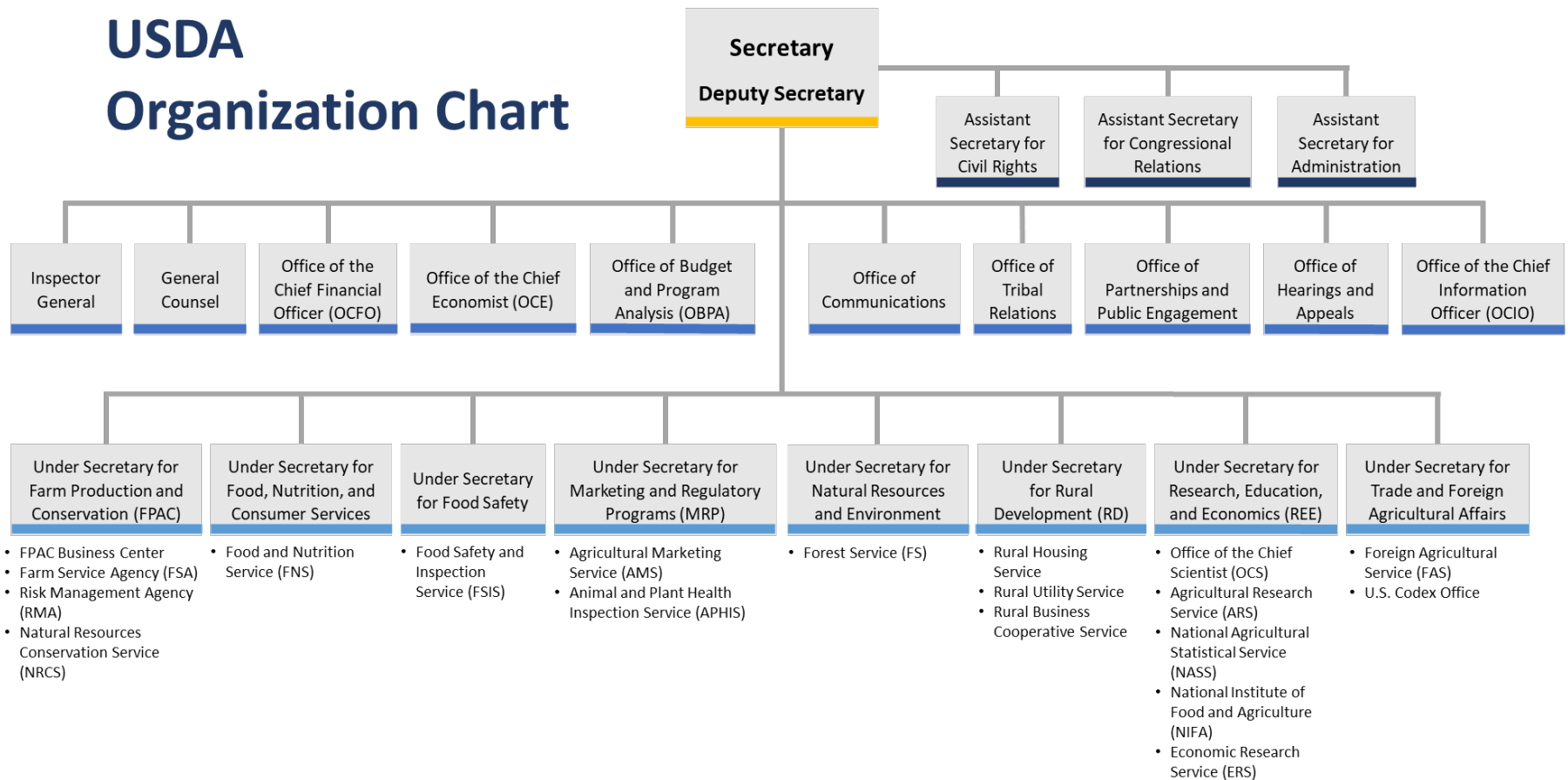
USDA Mission: To serve all Americans by providing effective, innovative, science-based public policy leadership in agriculture, food and nutrition, natural resource protection and management, rural development, and related issues with a commitment to deliverable equitable and climate-smart opportunities that inspire and help America thrive.

USDA Vision: An equitable and climate-smart food and agriculture economy that protects and improves the health, nutrition, and quality of life of all Americans; yields healthy land, forests, and clean water; helps rural America thrive; and feeds the world.

USDA Core Values

- *Respect and Dignity:* We treat all people with courtesy and respect, and we value the inherent dignity of every individual.
- *Equity and Inclusion:* We seek to end discrimination in all forms, wherever it exists, and expand services and opportunities to underserved people and communities across America, starting with our workforce.
- *Trust and Integrity:* We act in a manner that is deserving of the public’s trust and with the utmost integrity in everything we do as public servants.
- *Service and Results:* We listen to our internal and external customers and actively incorporate their ideas on how to best reach our diverse customers and deliver service that significantly and positively impacts the lives of all Americans.
- *Science Leadership:* We base our decisions and policy on science and data that are reliable, timely, relevant, and free from political interference.

USDA Organization Chart



Executive Summary

Background

In accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), as amended by the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA), USDA is pleased to present the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Annual Performance Report. This document provides an overview of the Department's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan and performance progress for FY 2024.

The Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA) leads USDA in Performance, Evaluation, Evidence, and Risk Management, and chairs the USDA Performance, Evidence, Evaluation, and Risk Committee. All Mission Areas and Departmental Administration are represented on the committee, as well as other key evaluation partners. The broad representation facilitates buy-in across the Department, augments technical expertise, and creates a greater diversity of perspectives. Additionally, OBPA has a close partnership with the Chief Data Officer and Statistical Official, which provides insight and advisement on data access, data quality, and statistical methods.

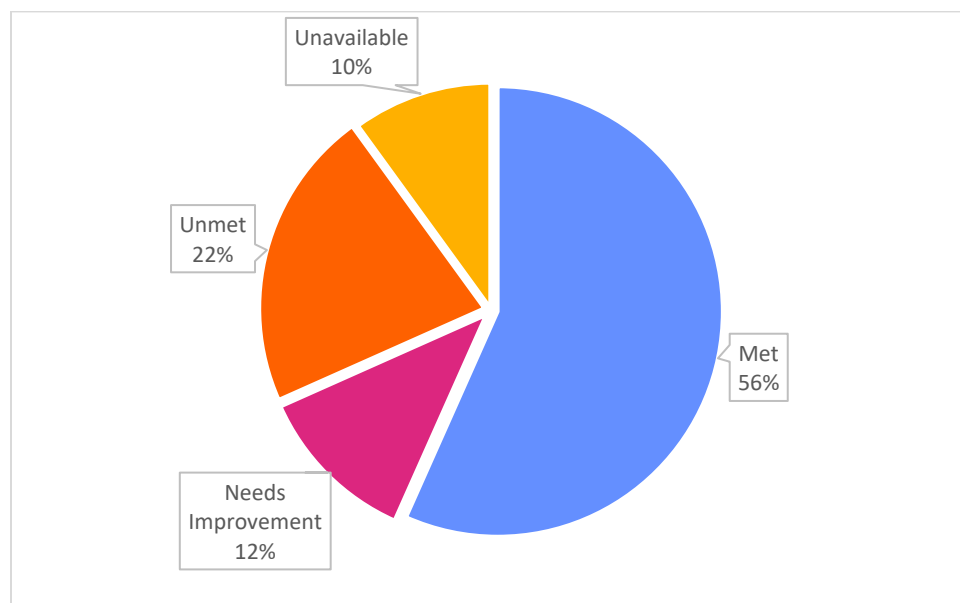
USDA applies a standardized methodology to collect and use data for program performance measurement. This methodology has been vetted by federally employed scientists and policymakers. With this, USDA attests to the completeness, reliability, and quality of the data.

Performance

The FY 2024 Annual Performance Report use the following terms in discussing past and future performance:

- **Strategic Goal:** The highest-level statement of aim or purpose that is included in the Strategic Plan. The strategic goals articulate the broad categories of action that the Department will take to advance its mission.
- **Strategic Objective:** This document's 21 strategic objectives are the primary unit for strategic analysis and decision-making. Strategic objectives state the outcomes or management impacts the Department is trying to achieve.
- **Key Performance Indicator (KPI):** A key performance measure used to track progress toward achieving a strategic objective. The Department measures and monitors the trend for these indicators. Performance indicator status results are determined by the following standard:
 - **Met/Blue:** Within 100% or more of target
 - **Needs Improvement/Pink:** Within 10% of target
 - **Unmet/Orange:** Greater than 10% below target
- **Target:** A quantifiable level of achievement that is planned for a measure of strategic objective progress.
- **Baseline:** A performance indicator's level over one or more time periods to assess the appropriate level for future performance targets.

In FY 2024, USDA met or exceeded the target for 34 out of 60 (56%) performance metrics. 7 of the 60 (12%) performance metrics were deemed to "need improvement," meaning they were within 10% range of meeting the set target. 13 of the 60 (22%) performance metrics were more than 10% below target, designating them as "unmet." 6 of the 60 (10%) performance metrics do not have available data at the time of this report, due to lag times associated with data reporting and processing.



USDA will continue to pursue challenging and ambitious yet feasible target thresholds for its key performance measures aligned to and supported by the Department’s Budget request. As precedent data become more readily available, staff will be able to make more informed decisions about manageable targets. USDA will continue to build on its success using the Quarterly Strategic Review process to maintain accountability, and to articulate resources necessary to successfully reach performance metric targets and strategic goals. In addition, the integration of Enterprise Risk Management, along with increased capacity for evidence building, will improve decision-making surrounding resources and program activities.

Supplemental Funding

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, legislation like the American Rescue Plan (ARP), and the transformational and historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) have provided critical investments to address the challenges of climate change to the nation’s food and agriculture systems and rebuild the nation’s foundational needs from the bottom up and the middle out. Through the ARP, USDA is helping producers get back on their feet; creating more and better markets for local and regional food producers; and supporting those most vulnerable to food insecurity. BIL has supported investments in climate, energy, and the environment in rural America through the expansion of high-speed broadband to create jobs, help farmers use precision agriculture technologies, expand access to health care and educational services, and create economic opportunities for millions across the country. IRA invests in new and existing USDA programs that help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners adopt climate-smart practices, support the transition to clean energy in rural America, and provide technical and financial assistance to underserved farmers, ranchers, and foresters. USDA delivers on these investments to confront challenges in the future of agriculture. Below is a table that lays out KPIs and other supplemental performance measures to track progress on strategic objectives in BIL and/or IRA.

| Measure Text | BIL | IRA |
|---|-----|-----|
| Number of High-Priority Areas Where Treatments Have Occurred to Reduce Wildfire Risk to Communities | X | X |
| Number of UCF IRA Projects Delivered in CJEST ‘Disadvantaged’ Census Blocks/Tracts | | X |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Impacts of Investments to Improve National Baseline UTC and (Tree Planting) Based on 30-Year Canopy Growth Projections | | X |
| Number of Landowners Assisted through the Landowner Support for Forest Resilience Program | | X |
| Number of Projects Funded through the Landowner Support for Forest Resilience Program | | X |
| Number of Acres Impacted through the Landowner Support for Forest Resilience Program | | X |
| Number of Projects Funded to Establish, Reopen, Retrofit, Expand, or Improve a Sawmill or Other Wood-Processing Facility | | X |
| Acreage of National Forest System Lands Where Final Treatment Effectively Mitigates Wildfire Risk | X | X |
| Haul Amount of Material Removed to Reduce Hazardous Fuels to Locations Where that Material can be Utilized | X | X |
| Reduction and Avoidance of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from RD investments (PACE and New ERA) | | X |
| Reduction and Avoidance of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from RD investments (REAP) | | X |

Commitment to Customer Experience

USDA is committed to empowering, enabling, and engaging USDA customers and employees in a human-centered approach to innovation in order to deliver consistently exceptional service to customers. The need for improved customer experience in government is both mandated by policy and the need to provide customers with efficient and effective services.

The Office of Customer Experience (OCX) at USDA works to address complex challenges across programs and services that may impact the experiences of USDA customers and employees. A good customer experience will increase trust in government, the likelihood to use products and services, and improve service efficiency through decreased costs. In addition, OCX has and continues to collaborate with USDA’s High Impact Service Providers (HISPs) on several initiatives to streamline program applications and enhance customer service. More information on OCX key initiatives can be found at [Office of Customer Experience \(OCX\) | USDA](#).

USDA’s commitment to providing high-quality customer experiences is also reflected in the three Agency Priority Goals and high-impact services provided by five of USDA’s eight mission areas. More information on these programs can be found at [USDA | Performance.gov](#).

Finally, USDA recognizes that meeting the needs of its customers also involves addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). USDA established an Equity Commission to ensure that none of its customers are ignored or left behind and that all have an equal chance of success and prosperity. Recognizing the role of a healthy and inclusive organizational culture and the need to build an organization that reflects the communities that the agencies and programs serve, USDA is looking inward to understand what it will take to build an organization that centers DEIA. More information on the equity commission and DEIA initiatives can be found at [Equity | USDA](#).

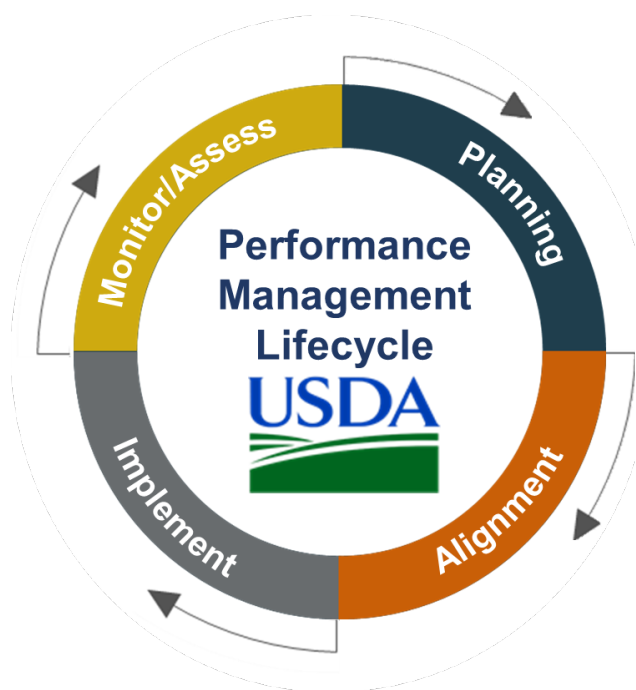
FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan Overview

The [USDA FY 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan](#) guides the work of USDA to ensure that the Department’s efforts best serve the American public. As part of its vision to make USDA the most efficient, most effective, and most customer-focused department in the Federal government, the Department has established six strategic goals for FY 2022 – 2026 and two FY 2024-2025 Agency Priority Goals.

In FY 2024, USDA continued work on the two FY 2024-2025 APGs to focus and monitor performance where the Department needed to drive significant progress and change. The means used to verify and validate measured values, the sources of data, the level of accuracy required for the intended use of the data, and limitations to the data at the required level of accuracy are described and documented for each Agency Priority Goal on <http://www.performance.gov/>.

Performance Management

The following chart demonstrates the Department’s performance management lifecycle.



| |
|---|
| FY 2022-2026 USDA Strategic Plan View Online |
| FY 2024-2025 Agency Priority Goals (APGs) View Online |
| Annual Performance Plan/Report View Online |
| Learning Agenda/Capacity Assessment View Online |
| Annual Evaluation Plan View Online |
| Quarterly APG/CAP Updates View Online |
| Quarterly APG/CAP Performance Updates <i>Internal</i> |
| Annual Financial Report (AFR) View Online |

FY 2022 – 2026 Strategic Goals and Objectives

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE TO SUPPORT AMERICA’S WORKING LANDS, NATURAL RESOURCES AND COMMUNITIES

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Strategic Objective 1.1 | Use Climate-Smart Management and Sound Science to Enhance the Health and Productivity of Agricultural Lands |
| Strategic Objective 1.2 | Lead Efforts to Adapt to the Consequences of Climate Change in Agriculture and Forestry |
| Strategic Objective 1.3 | Restore, Protect, and Conserve Watersheds to Ensure Clean, Abundant, and Continuous Provision of Water Resources |
| Strategic Objective 1.4 | Increase Carbon Sequestration, Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Create Economic Opportunities (and Develop Low-Carbon Energy Solutions) |

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: ENSURE AMERICA’S AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM IS EQUITABLE, RESILIENT, AND PROSPEROUS

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Strategic Objective 2.1 | Protect Plant and Animal Health by Minimizing Major Diseases, Pests, and Wildlife Conflicts |
| Strategic Objective 2.2 | Build Resilient Food Systems, Infrastructure, and Supply Chain |
| Strategic Objective 2.3 | Foster Agricultural Innovation |

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: FOSTER AN EQUITABLE AND COMPETITIVE MARKETPLACE FOR ALL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Strategic Objective 3.1 | Foster Sustainable Economic Growth by Promoting Innovation, Building Resilience to Climate Change, and Expanding Renewable Energy |
| Strategic Objective 3.2 | Expand Markets for Emerging Technologies, Sustainable Products, and Novel Products |
| Strategic Objective 3.3 | Expand All Producers’ Access to Global Markets Through Negotiation and Enforcement of Trade Agreements |
| Strategic Objective 3.4 | Expand International Marketing Opportunities and Build Demand in Developing Countries through Delivery of Technical Assistance and Capacity Building |

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: MAKE SAFE, NUTRITIOUS FOOD AVAILABLE TO ALL AMERICANS

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Strategic Objective 4.1 | Increase Food Security Through Assistance and Access to Nutritious and Affordable Food |
| Strategic Objective 4.2 | Encourage Healthy Dietary Choices Through Data-Driven, Flexible, Customer-Focused Approaches |
| Strategic Objective 4.3 | Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health |

STRATEGIC GOAL 5: EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL AND TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Strategic Objective 5.1 | Improve Rural and Tribal Community Infrastructure, Including Affordable E-Connectivity, Cornerstone Community Facilities, Sustainable and Reliable Power, and Clean and Safe Water and Sewer Systems |
| <i>Agency Priority Goal</i> | <p><i>Ensure All Americans have Access to High-speed, Affordable, and Reliable Broadband</i></p> <p>By September 30, 2025, the Departments of Agriculture and Commerce will expand affordable and reliable access to broadband service by funding projects, which when completed, will provide at least 6,250,000 households and other locations with reliable and affordable access to high-quality internet service. This will be achieved through investment in broadband infrastructure and related activities, accompanied by outreach and technical assistance, and in coordination with applicable Federal agencies, to promote American household accessibility to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet service.</p> |
| Strategic Objective 5.2 | Boost the Financial Security of Rural and Tribal Communities Through Access to Affordable Housing |
| Strategic Objective 5.3 | Increase Capacity, Sustainability, and Economic Vitality in Rural and Tribal Communities |
| Strategic Objective 5.4 | Promote Environmental Justice by Maximizing Sustainable and Green Economic Development in Rural and Tribal Communities |

STRATEGIC GOAL 6: ATTRACT, INSPIRE, AND RETAIN AN ENGAGED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE THAT’S PROUD TO REPRESENT USDA

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Objective 6.1 | Foster a Culture of Civil Rights, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, Transparency, and Accountability |
| Objective 6.2 | Establish a Customer-Centric, Inclusive, High-Performing Workforce that is Representative of America and the Communities We Serve |
| <i>Agency Priority Goal</i> | <p><i>Cultivate a motivated and skilled workforce capable of accomplishing USDA’s mission through effective recruitment and retention</i></p> <p>Building upon the work of the previous two years, by September 30, 2025, improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and strategic alignment of recruitment and retention strategies and processes to attract, hire, and retain top talent. By September 30, 2025, USDA will decrease the total number of permanent employee separations by 1% per year, with concentration on the number of permanent employee separations having less than 1 year as well as 1-2 years of service as compared to the FY23 YTD baseline.</p> |
| Objective 6.3 | Promote USDA Operational Excellence Through Better Use of Technology and Shared Solutions |

Cross-Agency Priority Goals

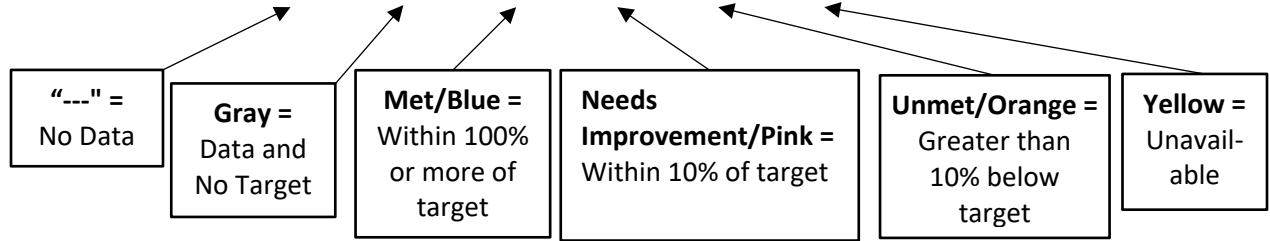
GPRAMA requires Cross-Agency Priority Goals to be addressed in the Annual Performance Report. Please refer to <https://www.performance.gov> for the Department’s contributions and progress toward those goals, where applicable.

Lower-Priority Program Activities

The President’s Budget identifies lower-priority program activities where applicable, as required under GPRAMA [31 U.S. Code § 1115\(b\)\(10\)](#). The public can access the volume at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget>.

Key to Performance Measure Data Tables

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | FY 2025 | FY 2026 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | 100 | 100 | 120 | 150 | 150 | 225 | Units | Increase |
| Actual | --- | 90 | 100 | 115 | 100 | TBD | N/A | | |



Goal 1: Combat Climate Change to Support America’s Working Lands, Natural Resources, and Communities

Climate change poses a significant risk to agriculture, forests, and grasslands across the United States and the communities that support and depend on them. The Nation’s agricultural lands, forests, and private working lands require conservation and restoration efforts to strengthen their resilience to drought, invasive species, and wildfire. The Department must lead with investments in science, research, and climate-smart solutions. These investments will mitigate the impacts of climate change, increase adaptation to climate change, generate new income opportunities, and build generational wealth in disadvantaged communities.

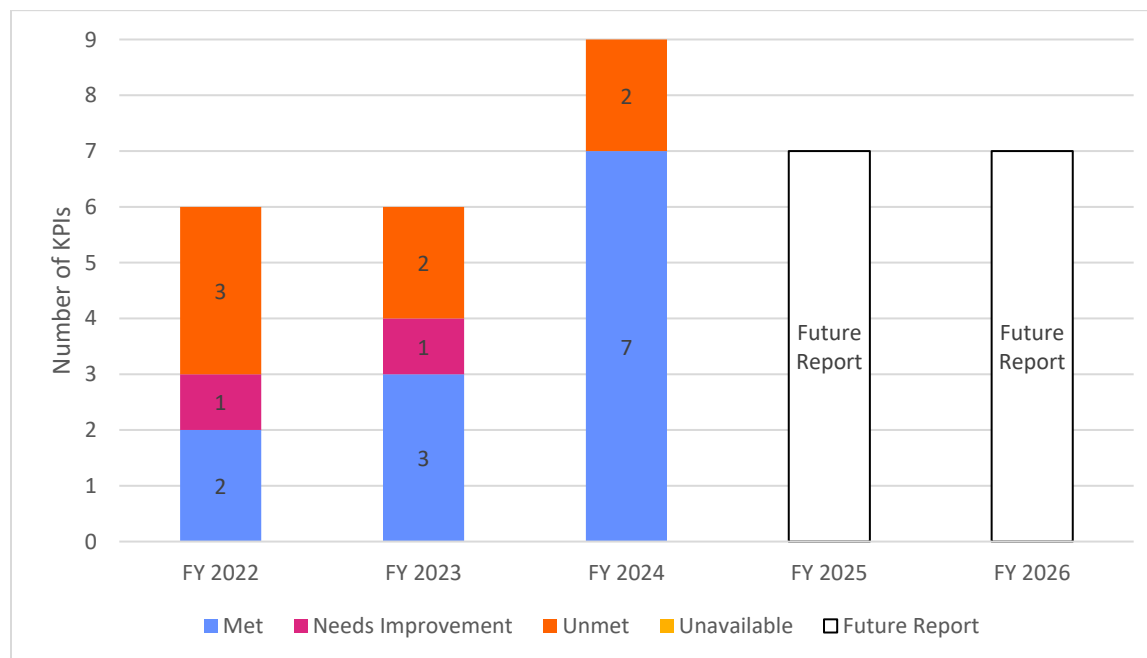
Agriculture can lead the fight on climate using climate-smart agriculture, forestry, and renewable energy practices that sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve adaptation and resilience, and increase market opportunities for all producers. USDA is working to develop and implement a comprehensive climate-smart strategy that is centered on incentives for voluntary participation and meeting the needs of its diverse producers, landowners, and communities. Additionally, it will provide a host of new tools to deploy important conservation practices and the research essential to inform them.



Objective 1.1: Use Climate-Smart Management and Sound Science to Enhance the Health and Productivity of Agricultural Lands

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

- Completed approximately 279,000 conservation plans providing scientifically proven conservation benefits to approximately 147 million acres of privately owned agricultural and forestry lands, and approximately 58 million additional acres assessed for resource concerns.
- Since FY 2022, USDA has invested \$3.03 billion in 135 Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities projects, enrolling over 5 million acres of working land into climate-smart practices.
- Dedicated resources toward six projects focused on measuring, monitoring, and mitigating climate impacts of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) conservation practices.
- Developed climate smart incentives to encourage voluntary participation in CRP. Climate smart incentives totaling \$27.7 million were issued as part of CRP annual rental payments.

Challenges

- Crop prices and high cash rent have impacted producer’s decisions to enroll and reenroll grass and riparian buffers.
- CRP had to wait for signup authority to be restored and then had to batch offers given proximity to the cap. This prohibited a free and open year-round enrollment opportunity for producers.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Farm Service Agency
- Forest Service
- Office of the Chief Economist

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Cropland with Applied Soil Health Management System Practices

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | 225 | 225 | 225 | 225 | Thousand Acres | Increase |
| Actual | --- | 313 | 294 | 464 | 261 | | |

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025 and replaced by a new soil health KPI.

Progress Made in FY 2024

The Soil Health Division has streamlined its soil health training offerings to states which include content on implementing conservation practices that improve soil health resource concerns, organic matter depletion, aggregate instability compaction, and soil organism habitat. The soil health training offerings help NRCS staff communicate the importance of soil health management systems (SHMS) in mitigating climate change. Also, with IRA funds bolstering the availability of technical and financial assistance opportunities that NRCS can provide to adopt conservation practices that sequester carbon and mitigate GHG emissions, NRCS is seeing private landowners implementing three or more of these practices and activities listed on the Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Practice List, which constitutes a Soil Health Management System.

Cropland on Which at Least One Conservation Practice was Applied to Improve Soil Quality Under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------------|
| Target | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.4 | Million Acres | Increase |
| Actual | 3.9 | 3.4 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.4 | | |

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025 and replaced by a new soil health KPI.

Progress Made in FY 2024

In FY 2024, NRCS met the target for this KPI. The success is the expected result of additional funding from IRA which was available starting in FY 2023. Of the 16 conservation practices, 12 are considered mitigation activities and are eligible for IRA funding. This additional funding resulted in associated state level priority efforts to support of some of the 12 eligible practices. This resulted in the increased contracting and installation. Examples of practices included in state level priority efforts are cover crops, prescribed grazing, and shrub establishment.

Cropland with Conservation Applied to Improve Soil Quality through Conservation Technical Assistance

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | --- | 8 | Million Acres | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | --- | 9.45 | | |

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025 and replaced by two new KPIs that represent how Conservation Technical Assistance translates into working with customers to create conservation plans which address resource concerns.

Progress Made in FY 2024

The increased availability of financial assistance funding from the farm bill and IRA funding has led to an increase in customers requesting acres to be evaluated. This increase in financial assistance is likely what caused NRCS to greatly exceed the target for this KPI. Continued enhancements to conservation planning software provides conservation planners an efficient way to work with clients to develop a conservation plan by documenting the resource concerns evaluated and the planned practices selected to meet soil quality and other objectives.

Cropland with Conservation Applied to Reduce Soil Erosion and Improve Soil Quality through Environmental Quality Incentives

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | --- | 3.1 | Million Acres | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | --- | 3.4 | | |

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025 and replaced by a new soil health KPI.

Progress Made in FY 2024

In FY 2024, USDA exceeded the target. The success is the expected result of additional funding from IRA which started to be available in FY 2023. Twelve of the 16 conservation practices are considered mitigation activities and are eligible for IRA funding. This additional funding resulted in associated state-level priority effort to support of some of the 12 eligible practices, which resulted in the increased contracting and installation. Examples of practices included in state-level priority efforts are cover crops, prescribed grazing, and tree/shrub establishment.

Working Lands Protected by Conservation Easements

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------|---------------------|
| Target | 163 | 163 | 163 | 129 | 129 | Thousand Acres | Increase |
| Actual | 167 | 145 | 167 | 193 | 141 | | |

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025 and replaced by a new KPI which reflects the full inventory of acres under conservation protection.

Progress Made in FY 2024

In FY 2024, NRCS continued to increase the acres held under easement for a total of 5,656,541 acres under 24,871 acres, which included eight IRA easements. NRCS continued streamlining easement programs to reduce the time to close easements, these improvements include increasing the number of Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Agricultural Land Easement certified entities, improving the appraisal and boundary survey process, increasing NRCS capacity, and continued development of tools to support the implementation of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Acreage Enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program Riparian and Grass Buffers

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------------|
| Target | 1.41 | 1.46 | 1.56 | 1.56 | 1.61 | Million Acres | Increase |
| Actual | 1.36 | 1.42 | 1.37 | 1.28 | 1.24 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

Crop prices and high cash rent have impacted producer’s decisions to enroll and reenroll. Another factor is a producer’s/landowner’s financial decision to annually produce a crop versus participate in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). While CRP is proven to provide environmental benefits for soil health, water quality, and wildlife, the producer/landowner tends to focus first on the most financially viable option for their farming operation. A producer’s/landowner’s ability to generate more revenue from annual crop production yields and/or prices, along with guarantees from risk protection and disaster programs, higher land values, cash-rents, statutory and regulatory limits on CRP rental payments, and CRP’s annual rental rates established in arrears, likely all contribute to why interest in CRP enrollment is trending downward. The average age of the American farmer is increasing and has some impact on producers making long-term decisions. In FY 2024, continuous signup was delayed due a lapse in authority. Continuous signup 61 started January 12, 2024. FSA batched offers to ensure the statutory acreage cap was not exceeded. Batching ended on July 31. CRP authority lapsed again on September 30, 2024.

FOREST SERVICE

Percentage of National Forest System Landscape Ecosystems Improved, Maintained, or Recovering Due to Management Actions

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------|---------------------|
| Target | 42 | 42 | 35 | 38 | 38 | % Ecosystems | Increase |
| Actual | 32 | 33 | 29 | 30 | 30 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

The percentage of National Forest System landscape ecosystems improved, maintained, or recovering due to management actions remained flat between FY 2023 and FY 2024, however, agency actions occurred in more landscape ecosystems resulting in new areas which were improved, maintained, and recovered. Additionally, the agency took management actions in many more landscape ecosystems to address small scale projects which helped address previously identified areas needing improvement and maintenance needs. These actions increased both the number of ecosystems improved and the total number of ecosystems with management actions occurring. And while the KPI was steady for this fiscal year, the work accomplished on the ground represents a significant amount of work improving ecological conditions across National Forest System lands with a key emphasis remaining on those landscapes that were also part of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy.

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Number of UCF IRA projects awarded in CEJST ‘disadvantaged’ communities

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | --- | 700 | # of agreements awarded | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | --- | 701 | | |

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Total cumulative acres of Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) added to UTC baseline acres

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | UTC Acres Added | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | --- | 71 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

The Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program has obligated \$1,390,000,000 in IRA funding to domestic grants and cooperative agreements and has made significant progress executing the 385 awards initially announced in September 2023. Collectively, several hundred additional IRA funded grants have been awarded by partners to sub-awardees as well. Forest Service regions have executed 193 (97%) of 198 direct awards assigned in September 2023 and through FY 2024, over 700 total UCF IRA grants have been executed through this innovative partner driven service delivery model. As a Justice40 covered program, the UCF program committed to awarding 100% of IRA funding to underserved and disadvantaged communities suffering disproportionately from the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme heat, chronic air pollution, and persistent social and economic vulnerabilities. Finally, to help the 700+ communities of all scales funded through the IRA identify gaps in urban tree canopy, plan and prioritize tree planting projects in communities most in need, the UCF program entered into a cooperative agreement with a national partner to develop the first ever baseline national urban tree canopy assessment. This GIS spatial assessment will establish baseline conditions in urban tree canopy for every U.S. Census defined urban area in all 50 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Pacific Island protectorates, and federally recognized tribal lands. This baseline canopy data will be available to all IRA partners and grantees to aid in project planning and prioritization. This baseline assessment will further establish the total acres of urban tree canopy nationally at the onset of IRA project implementation. Trees planted in IRA funded projects are being reported to an interim Accomplishment Reporting System launched in August 2024. To date, 116 unique entities have reported a total of 5,520 newly planted trees, which represents a 71 acre increase in urban tree canopy nationally.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ECONOMIST

Percent Increase in Number of Stakeholders Supported through Climate Hubs Capacity-Building Activities

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 2.5 | 5 | 5 | Percent | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | 0.5 | 146 | 226 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

The USDA Climate Hubs develop and deliver science-based, region-specific tools and resources for climate informed decision making in agricultural food and fiber production, the management of forest and rangeland ecosystem services, and in support of community resilience. Through FY 2024, the USDA Climate Hubs continued engaging with existing and new stakeholders. With the growth in Hub staff numbers primarily through additional Hub fellows, USDA was able to reach considerably more stakeholders over the course of FY 2024 compared to previous years. In 2024, Climate Hubs hosted or participated in 290 workshops and webinars reaching an estimated 24,936 adult participants. Hub staff gave 177 presentations at meetings and had 40 engagements with Tribes. In total, the Hubs have provided scientific and technical information to a total of over 35,000 adults. Climate Hubs also reached 46,349 youth participants continuing to increase the number of overall engagements over previous years. In comparison, in FY 2022, Climate Hubs reached an estimated 24,186 adult participants and 1,719 youth

participants. The International Climate Hub, supported by the Foreign Agricultural Service, has continued to make important contributions to the Hubs Program, including further development of international climate tools such as COMET Planner Global and by collaborating with the other Climate Hubs, supporting further engagement with multiple international stakeholders and partners.

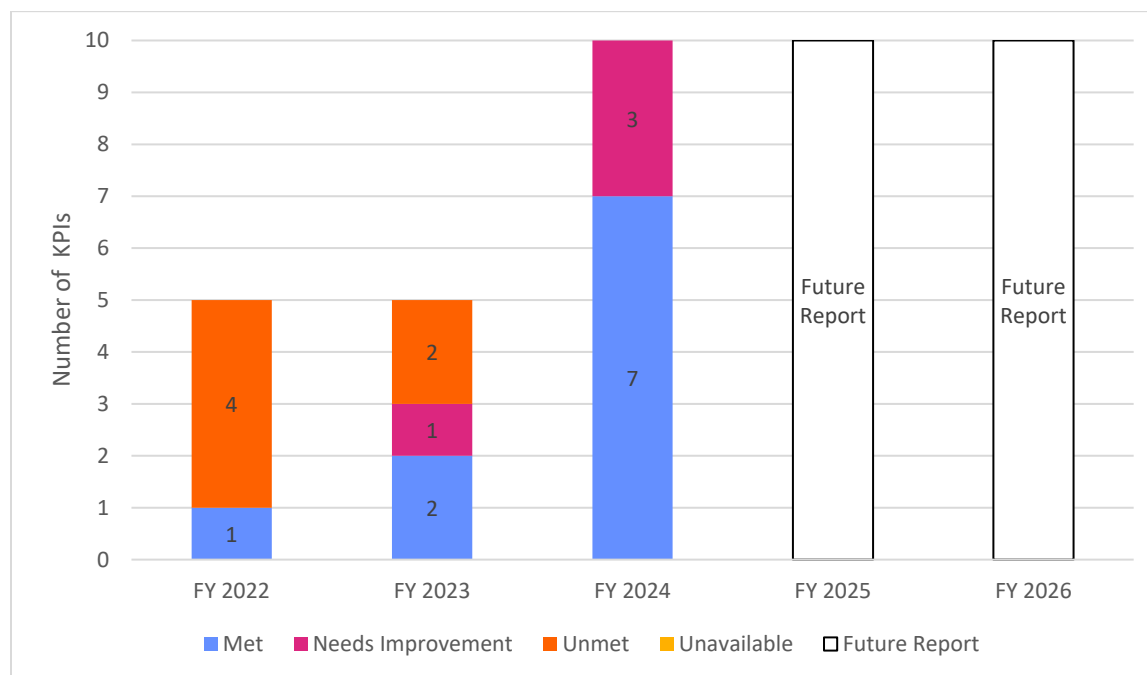
During FY 2024, NRCS has assumed the leadership of the Climate Hubs and has provided support through additional funding for the NRCS Climate Hub Co-Leads and the Climate Hub National Lead.

FY 2024 marked the USDA Climate Hubs 10-year anniversary. The Hubs promoted this achievement by developing a communications campaign aimed at connecting with the public and USDA employees. StoryMaps, voice memos, and the Hub website have effectively sparked interest in USDA staff and the public, provided valuable regional and national climate information, and offered potential solutions. Moreover, they served as a gateway to the Climate Hubs website a reliable source for further climate-related information. Work has progressed on the Hubs IRA climate mitigation responsibilities by hiring multiple climate fellows and other staff to facilitate NRCS staff and partner mitigation training, develop additional tools and technologies, and conduct science synthesis activities. Climate Hubs continue to leverage partnerships with USDA and other government agencies, cooperative extension and state agencies, and nonprofit organizations to generate information and support resources. All these activities are synergistic with outreach and education providing the content for stakeholder engagement and capacity building.

Objective 1.2: Lead Efforts to Adapt to the Consequences of Climate Change in Agriculture and Forestry

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Strategic objective 1.2 has been designated as a focus area for improvement.

Accomplishments

- The Forest Legacy program exceeded its target in FY24, adding 68,000 acres to the total of over 3 million acres protected through the program.
- The Forest Service remained focused on wildfire risk reduction with a special emphasis on Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscapes. These efforts have resulted in increased removal of smaller diameter material for fuels reduction purposes.
- Special authorities including stewardship contracting and Good Neighbor Authority continue to be important tools for accomplishing timber sales for the Forest Service.

Challenges

- The closure of timber markets in 2024 continues to impact the agency’s ability to sell material, in particular, lower value materials such as pulpwood, non-sawtimber, and biomass.
- Wildfires continue, however, to not only divert resources from planning and timber sale preparation, but also prohibit access and salability of timber in those regions that are impacted.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Forest Service

FOREST SERVICE

Private Forest Acres Protected Through the Forest Legacy Program

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 69,000 | 64,000 | 64,000 | Acres | Maintain |
| Actual | --- | --- | 54,378 | 46,772 | 68,060 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

In FY 2024, the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is projected to conserve over 68,000 acres of forest, bringing the total acres permanently protected through the program to 3.086 million acres. Conservation across landscapes and ownerships is essential to addressing large-scale conservation issues, including watershed protection, wildfire risk mitigation, and protection of at-risk species. Intact working forests provide clean drinking water, sequester carbon, protect wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and offer recreation access. To select projects for funding, FLP uses a two-tiered competitive process at both the state and national levels. Historically, FLP leverages more than one dollar for every federal dollar spent. Additionally, the program awarded \$154 million in grant funding to protect 168,000 acres through 26 projects in 17 states and territories. This investment included \$70 million in IRA funding and \$84 million in Land and Water Conservation funding. An announcement is also planned for late October 2024 to deploy an additional \$265 million in IRA funding to 22 projects in 17 states and territories. The program continued to deploy increased state administrative funding to address project implementation challenges and to increase the pace of implementation moving forward.

Acres Treated to Reduce or Maintain Fuel Conditions on National Forest System and Non-Federal Lands

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------------|
| Target | 3.4 | 3.5 | 3.7 | 4.0 | 4.2 | Million Acres | Increase |
| Actual | 2.7 | 3.7 | 3.2 | 4.4 | 4.2 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

The Hazardous Fuels Management program aims to reduce wildfire risk to communities, critical infrastructure, water supply, traditional homelands and restore plus maintain fire adaptive ecosystems. Implementing a robust hazardous fuels program requires a collaborative, cross boundary approach working with a wide range of partners such as local communities, counties, states, other federal agencies, non-governmental organizations and Tribal Nations. One challenge the program experienced in FY 2024 was a reduction in regular hazardous fuels appropriations. This reduction caused an impact in FY 2024, but the most significant impact will be experienced in outyears due to reduced planning and implementation capacity. The agency leveraged all available hazardous fuels funding sources (regular

appropriations, BIL and IRA) to support the implementation of the program. Through the support of supplemental funding, the agency was able to accomplish a total of 4.28 million acres of treatments. Of this total, over 800,000 acres were treated within the Wildfire Crisis Strategy landscapes. Also, from this total, the agency was able to accomplish another record-breaking year of treatments accomplished by prescribed fire by accomplishing 2.2 million acres. State Forestry partners leveraged federal programs such as State Fire Assistance and Community Wildfire Defense Grants to accomplish over 600,000 acres on state and private lands and approximately, 130,000 acres of naturally occurring wildfire which met natural resource objectives were accomplished.

Acreeage of National Forest System Lands Where Final Treatment Effectively Mitigates Wildfire Risk

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------------|
| Target | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.7 | Million Acres | Increase |
| Actual | 0.8 | 1.3 | 1.1 | 1.4 | 1.6 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

This hazardous fuels performance measure was also impacted by the reduction in funding which could also impact outyear accomplishments. Through the support of supplemental funding, however, the agency was able to accomplish a total of 1.6 million acres of final treatments. Also, from this total many of the acres treated helped maintain areas currently in a desired, low wildfire risk condition. In addition, there was a continued priority to treat acres in areas categorized as having a high to very high hazard potential for wildfires that would be difficult to maintain. This performance measure is important because it demonstrates where and when Forest Service fuels treatments have effectively been mitigated to reduce wildfire risk.

Timber Volume Sold

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Target | 3.7 | 4.0 | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.2 | Billion Board Feet | Increase |
| Actual | 3.21 | 2.8 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 2.9 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

In FY 2024, the agency offered and sold approximately 2.99 billion board feet of timber. Sales included more than 464 contracts greater than \$10,000, nearly 110,000 small timber contracts and permits, and just under 20,000 special forest product permits. At the end of August 2024, a cumulative total of 7.2 billion board feet were under contract with industry. Additionally, in the western states, a significant focus was placed on the Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscapes (WCSL) from 2021 through 2023. This trend continued in 2024 as the agency remained focused on wildfire risk reduction that has resulted in increased removal of smaller diameter material for fuels reduction purposes. Partnerships through national

keystone agreements, and other local and regional partners from FY 2022 through FY 2024 have added capacity to the agency’s focus within the WCSL. Various special forest management programs also contributed to the volume accomplishment including salvage sale funds and other permanent and trust funds. Of note, authorities such as the Good Neighbor Authority - 272 Million Board Feet (MMBF); and stewardship contracting and agreements - 936 MMBF; accounted for just over 40% of the total timber accomplishments. Wildfires, however, continue to not only divert resources from planning and timber sale preparation, but also prohibit access and salability of timber in those regions that are impacted. Investments in the WCSL projects have resulted in higher cost treatments with lower timber volume production, while also requiring additional preparation and partnership coordination to maintain stability in the timber program.

Furthermore, the closure of timber markets in 2024 continues to impact the agency’s ability to sell material, in particular for lower value materials such as pulpwood, non-sawtimber, and biomass. The loss of these markets has impacted the agency’s ability to remove this material while receiving a financial benefit, specifically this becoming an increasing issue in the eastern regions. The closure of dimensional milling infrastructure across the country has impacted the agency’s ability to sell timber volume, specifically in western regions with sales that receive no bid, as well as in the reduction of value receipts of the timber. Budget timing also continues to make strategic investments in resources difficult. Finally, hiring continued to be a challenge in FY 2024 and is also expected to remain in FY 2025 as critical vacancies impact the agency’s ability to deliver timber targets and respond to vegetation treatment needs.

Number of Peer-Reviewed Scholarly Publications

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | --- | 1,100 | Publications | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | --- | 1,010 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

Forest Service Research and Development (R&D) prioritizes investments that produce research publications and science tools that inform Forest Service land management and advance national priorities. These investments provide research, and science delivery products, and direct technical assistance that improve the effectiveness and efficiency of wildland fire management; expand understanding of the effects of climate change on ecosystems; foster climate adaptation and resilience through informing nature-based climate solutions such as carbon stewardship; inform watershed resilience, risk assessment, and restoration; produce forest inventory and trend analysis; and advance wood product innovations. In FY 2024, R&D strengthened focus on the Wildfire Crisis Strategy and other national priorities, however, due to competing budget constraints and additional investments required in WCS publications, FS was slightly short of the target. These investments, however, should create a foundation for future publications.

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Number of landowners assisted through Forest Landowner Support (FLS) under Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) Authority

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0 | Number of Landowners | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0 | | |

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Number of projects funded through Forest Landowner Support (FLS) under the Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) Authority

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | --- | 30 | Number of Projects | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | --- | 54 | | |

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Acres of forest impacted through Forest Landowner Support (FLS) under the Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) authority

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0 | Number of Acres | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

In FY 2024, the Forest Service made strong progress obligating funding into agreements and thereby exceeding the anticipated pace of agreement execution. All 54 agreements signed were funded by IRA Sec. 23002(a) provisions 2 and 3. In addition to the 54 agreements executed in FY 2024, the agency signed one Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the Denali Commission and transferred \$10M to the Denali Commission for activities in Alaska to benefit Alaska Native corporations and villages. Anticipated benefits to landowners and land (acres) will flow from work executed under these agreements, with significant work and impact expected in FY 2025. In FY 2024, the agency also announced Notices of Funding Opportunities for IRA Sec. 23002(a) provisions 1 and 4 with funding for those two provisions expected to be awarded in FY 2025.

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Number of projects funded to establish, reopen, retrofit, expand, or improve a sawmill or other wood-processing facility

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | --- | 116 | Number of Projects | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | --- | 135 | | |

Supplemental Funding Performance Measure: Green tons hauled to biomass utilization facilities where the material can be utilized, reducing hazardous fuels on National Forest System (NFS) Land

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | --- | 150,000 | Green Tons | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | --- | 247,443 | | |

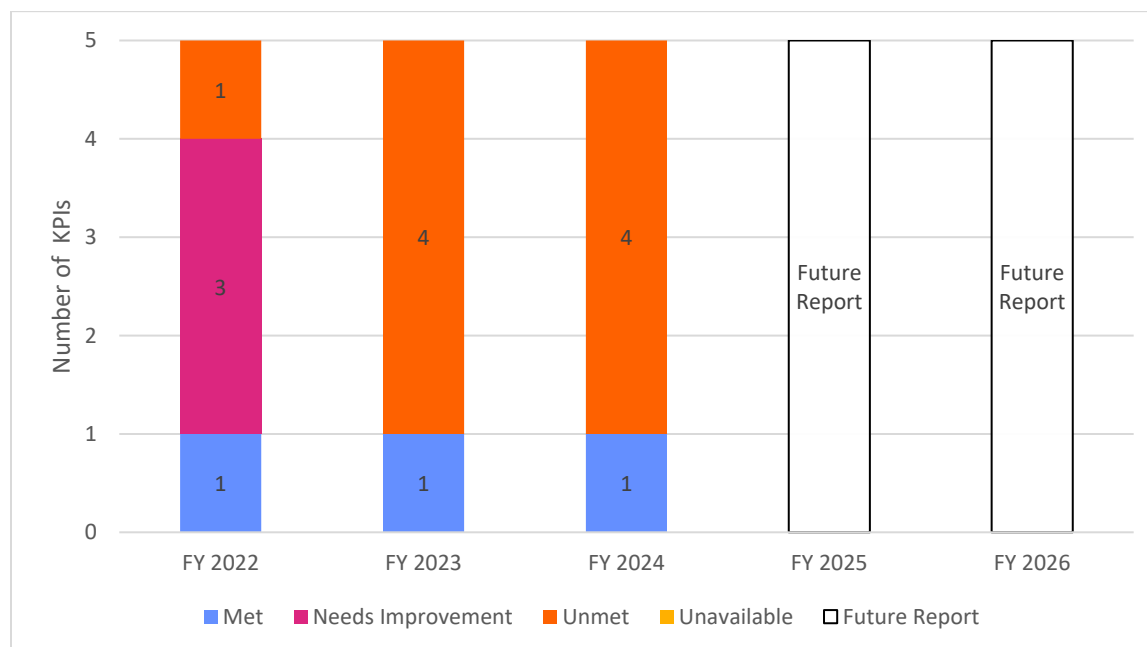
Progress Made in FY 2024

In FY 2024, the Wood Innovations program awarded nearly \$65 million in funds to 135 projects which will establish, reopen, retrofit, expand, or improve sawmills and other wood processing facilities. Specifically, the Wood Innovation Grant program awarded 81 projects for \$22.3 million, the Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance grants awarded 36 projects for \$27.8 million, and the Community Wood Grants awarded 18 projects for \$14.9 million. The IRA also included an authorization to support private industry and partners in transporting hazardous fuels to utilization facilities through a program called the Hazardous Fuels Transportation Assistance Program (HFTA). A total of \$60M was allocated to provide grants to through this authorization. In the pilot round, awarded in FY 2024, \$15M was awarded to 12 private industry entities through individual grants and participation in the Biomass Transportation Incentive Program (BTIP) pilot. Selected projects included a wide range from the transportation of sawlogs to mills to the transportation of biomass to energy plants. Specifically, total green tons transported by BTIP was 113,226.

Objective 1.3: Restore, Protect, and Conserve Watersheds to Ensure Clean, Abundant, and Continuous Provision of Water Resources

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

- Approximately 30 million acres were enrolled in NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for FY 2024. Contracts were entered into with approximately 160,000 participants for \$3.7 billion.
- CRP water quality practices, including grass and riparian buffers, reduced nutrient losses by an estimated 350 million pounds of nitrogen and 77 million pounds of phosphorus in FY 2024. These practices also reduced sedimentation by 123 million tons.

Challenges

- The existing pay disparity continues to present challenges for NRCS in recruitment and retention. NRCS has a pending request for a Special Salary Rate for engineers at the Office of Personnel Management for review and approval.
- Continuous signup was delayed until January 12, 2024, due a lapse in authority

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Farm Service Agency
- Forest Service

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Tons of Sediment Prevented from Leaving Cropland and Entering Water Bodies

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------|---------------------|
| Target | 5.7 | 5.7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | Million Tons | Increase |
| Actual | 8.2 | 8.1 | 8.3 | 8.5 | 8.8 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

This metric exceeded its target largely due to the additional resources provided under IRA and greenhouse gas reduction activities. A large number of the practices that sequester carbon emissions also provide the co-benefit of erosion prevention (i.e. cover crop). The increased prioritization and targeted resources have allowed NRCS to implement these erosion prevention practices which have favorably impacted this KPI and others, like Practice Implementation Rate.

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Total National Acres in Grassed Waterways

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 0.110 | 0.120 | 0.125 | Million Acres | Increase |
| Actual | --- | 0.110 | .107 | .102 | 0.099 | | |

Total National Acres in Contour Grass Strips, Contour Grass Strips in Terraces, and Prairie Strips

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 0.062 | 0.073 | 0.080 | Million Acres | Increase |
| Actual | --- | 0.060 | .0595 | .036 | 0.034 | | |

Acreage of Restored Wetlands

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------------|
| Target | 2.41 | 2.34 | 2.64 | 2.76 | 2.96 | Million Acres | Increase |
| Actual | 2.35 | 2.36 | 2.39 | 2.30 | 2.29 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

Crop prices and high cash rent have impacted producer’s decisions to enroll and reenroll. Another factor is a producer’s/landowner’s financial decision to annually produce a crop versus participate in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). While CRP is proven to provide environmental benefits for soil health, water quality, and wildlife, the producer/landowner tends to focus first on the most financially viable option for their farming operation. A producer’s/landowner’s ability to generate more revenue from annual crop production yields and/or prices, along with guarantees from risk protection and disaster programs, higher land values, cash-rents, statutory and regulatory limits on CRP rental payments, and CRP’s annual rental rates established in arrears, likely all contribute to why interest in CRP is on the back burner at this time. The average age of the American farmer is increasing and has some impact on producers making long-term decisions. In FY 2024, continuous signup was delayed due a lapse in authority. Continuous signup 61 started January 12, 2024. FSA batched offers to ensure the statutory acreage cap was not exceeded. Batching ended on July 31. CRP authority lapsed again on September 30, 2024.

FOREST SERVICE

Number of Watersheds Moved to Improved Condition Class or Sustained in Condition Class 1¹

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| Target | 15 | N/A | 15 | 16 | 21 | Watersheds | Increase |
| Actual | 9 | N/A ² | 12 | 6 | 12 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

Investments from BIL and IRA funding sent to projects in FY 2023 are beginning to come into fruition with completion of an estimated 12 watershed restoration action plans in FY 2024. However, the FY 2024

¹ National Assessments of national forest and grassland watershed conditions rate 47% either as “Functioning at Risk” or “Impaired Function”. To improve their conditions and increase climate change resiliency, these watersheds require substantial restoration work. Specifically, using a mix of funding, the agency will complete essential projects outlined in the Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) Watershed Restoration Action Plans (WRAPs).

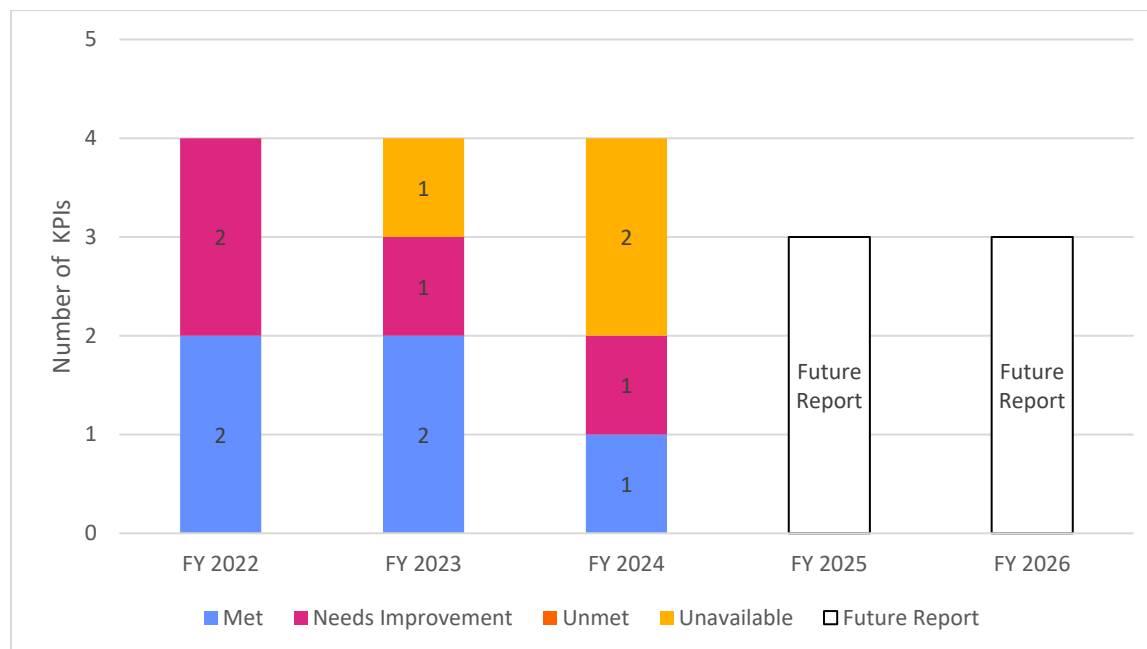
² This performance metric was developed in 2010 as the agency’s first nationally consistent outcome performance measure to demonstrate accomplishments in watershed restoration. For FY 2021, watershed restoration was not a Departmental key performance indicator and no target was established.

accomplishment is 43 percent less than what was anticipated due to the unplanned need to redirect IRA funds away from projects and instead towards other internal priorities as well as challenges encountered with the procurement and grants and agreements processes. Looking ahead, the number of watersheds completed in future fiscal years will likely be at least 20 to 30 percent less than previously anticipated due to similar budgetary redirection and reduced staff capacity.

Objective 1.4: Increase Carbon Sequestration, Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Create Economic Opportunities (and Develop Low-Carbon Energy Solutions)

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

- Added 15 practices to the set of Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation Activities (CSAF mitigation activities), expanding the toolbox available to agricultural producers interested in adopting climate-smart agriculture on their farms and ranches with assistance through the IRA.
- Released the NRCS Conservation Practices and Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Information Dashboard, a resource providing information on the expected mitigation benefits, current estimation approaches, and selected references associated with each CSAF mitigation practice.
- RD utilized IRA supplemental funding to invest \$1 billion in clean energy projects across all 50 states and three territories.
- REAP investments have helped rural America reduce 3.6 million metric tons of carbon dioxide annually (estimate).
- Energy generated and saved through REAP has provided enough electricity to power more than 710K homes, the equivalent to powering households in Raleigh, NC (MSA) or 1.75 million people.

Challenges

- Staffing, tight turnaround time to setup new programs, IT systems, limited technical assistance resources for Electric Program applicants, and environmental reviews remain the top challenges in awarding the supplemental funds provided under IRA.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Office of Property and Environmental Management
- Rural Development

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Percentage of Items in a Contract that are Certified During the Life of a Contract

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Target | 87 | 87 | 87 | 87 | 87 | % of Items Certified | Increase |
| Actual | 87 | 87 | 87 | 82.4 | 79 | | |

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025.

Progress Made in FY 2024

The Contract Implementation Ratio (CIR) is an indicator of the completeness of finalized contracts after 3 years (e.g., if 3 out of 4 practices in a completed contract are certified as implemented and 1 practice is cancelled the CIR for that contract is 75%). Ideally, CIR should be 100% for all contracts. A CIR of less than 100% indicate factors such as, incomplete support for the contract holder, or cancelled contract items; most of which come from cancelled contracts. CIR is an indicator that is most useful when considered along with the Practice Implementation Rate (PIR) to get a more complete picture. In FY 2024, practice implementation exceeded the annual target despite the contract implementation falling slightly below the target. Two significant challenges NRCS faced are the recruitment and retention of engineers and other highly qualified conservation experts and the increase of materials and labor. Both these challenges can lead to an increase in contract items (practices) being cancelled. This is particularly true where contract payment rates are locked in at past year rates (3 years by CIR metric definition), yet actual present-day material and labor rates are significantly greater. Although CIR and PIR are useful agency measures, they are being retired as KPIs in favor of metrics that provide timelier (not 3 years old) contracting data and a more complete and direct picture of performance and benefits.

Percentage of Timeliness of Practice Certifications or Timely Modification of Past Scheduled Practices to Reflect a New Future Schedule Date³

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Target | 53 | 53 | 53.0 | 53.0 | 53.0 | % of Timeliness | Increase |
| Actual | 43 | 68 | 65.6 | 65.8 | 65.9 | | |

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025.

Progress Made in FY 2024

PIR is a measure of conservation practices being implemented on or before the scheduled date in the conservation plan, and proper contract management to ensure that practices do not fall behind the

³ Numerator: a count of all practices certified within the target quarter. Denominator: a count of all practices that are expected to have been certified as of a given end-of-quarter timeframe.

planned schedule when unforeseen delays in implementation occur (excessive rain, family illness, material or labor shortages etc.). IRA has provided additional resources that enabled increased NRCS financial and technical assistance to producers.

OFFICE OF PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Percent Reduction in Scope 1 and Scope 2 Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent)⁴

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|--|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 21 | 22 | 23 | % Reduction in Scope 1 and Scope 2 Emissions | Increase |
| Actual | 31.8 | 21.3 | 19 | 12.9 | TBD ⁵ | | |

Baseline and targets are preliminary and subject to change based on White House policy direction. The baseline year is FY 2008.

Progress Made in FY 2024

In FY 2024, USDA continued several priority actions to make progress on reducing scope 1 and scope 2 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as required by Executive Order (EO) 14057 and relevant statutes. These actions included increasing facilities energy efficiency, implementing renewable energy projects, designing and building low-emission buildings, acquiring zero-emission vehicles and charging infrastructure, and reconvening the Sustainable Operations Council. Some values appeared to rise as USDA continued to make improvements in data and calculation methods.

Total Number of Departmental Fleet Vehicles

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Target | 36.5 | 36.5 | 39.1 | 39.1 | 38.6 | Thousand Vehicles | Maintain |
| Actual | 37.9 | 37.1 | 39.7 | 38.6 | TBD ⁶ | | |

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025.

⁴ Scope 1 emissions are direct greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the activity of an organization. Scope 2 emissions are indirect greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the energy an organization purchases. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, [Scope 1 and Scope 2 Inventory Guidance | US EPA](#). Accessed December 19, 2023.

⁵ USDA’s GHG emissions for FY 2024 will be reported on January 31, 2025, and approved by the Department of Energy (DOE) and OMB later in 2025. The actual percent change in Scope 1 and Scope 2 GHG emissions will be provided when it is approved in 2025.

⁶ Total number of Departmental fleet vehicles for FY 2024 will be available after the FAST reporting on December 15, 2024.

Progress Made in FY 2024

Efforts to eliminate inefficient and non-essential vehicles from the inventory continued throughout FY 2024, placing a focus on fleet optimization. USDA is committed to attaining its optimal fleet inventory. In the years ahead, USDA remains resolute to continue executing right-sizing and right-typing acquisition strategies designed to identify and eliminate inefficient vehicles and replace them, as needed, with vehicles that use less petroleum per mile and use alternative fuels/electricity where available and are best-matched to the mission.

USDA's plans consist of a systematic approach to vehicle acquisition, use, maintenance, refueling, and replacement, which is meant to anticipate and account for changes in mission, organization, and resulting vehicle demand, while establishing strategic positioning for achieving full compliance with current management and sustainability mandates. These plans will help define how vehicle selection will achieve maximum fuel efficiency, and limit motor vehicle body size, engine size and optional equipment to what is essential to meet the mission while guiding the programming of funds necessary to continue fleet operations.

Goal 2: Ensure America’s Agricultural System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous

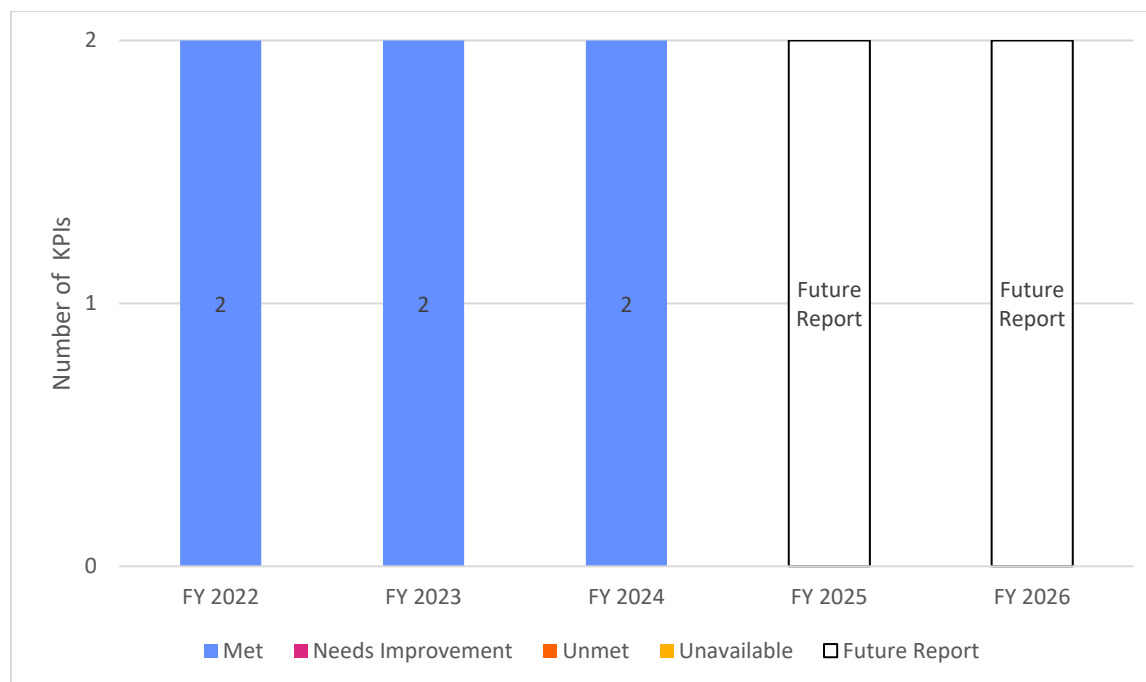
A strong and prosperous agricultural sector is essential to the well-being of the U.S. economy. America’s farmers and ranchers ensure a reliable food supply, support job growth, and promote economic development. To maintain an equitable and competitive agricultural sector, USDA will safeguard animal and plant health, support farmers and ranchers’ ability to start and maintain profitable cooperatives and businesses and offer financial support to all producers affected by natural disasters. Additionally, USDA’s research agencies will continue to introduce high-performance plants and animals and offer integrated management options to increase the efficiency of farming practices.



Objective 2.1: Protect Plant and Animal Health by Minimizing Major Diseases, Pests, and Wildlife Conflicts

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Strategic objective 2.1 has been designated as an area making noteworthy progress.

Accomplishments

- Continued sampling migratory birds for highly pathogenic avian influenza, collecting more than 52,000 samples from wild birds across the United States.
- Quickly enhanced avian influenza sampling when a novel variant was detected in cattle
- Developed 9 new climate suitability maps (for a cumulative total of 33 maps) for high-risk plant pests to support early detection efforts.

Challenges

- APHIS wildlife disease surveillance staff continued supporting response efforts for the widespread outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza and prevention and preparedness activities for African swine fever, along with ongoing, routine activities. The program was able to meet its target of sampling for an additional disease despite capacity challenges due to these emergency response efforts. APHIS is discontinuing this KPI.
- Developing climate suitability maps for pests with complex lifecycles that may have long dormant periods or are not limited by climate factors takes additional time and requires new approaches.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE

Number of Zoonotic and Agricultural Diseases Sampled in Wildlife

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 16 | 17 | 18 | Diseases Sampled | Increase |
| Actual | --- | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | | |

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025. Staff are at capacity sampling for emergency programs needs such as highly pathogenic avian influenza, African Swine Fever (ASF), and SARS-CoV-2.

Progress Made in FY 2024

APHIS monitors for diseases that have the potential to spread from wildlife to farmed livestock, or even humans, and serves as an early warning system for outbreaks of foreign animal diseases. APHIS continued responding to widespread outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza in FY 2024, collecting and testing more than 52,000 samples from wild birds throughout the United States during the year. The program quickly enhanced monitoring activities to respond to the finding of a novel variant of the disease in dairy cattle at the end of March. The program continued to coordinate reporting of avian influenza detections in mammal species, working with numerous Federal, state, and local agencies to consolidate nation-wide data. The program also continued conducting surveillance for African swine fever (ASF) in feral swine in high-risk areas of Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas as well as the Caribbean territories of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and expanded sero-surveillance across the whole range of feral swine in the contiguous United States and territories, sampling feral swine removed as part of the ongoing feral swine eradication program. The program added sampling for avian metapneumovirus in FY 2024, bringing the total number of agricultural and zoonotic disease sampled for in wildlife to 18 and meeting the programs target. The program added this disease at the request of poultry industry representatives.

Number of Priority Pests for Which Climate Sustainability Maps Have Been Completed

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 14 | 24 | 32 | Pests | Increase |
| Actual | --- | 6 | 16 | 24 | 33 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

APHIS is developing climate suitability maps for high-risk plant pests to support early detection efforts. APHIS completed maps for 9 high-risk pests in FY 2024, bringing the cumulative number of maps to 33 and exceeding the program’s annual target by one. The maps focus on pests that could have destructive effects on a variety of specialty crops, forest resources, rice, corn, and cotton, among others, illustrating

where the pests could become established based on suitable conditions. The programs team of entomologists, pathologists, and plant ecologists continued addressing challenges in modeling suitability for pests with complex life cycles, such as long dormant periods or other complicating factors, and began developing maps for pests such as pine processionary moth that are not limited by climate factors. Throughout the year, the program worked with a panel of map users to develop and improve guidance documents for the maps and understand how the maps fit into the users’ work processes for building pest survey plans. The program also made improvements during the year, adding finer-scale weather data and data layers predicting future plant hardiness zones to its SAFARIS Data Portal. The finer-scale weather data allows the program to analyze conditions in small areas such as islands, improving mapping abilities for Hawaii and Puerto Rico, for example.

Percent of U.S. Swine Inventory Enrolled in Swine Health Improvement Program (SHIP) Pilot

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | N/A | N/A | % Swine | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | 60 | 67 | | |

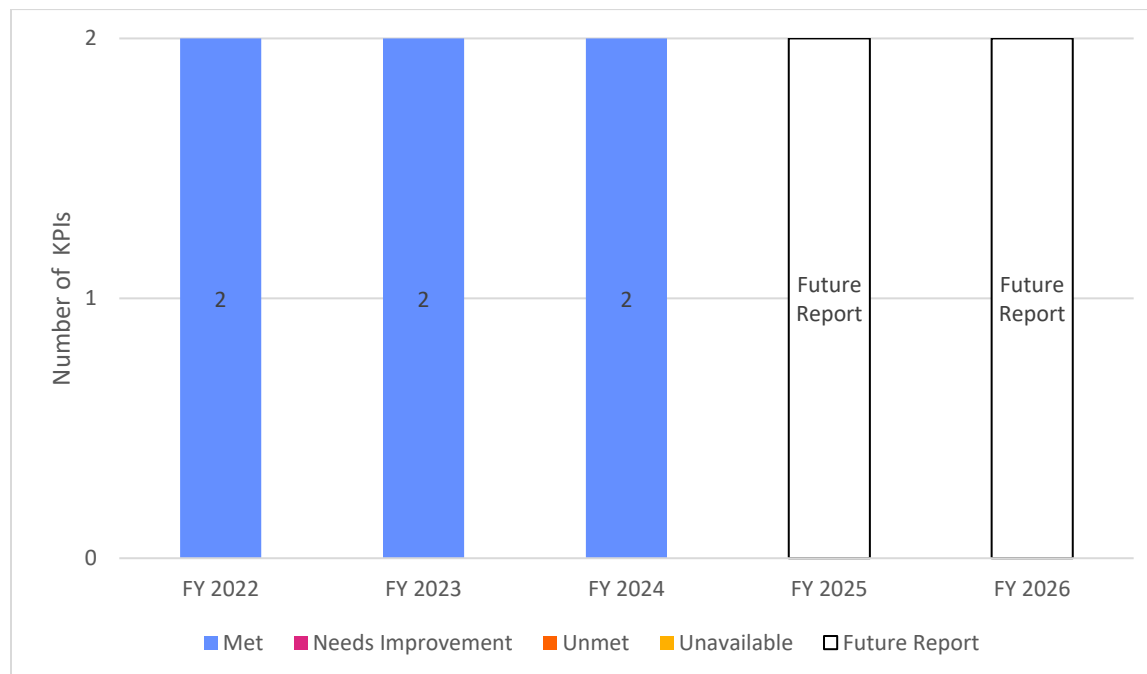
New KPI Description

The U.S. Swine Health Improvement Plan (U.S. SHIP) is a key part of the APHIS plan to safeguard U.S. pork production from African and classical swine fevers and other diseases of economic importance to the industry. When fully established, the SHIP will be a collaborative effort involving State, industry, and Federal partners and provide standards for certifying the health status of swine across participating farm sites, supply chains, States, and regions. It will support industry leadership on sustainable solutions to ASF preparedness and prevention. Producer participation will enhance biosecurity and traceability practices that will bolster APHIS’ ability to control disease and return to productivity and marketability in the event of an ASF incursion in the swine sector.

Objective 2.2: Build Resilient Food Systems, Infrastructure, and Supply Chain

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

AMS continued to develop and implement programs to strengthen supply chains and ensure farmers have greater opportunities to access markets and receive a fair return for their products, including:

- Issuing four rounds of Organic Market Development Grant awards to 107 projects, totaling over \$80 million.
- Reviewing and approving 56 Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure state plans and awarding two state subaward packages (Kansas and Nebraska), totaling \$8.1 million.
- Continuing the implementation of the Local Food Purchase Assistance and Local Food for Schools programs, totaling over \$1 billion.
- Releasing the Food and Agriculture Mapper and Explorer (FAME), a data visualization tool to help communities more easily access local/regional food system data.

Challenges

Further strengthening the resilience of the country’s agri-food supply chains will require (1) enhanced data and market intelligence to address disruptions early, reducing impacts on agricultural producers, processors, and consumers, and (2) increased federal coordination on agri-food supply chain disruptions to target investments across the nation’s critical infrastructure. Additional research will need to be conducted on supply chain constraints, and increased data analysis should be done on critical supply chain components, especially where information is not commonly captured.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Agricultural Marketing Service

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

Percentage of Graders’ Time Recovered Through Customer Billing (Poultry Livestock)

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|---------------------|
| Target | 83 | 83 | 87 | 87.0 | 87.0 | % of Time | Decrease |
| Actual | 95 | 94.5 | 94 | 95.2 | 93.8 | | |

Percentage of Graders’ Time Recovered Through Customer Billing (Meat Livestock)

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|---------------------|
| Target | 83 | 83.0 | 87.0 | 87.0 | 87.0 | % of Time | Decrease |
| Actual | 93 | 94.9 | 94.4 | 96.4 | 96.0 | | |

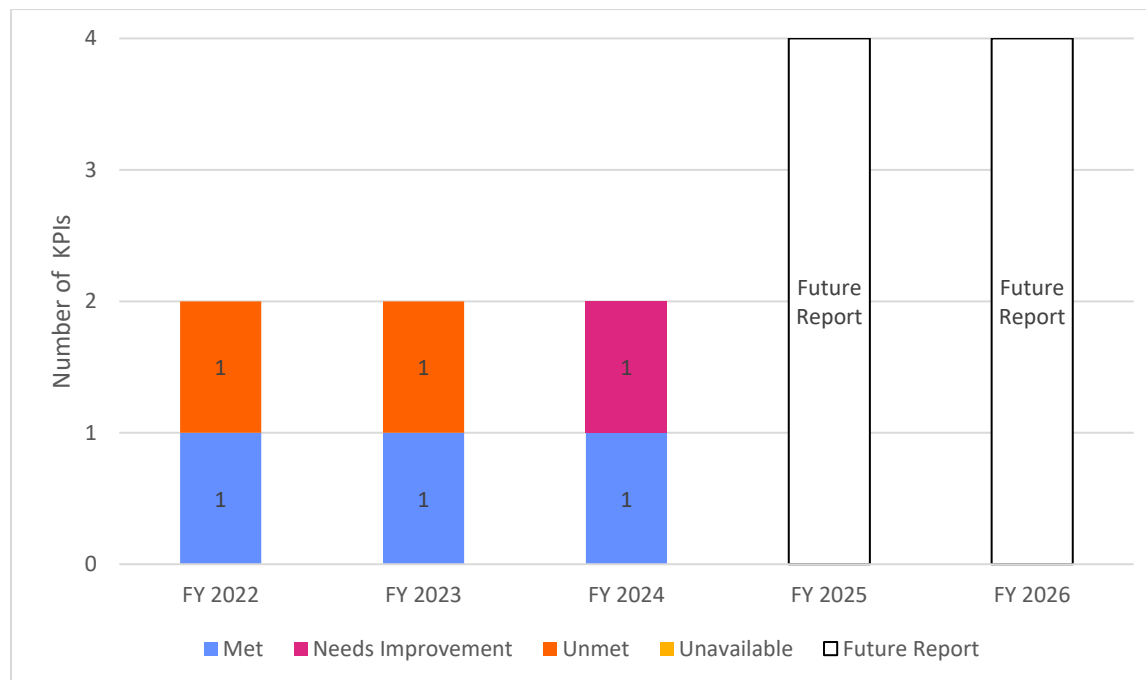
Progress Made in FY 2024

For FY 2024, AMS recovered 96.0% of Graders time for Livestock; 93.8% of Graders time for poultry. AMS recruited new Agricultural Commodity Graders using multiple recruitment tools, including Direct Hiring Authority and Open Continuous hiring. AMS also offered recruitment bonuses for this mission-critical series and implemented a retention incentive program to retain current commodity graders.

Objective 2.3: Foster Agricultural Innovation

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

- In June 2024, the Office of Chief Scientist (OCS) hosted the **USDA’s Agrifood Innovation Symposium Harvesting Hope: Cultivating Scientific Solutions that Nourish People & Planet**; the event brought together participants from industry, government, and academia to foster new collaborations, promote next-generation scientists, and drive innovation.
- OCS, in partnership with the Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (FFAR), completed its first **Innovation Challenge**, a global funding competition for dynamic, disruptive projects that will produce breakthroughs for research. The challenge connected projects focused on incorporating a systems approach to connecting nutrition security and mitigating climate impacts.
- The **USDA Science and Research Strategy, 2023-2026: Cultivating Scientific Innovation (S&RS)** moved from intention to implementation in FY 2024 through relaunching the five priority theme teams with 175 subject matter experts from all USDA agencies, Mission Areas, five staff offices, and the White House to work together to carry out its objectives and strategies.

Challenges

- The implementation of the **USDA Science and Research Strategy, 2023-2026: Cultivating Scientific Innovation (S&RS)** has encountered challenges in maintaining sustained engagement from USDA agencies and Mission Areas outside of Research, Education, and Economics (REE). Ensuring voluntary, consistent participation and effectively communicating cross-departmental team outcomes back to each expert’s home agency has proven complex.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Office of the Chief Scientist – Research, Education, and Economics

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SCIENTIST – RESEARCH, EDUCATION, & ECONOMICS

Intellectual Property (IP) Funded by NIFA - Count of Reports of Intellectual Property Supported by NIFA Funding

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | N/A | N/A | Inventions | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | 211 | 354 | | |

New KPI Description

This is a new KPI for FY 2025 and includes two components, inventions and patents, both of which indicate the progress towards the protection of Intellectual Property (IP). Supported by funding from NIFA, this KPI demonstrates USDA successes support IP lifecycle, including compliance monitoring by the [Bayh-Dole Act](#). Selection of this KPI is in line with anticipated modernization and prioritization of this publicly funded asset. The metric includes reporting to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) system iEdison which supports funding recipient Bayh-Dole responsibilities to report subject inventions, patents filed to protect subject inventions, and utilization.

Count of Journal Article Publications Reported to NIFA, Published from NIFA-funded Research, Education and Extension

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | N/A | N/A | Publications | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | 9,784 | 8,508 | | |

New KPI Description

This is a new KPI for FY 2025 which measures the number of published journal articles that are reported to NIFA from NIFA-funded research, education, and extension. By tracking the reach of NIFA-funded research and its related publications, REE is able to monitor and drive accessibility, usability and reach of its science, expanding opportunities for new innovations and impact. Additionally, NIFA expects to see this number increase with the issuance of Departmental Regulation 1020-006, “Public Access to Scholarly Publications and Digital Scientific Research Data” ensuring that USDA science is increasingly accessible to its stakeholders and scientific community. This new KPI has been co-developed with the National Agriculture Library (NAL) where NIFA grantees can submit publication info to PubAg to collect and track data.

Number of Citations of REE Reports (NASS/ERS)

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------|
| Target | 119 | 122 | 126 | 129 | 134 | Reports | Increase |
| Actual | 134 | 82 | 95 | 70 | 125 | | |

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025.

Progress Made in FY 2024

In FY 2024, the target for this KPI was 134 citations and there were 125 citations. While this measure is one indicator where NASS and ERS data, research findings, and analysis are used as evidence to support decision-making and implementation of policies and programs across the federal government, it is challenging for both NASS and ERS to directly impact. The use of research and data products would have a natural delay in being used by another entity and cited. The policy needs for the products can also fluctuate as new interest and policy problems arise.

Percent of USDA Patents Licensed per Patents Issued

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Target | 25 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 | % of Patents Licensed | Maintain |
| Actual | 26 | 50 | 55 | 100 | 100 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

This KPI approximates the extent to which the percent of patents licensed is an indicator of the commercialization of patented research outcomes. The current goal is to have approximately one-third of issued patents licensed. Although the year in which a license is signed is not typically the year in which the patent was issued, over time the ratio of newly signed licenses over the number of newly issued patents may be an indicator of “judicious” patenting contemplating among other things commercial viability of the technology. In FY 2024, the 11-year average of Licenses Executed/Patents Issued is approximately 37% which is in line with the 35% target.

Goal 3: Foster an Equitable and Competitive Marketplace for All Agricultural Producers

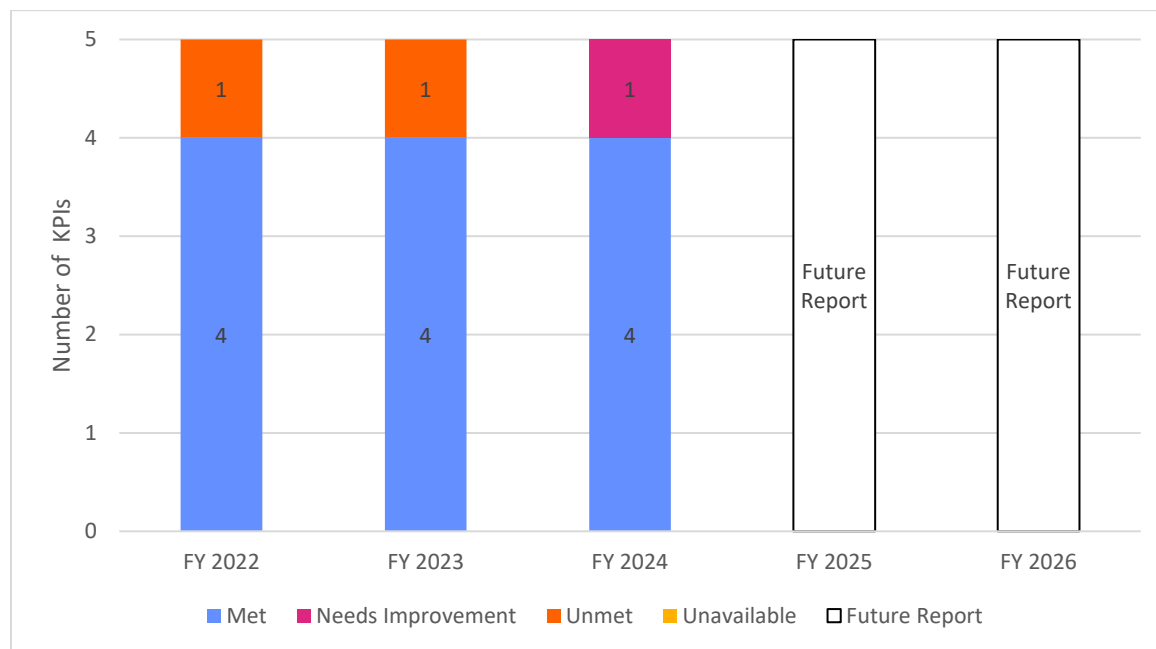
Expanding international marketing opportunities for U.S. farmers and exporters is critical to fostering business and income growth across rural America. USDA promotes American agricultural products and exports by expanding overseas markets, developing international standards, removing trade barriers by monitoring and enforcing existing trade agreements, and negotiating trade agreements that benefit the U.S. agricultural economy. USDA provides tools to domestic producers so that they are well-positioned to secure a share of the growing global market for agricultural products. USDA also works with developing countries to grow their economies and facilitate trade, developing markets of the future for all USDA’s producers.



Objective 3.1: Foster Sustainable Economic Growth by Promoting Innovation, Building Resilience to Climate Change, and Expanding Renewable Energy

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

- Published the Enhancing Program Access and Delivery for Farm Loans Rule which provides loan repayment and collateral flexibilities for farmers and ranchers, helping them to maintain and grow their business operations.
- As part of business process improvement and automation initiative, implemented new online features for direct loan customers, including an online loan application and online loan installment repayment feature. Both of these improvements provide significant time savings to customers using these automated features.
- Implemented Fire Insurance Protection-Smoke Index (FIP-SI) program in 32 grapes counties in California. FIP-SI is an innovative program providing insurance against grape quality loss from smoke, fulfilling requests for improved insurance coverage after catastrophic wildfires in 2020.

Challenges

- Producers’ profit margins are getting tighter making credit solutions more challenging to develop.
- USDA needs to replace the Program Loan Accounting System.
- RMA’s continued development of new products and expansion of existing products is hampered by decreasing quantity and quality of relevant external data for insurance program execution.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Farm Service Agency
- Risk Management Agency

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Percentage of Direct and Guaranteed Loan Borrowers Who Are Beginning Farmers

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------|---------------------|
| Target | 59.9 | 59.9 | 59.9 | 59.9 | 59.9 | % of Borrowers | Increase |
| Actual | 58.6 | 59.9 | 60.9 | 63 | 61.8 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

Lending to beginning farmers continues to be a priority and represents nearly two-thirds of loan customers. State and local office personnel attend outreach events to educate beginning farmers about Farm Loan Programs credit options for real estate and operating loans. Employees of the national office and state and local offices work closely with farm groups and trade associations to support the latter’s work with beginning farmers. Automated tools such as the online Loan Assistance Tool are designed to help beginning farmers and those unfamiliar with Farm Loan Programs to learn about the credit products and services offered and to navigate the loan application process.

First Installment Delinquency Rate on Direct Loans

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Target | 8 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 9 | Delinquency Rate (%) | Decrease |
| Actual | 9.9 | 13.8 | 8.4 | 5.9 | 6.6 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

The first installment delinquency rate KPI is a measure of credit quality, which Farm Loans monitors for loan officer performance and training purposes. Additional training and oversight of employees with loan approval authority have been implemented to improve credit quality. Implementation of the Application Fast Track pilot in 2023 is expediting the underwriting review of applicants assessed to be least likely to default, which allows loan officers to spend more time with those customers who may need more technical assistance. The rate of 6.6% represents approximately 1,300 loans whose first installments totaling ~\$47M were scheduled in FY 2024 but were delinquent as of September 30, 2024. While many of those installments will be made in the subsequent months to reduce overall delinquency, it is important to note that FSA also implemented new repayment opportunities for initial installments that are in full effect now for FY 2025, providing all applicants the opportunity for reduced interest-only installments. This is also anticipated to improve first installment delinquency rates.

Direct Loan Delinquency Rate

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Target | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | Delinquency Rate (%) | Decrease |
| Actual | 4.3 | 4.7 | 4.5 | 1.5 | 1.7 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

IRA section 22006 payments caused a decline in the number of delinquent loans. Some states are seeing small upticks in loan delinquencies. The volume of IRA payments is slowing as the balance of available funds declines. The Enhancing FLP Rule is expected to provide loan origination and servicing flexibilities to mitigate distressed borrower situations. Nevertheless, delinquencies may settle at a rate nearer the mean. The rate of 1.7% represents approximately 19,500 loans which were delinquent as of September 30, 2024, totaling ~\$297M.

RISK MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Improper Payment Rate for All Categories of Payments

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 2.09 | 2.26 | 2.38 | Payment Rate (%) | Decrease |
| Actual | --- | 1.41 | 2.58 | 2.64 | 2.43 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

This is an annual measure. RMA has completed the FY 2024 improper payment reviews and reported a program-wide error rate and Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO). The CAP was derived from a thorough analysis of the FY 2024 results data and consists of steps RMA will take to help reduce improper payments in the federal crop insurance program. RMA’s primary goal is to sustain a tolerable error rate, a true indicator of the agency’s performance. Additionally, the FY 2025 improper payment review cycle has initiated. The sample consists of 388 policies that will be reviewed by RMA’s Regional Compliance Offices (RCOs) to determine the FY 2025 improper payment error rate.

Annual Normalized Value of Risk Protection Provided to Agricultural Producers through the Federal Crop Insurance Program

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Target | 77.6 | 77.9 | 78.2 | 78.5 | 78.8 | Billion Dollars | Increase |
| Actual | 84.1 | 87.9 | 94.4 | 100 | 101.7 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

In FY 2024, RMA:

- Implemented new crop insurance program for controlled environment agriculture;
- Implemented policy improvements for sugar beets;
- Modified purchase deadline for the new shellfish pilot program to allow more time to reach stakeholders;
- Expanded crop insurance coverage for sesame nationwide via written agreement;
- Expanded enterprise units to 10 crops including three specialty crops;
- Conducted outreach efforts including the RMA Roadshow for Livestock Risk Management Products;
- Developed and published a list of agents willing to sell and service Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP)/Micro Farm policies so producers could more easily find an agent;
- Expanded Nursery Value Select nationwide;
- Expanded the Pasture, Rangeland, Forage program to Hawaii;
- Improved camelina coverage by expanding enterprise units and increasing the maximum allowable coverage level to 85%;
- Expanded enterprise units for additional specialty crops and for organic practices; and
- Expanded coverage for blueberries, clams, fresh market tomatoes, and grapes.

Objective 3.2: Expand Markets for Emerging Technologies, Sustainable Products, and Novel Products

Accomplishments

- Invested \$90 million in 53 Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) projects, which support the development of new tools, approaches, practices and technologies to conserve natural resources, build resilience in producers' operations and improve their bottom lines.
- Since FY 2022, USDA has invested \$3.03 billion in 135 Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities projects that have connected over 21,000 farms to climate-smart markets, premiums, and incentives, and made over 40 climate-smart commodities available to consumers.
- Through USDA's BioPreferred program, National Biobased Products Day spotlighted various ARS-led biobased innovations alongside NIFA's investments in hemp. This initiative highlights USDA's commitment to promoting sustainable, biobased product markets.
- USDA hosted two Innovation Expo Halls—one at the 100th Agricultural Outlook Forum (in February) and another at the USDA Agrifood Innovation Symposium "Harvesting Hope" (in June). These events showcased USDA's role in fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing within its innovation ecosystem, connecting stakeholders and highlighting cutting-edge advancements.
- FAS leads the U.S. Government's efforts in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) High-Level Policy Dialogue on Agricultural Biotechnology (HLPDAB). The HLPDAB has been pivotal in FAS's efforts to advance biotechnology within APEC, maintain market access for U.S. agricultural products, and foster transparent, science-based biotechnology regulatory regimes.
- FAS continued its expanded emphasis on animal biotechnology engagements, with record attendance at its August 2024 global virtual workshop. Animal biotechnology is a rapidly growing field, with the development of genome editing offering new opportunities to help farmers and ranchers adapt to new production challenges and improve animal health and well-being.

Challenges

- As consumers increasingly voice a desire for more sustainable, climate-smart products, USDA and its partners hope to apply the best science to create transparency and traceability in the supply chain, with over 30 verification and certification standards being explored through Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities. Collectively, these measures will enhance end customer confidence while helping producers monetize greenhouse gas reduction on their acres by connecting them to new and expanding markets.
- Transgenic products continue to play a huge role in the marketplace and in developers' technology pipelines. At the same time, developers and users are marching toward new frontiers with the rise of genome editing and governments around the world are shaping their own regulatory responses while vying to influence the landscape beyond their borders. This all has great implications for U.S. agriculture. Against this backdrop, FAS proactively engages with trading partners to help them understand the underlying science and the potential of innovative agricultural technologies.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Foreign Agricultural Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Agricultural Marketing Service
- Office of the Chief Scientist — Research, Education, and Economics

FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE

Progress Made in FY 2024

Progress Made in FY 2024, FAS continued to leverage its unique blend of policy expertise, strategic thinking, and results-oriented programming in the service of U.S. exporters of agricultural products derived from biotechnology, whose sales abroad in 2023 totaled over \$55 billion. Agricultural biotechnology continues to play an increasingly pivotal and positive role for the U.S. economy but only to the extent that its potential is not artificially limited by non-science-based regulatory and trade barriers. FAS's work therefore is central not only to the mission of USDA but to the U.S. government writ large.

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Progress Made in FY 2024

NRCS and USDA as a whole made great strides toward fostering an equitable and competitive marketplace for all agricultural producers and specifically with expanding markets for emerging technologies, sustainable products, and novel products. Advances under the Conservation Innovation Grants, Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Grant Program, and the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities all moved this work forward. Specifically, under Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, many of the grants moved from preparing for enrollment to actually enrolling producers, producing climate-smart commodities, and marketing them to consumers. Initial results were shared on the climate smart website at www.usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities.

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

Progress Made in FY 2024

Packers and Stockyards Division

AMS' Packers and Stockyards Division (PSD) is continuing its market-level price monitoring program for fed cattle and hog markets. PSD's price monitoring program includes a weekly internal reporting protocol based on statistical models for fed cattle and hog markets. The statistical models rely on publicly reported price data to identify regional prices that are outside the range of prices predicted by the models. PSD investigates any fed cattle and hog prices that are outside the range predicted by price monitoring models.

AMS is currently engaged in rulemaking efforts that will enhance PSD's ability to conduct investigations of alleged unfair or anti-competitive conduct in the livestock, meat, and poultry industries.

Final Rules Published in FY 2024

- **Transparency in Poultry Grower Contracting and Tournaments final rule** – amends the regulations under the Packers and Stockyards Act, to add disclosures and information that live poultry dealers engaged in the production of broilers must furnish to poultry growers with whom dealers make poultry growing arrangements.
- **Inclusive Competition and Market Integrity Rules Under the Packers and Stockyards Act final rule** – prohibits undue prejudice and unjust discrimination against individuals on a prohibited basis unrelated to the quality of the service or product provided.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SCIENTIST — RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS

Progress Made in FY 2024

The REE mission area is central to advancing USDA’s Strategic Plan Objective 3.2—expanding markets for emerging technologies, sustainable practices, and novel agricultural products. Through critical oversight and facilitation by OCS, REE’s initiatives in FY 2024 aimed at fostering innovation and resilience across American agriculture, aligning R&D outcomes with USDA’s commitment to market expansion and global competitiveness.

Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Contributions

- In FY 2024, ARS research yielded transformative advancements that contribute directly to sustainable market expansion and competitiveness:
 - **Peanut Production for Market Efficiency:** Research demonstrated the feasibility of growing peanuts with partial kernels, reducing seed input costs while maintaining crop yield. This innovation enables more efficient peanut production, helping U.S. producers remain competitive in the global market without compromising supply, thereby expanding the market potential for cost-effective, sustainable peanut products.
 - **Pennycress for Biofuel Markets:** ARS researchers developed new varieties of pennycress tailored for biodiesel production, enhancing the availability of sustainable, U.S.-grown biofuel sources. By supporting the growth of a domestic biofuel industry, this research aligns with USDA’s objective to promote domestic energy markets.
 - **Automated Apple Harvesting for Market Sustainability:** The introduction of a dual-arm robotic system for apple harvesting increased efficiency by up to 34%, providing a commercially viable solution that supports sustainable market expansion. This technology not only addresses labor shortages but also strengthens the long-term sustainability of the U.S. apple industry.
 - **Genetic Resources in Cotton and Wheat:** With cotton’s market value exceeding \$100 billion annually, ARS invested in genetic research to combat threats from extreme weather, pests, and diseases. By developing high-quality genome sequences for American ‘Upland’ cotton varieties, ARS supports the creation of resilient, high-yield crops essential for sustaining the cotton market. Additionally, ARS developed wheat varieties resistant to Fusarium head blight, addressing a billion-dollar crop loss issue in the U.S. These innovations expand market opportunities by promoting disease-resistant, high-quality crops that meet global demand.

Economic Research Service

- ERS research and data informs policy and program decisions to create more sustainable agriculture markets.
 - **Climate Change and Productivity.** ERS research combined estimates of the impact of climate change on yield in crops of corn, rice, soybeans, and wheat with future productivity and demonstrated the research and development that can help mitigate any yield decreases. This research supported Objective 3.2 by highlighting the investment potential that can affect climate impacts.
 - **Solar and Wind Development.** ERS data informed potential changes in renewable energy capacity across the U.S. While the land area directly affected by solar or wind farms is relatively small compared to the acreage of U.S. farms, commercial and solar wind develops can lead to important changes in landscapes through shifting land use.

National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Contributions

- 2022 Census of Agriculture
 - **The 2022 Census of Agriculture**, conducted by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), provided crucial insights into technological, sustainable, and market trends shaping the agricultural landscape. This data supports USDA’s Strategic Plan Objective 3.2 by highlighting growth opportunities in precision agriculture, renewable energy, and conservation practices, guiding policymakers and industry leaders in targeting market-expanding initiatives that align with evolving consumer demands.

National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Investments

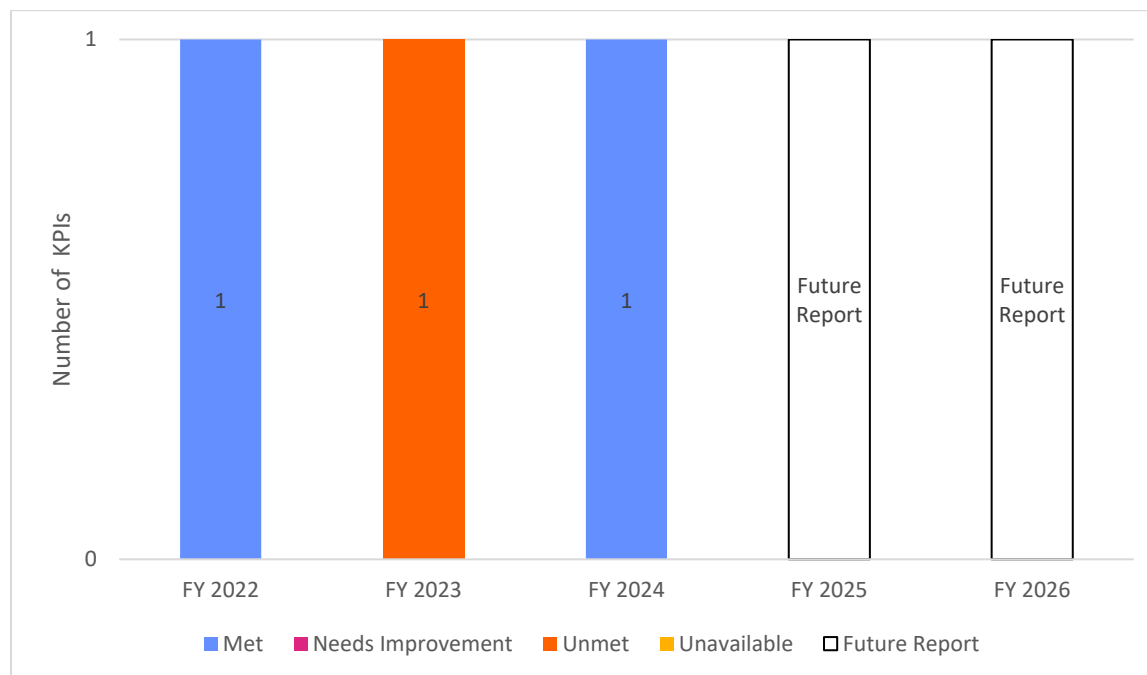
- NIFA’s research and extension programs create pathways to market expansion by supporting sustainable practices and emerging technologies in agriculture:
 - **Market Competitiveness Initiatives:** NIFA focused on expanding processing and distribution capacities in agricultural and forestry production, as well as supporting organic, biobased, and emerging production systems. These efforts directly address Objective 3.2 by fostering diverse market opportunities for U.S. producers.
 - **Small Business Innovation Programs (SBIR/STTR):** In FY 2024, NIFA invested \$40.2 million in 123 projects under the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs. By funding small businesses and research institutions to develop commercial innovations, these projects contribute to expanding rural market opportunities and enhancing the reach of emerging technologies in agriculture.
 - **Focused Investments in Sustainable Production:** NIFA supported projects addressing animal and plant production, conservation, biofuels, biobased products, and food safety. These investments support Objective 3.2 by enabling new, resilient production methods that expand sustainable market possibilities and reinforce food safety.

Together, these efforts by REE agencies underscore USDA’s commitment to Objective 3.2 by advancing technologies, promoting sustainability, and enabling novel products that bolster U.S. agricultural markets. Through these strategic achievements, REE continues to drive a resilient agricultural landscape, positioning U.S. producers and industries at the forefront of global market expansion.

Objective 3.3: Expand All Producers’ Access to Global Markets Through Negotiation and Enforcement of Trade Agreements

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

- Reopened the market for U.S. casings to Canada, valued at \$15 million.
- Reinstated the mandate for 10 percent ethanol in gasoline in Colombia, valued at \$100 million.
- Reached agreement with Korea on products labeled with markings for fresh and frozen beef, pork, eggs, dairy, and processed meats, with an estimated market value of \$3.4 million.
- Opened the market in Vietnam for peaches and nectarines, valued at \$2.5 million.
- Retained access to the European Union for all animal products, following new EU veterinary drug legislation, valued at \$430 million.
- Expanded the Chilean market for fresh U.S. blueberries valued at \$800,000.

Challenges

- The value of U.S. agricultural exports continued its retreat from the record high in FY2022 and U.S. agricultural exports continue to face headwinds from a strong dollar.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Foreign Agricultural Service

FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE

Value of Trade Preserved Through Resolution of Foreign Market Access Issues⁶

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|-------------------|---------|---------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Target | 6.00 | 6.10 | 6.10 | 5.70 | 5.70 | Billion Dollars | Increase |
| Actual | 7.67 | 5.89 | 6.42 ⁷ | 4.93 | 8.80 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

The FY 2024 total for this KPI was \$8.8 billion. Notable accomplishments include the Philippines granting a three-year extension to tariff cuts for corn, pork, and mechanically deboned meat through 2028, which should reduce U.S. exporter uncertainty as the Philippines had previously decided these extensions on a year-by-year basis. Retaining the reduced tariffs could increase U.S. pork exports by \$50 million, corn by \$10 million, and chicken by \$30 million, annually through 2028.

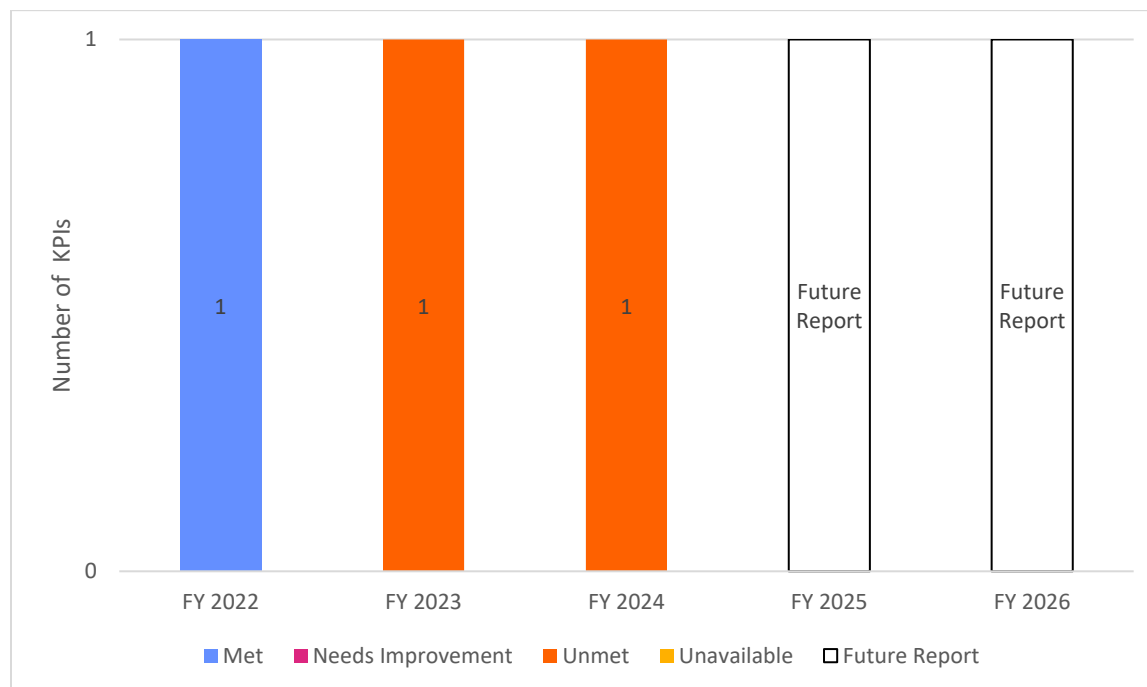
⁶ Foreign market access issues include U.S. export detention, sanitary/phytosanitary concerns, technical barriers to trade, and trade regulations.

⁷ FY 2022 actual changed from \$1.77 billion to \$6.42 billion, reflecting data validation.

Objective 3.4: Expand International Marketing Opportunities and Build Demand in Developing Countries Through Delivery of Technical Assistance and Capacity Building

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

- U.S.-Africa and Western Hemisphere Strategic Alignment on World Organization of Animal Health (WOAH) Standards** - In December 2023, FAS and APHIS, hosted the initial U.S.-African Union strategic session to align country positions, identify common interests, and exchange experiences in standard setting for over 80 African and Western Hemisphere countries.
- Good Regulatory Practices Toolkit Launch** – FAS, together with Standards and Trade Development Facility, the African Union, and the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat, developed and launched a Good Regulatory Practices Toolkit in Africa to help developing countries adopt regulations that are in line with international, science-based standards.
- Pakistan Approves Biopesticide Regulatory Framework** - In February 2024, Pakistan’s Biopesticide Regulatory Framework was approved. The framework, a collaborative effort between, FAS, USAID and the Government of Pakistan, is a major milestone for Pakistan and the United States, as it facilitates food safety and builds the country’s capacity around science-based maximum residue levels (MRLs). Trade-facilitative biopesticide regulations provide an opportunity for U.S. farmers who use biopesticides to market their products in Pakistan.
- Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP) and Assisting Specialty Crop Exports (ASCE)** - Launched and announced initial awards under the \$1.2 billion RAPP to support market development activities in specific foreign markets, fostering demand for American food and farm exports globally. FAS also launched the \$100 million RAPP funded ASCE Initiative to assist the U.S. specialty crop industry by tackling non-tariff export barriers.

Challenges

- Due to the introduction and the aggressive timeline for rollout of the RAPP and ASCE programs, the agency is facing staffing shortages in many areas, but especially in the areas of program management, oversight, and performance evaluation, which could impact long-term operational efficiency.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Foreign Agricultural Service

FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE

Value of Agricultural Exports Resulting from Participation in USDA-Endorsed Foreign Agricultural Trade Shows and Trade Missions

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Target | 2.13 | 1.75 | 1.75 | 2.00 | 2.15 | Billion Dollars | Increase |
| Actual | 1.16 | 0.119 | 2.3 | 1.73 | 1.76 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

In FY 2024, USDA/FAS implemented seven trade missions and three virtual trade events. The 23 USDA-endorsed trade shows featured 815 U.S. companies and organizations, drawing buyers from all over the world. Projected 12-month sales reported by U.S. exhibitors at the shows were estimated at \$153.2 million. This is the largest total of projected sales from trade missions ever in a 12-month period, exceeding the previous highs of \$90 and \$70 million in FY 2019 and 2023, respectively.

In February 2024, USDA Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small lead the first-ever U.S. agribusiness trade mission to Angola in an effort to help American agri-businesses build stronger relationships in the market and region. The inaugural visit yielded a reported \$13.3 million in projected 12-month sales. Members of the U.S. delegation conducted business-to-business meetings with potential buyers from Angola, as well as from neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo and Republic of the Congo.

In March 2024, USDA/FAS also secured the largest amount of sales by value reported for any trade mission with the South Korea trade mission reporting over \$68 million in projected 12-month sales. Participants engaged in business-to-business meetings with potential importers, processors and distributors and received in-depth market briefings from USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service on market dynamics.

In June 17-20, 2024, USDA/FAS hosted its first Tribal Trade Mission to Canada that highlighted tribal issues and indigenous agriculture. The visit resulted in over \$1 million in 12-month projected sales for tribal-owned businesses. The mission sought to reinvigorate historic agricultural trade networks amongst Native Nations across the United States and Canada.

Trade show reported 12-month sales were generally lower than previous years due to economic trends globally. Trade shows in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) have not reached pre-pandemic levels of participation from U.S. exporters. In FY 2024, trade shows in the PRC had roughly half the number of participating companies and about a third of the sales compared to 2019. Additionally, U.S. exports of seafood was down globally in 2024 (roughly six percent from the same period in 2023) that likely contributed to the lower results from the Seafood Expo Global trade show held in Barcelona, Spain in April 2024.

Goal 4: Make Safe, Nutritious Food Available to All Americans

USDA plays a critical role in preventing foodborne illness and protecting public health, while also ensuring Americans have access to healthy foods and beverages and nutrition education that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence. While keeping the food supply safe, USDA must also reduce food insecurity and prioritize nutrition insecurity, which emphasizes providing Americans not just calories, but calories that matter for their health and well-being.

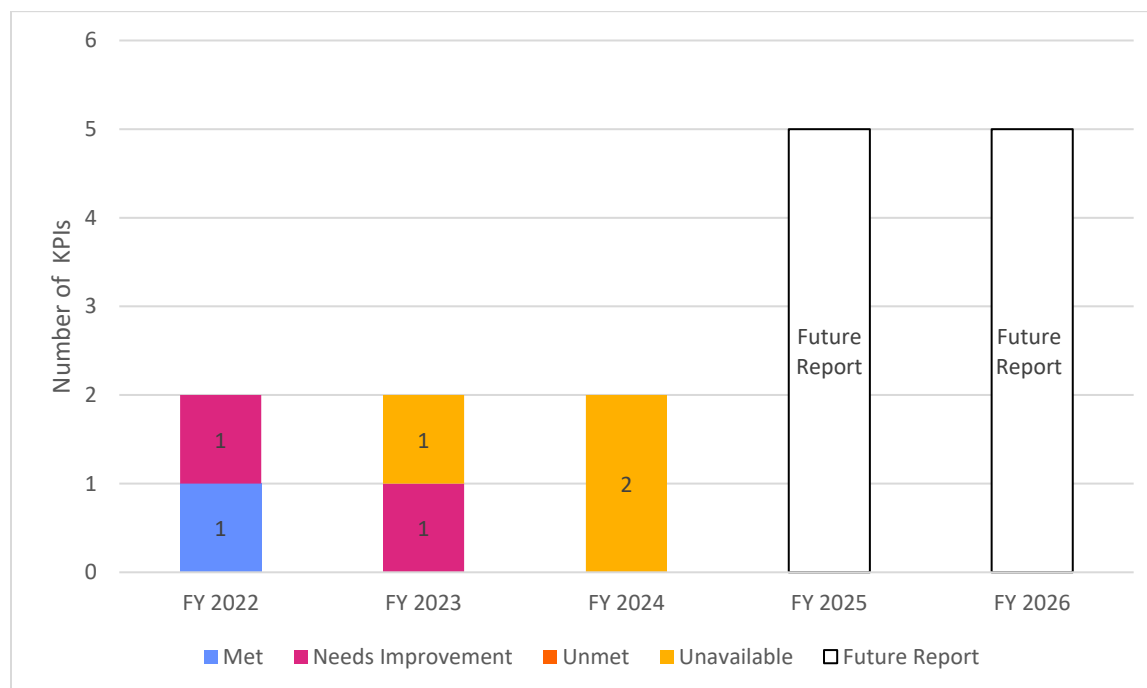
To ensure the food supply is safe, the Department will continue to enhance its food inspection system with the goal of reducing illness from meat, poultry, and egg products and drive compliance with food safety regulations. At the same time, USDA’s research, education, and extension programs will continue to provide science, information, tools, and technologies to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness. USDA will also continue to foster partnerships that support best practices in implementing effective programs to ensure that eligible populations have access to programs that support their nutrition needs.



Objective 4.1: Increase Food Security Through Assistance and Access to Nutritious and Affordable Food

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

- “SUN Programs: USDA’s Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids,” launched to help improve nutrition security during the summer months.** This inaugural summer, 37 states, the District of Columbia, all U.S. territories, and two Tribal nations partnered with USDA to make SUN Bucks (i.e., Summer EBT) available in their communities. About 21 million children were projected to benefit from SUN Bucks in 2024. FNS has received Interim Plan for Operations & Management (iPOMs) from 36 states, DC, 5 ITOs and 5 territories (47 in total) who plan to implement SUN Bucks in 2025. This includes two states who will be new to Summer EBT next year: Alabama and Utah, and three ITOs who will implement for the first time: Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Muscogee Creek Nation, and Otoe-Missouria Tribe. FNS expects to receive iPOMs from an additional three states and continues to conduct outreach to the other states on potentially implementing in 2025.
- FNS Awarded approximately \$4.9 million in SNAP Fraud Framework grants** to support state’s efforts to improve and expand recipient fraud prevention, detection, and investigation efforts using the procedures, ideas, and practices outlined in the SNAP Fraud Framework.

Challenges

- The decrease in the percentage of American households with consistent, dependable access to food in CY 2022 and 2023 as compared to CY 2021 may have been influenced by food prices and expiration of pandemic-related aid such as the expanded Child Tax Credit and expanded unemployment insurance in December 2021 and the SNAP Emergency Allotments in February 2023.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Food and Nutrition Service
- Office of the Chief Scientist – Research, Education, and Economics

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE

Percentage of American Households with Consistent, Dependable Access to Food

| | CY 2020 | CY 2021 | CY 2022 | CY 2023 | CY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Target | 89.0 | 89.2 | 89.3 | 89.4 | 89.5 | % of Households | Increase |
| Actual | 89.5 | 89.8 | 87.2 | 86.5 | TBD ⁸ | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

The increase in the number of food insecure households in CY 2022 and 2023 may be attributed to food prices and expiration of pandemic-related aid such as the expanded Child Tax Credit, SNAP Emergency Allotments, and expanded unemployment insurance. The Food and Nutrition Service’s (FNS) 16 nutrition assistance programs are the nation’s safety net to address food insecurity.

In FY 2024, FNS served low-income people in need by focusing on increasing program access for vulnerable populations and supporting evidenced-based nutrition efforts to advance nutrition security. Substantial progress in these areas include:

- Advanced USDA Foods Programs through regulatory action and in response to supply chain disruptions.** In October 2024, published the Food Distribution Programs: Improving Access and Parity Final Rule, which makes regulatory changes in response to lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and stakeholder feedback to increase access and parity within several USDA Foods programs. In response to supply chain disruptions at FDPIR and CSFP sites nationwide, FNS took a number of steps to address the delays in the short term and develop a longer term and permanent plan to ensure a steady and reliable supply.
- Supported implementation of revisions to the WIC food packages.** In April 2024, FNS finalized updates to the foods prescribed to participants in WIC. These science-based revisions incorporate recommendations from the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. In June 2024, regulations regarding the [WIC food packages](#) became effective to provide WIC participants with a wider variety of foods that align with the latest nutritional science. The food packages also provide WIC state agencies with greater flexibility to prescribe and tailor food packages that accommodate participants’ dietary needs and personal and cultural food preferences.
- Announced the launch of “SUN Programs: USDA’s Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids,” to help improve nutrition security during the summer months.** Thanks to bipartisan Congressional action, FNS implemented new, flexible strategies for providing children food and nutrition support in the summertime. FNS is calling this enhanced suite of tools the SUN Programs: USDA’s Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids. In-person group meals and snacks provided at SUN Meals sites remain a vital source of nutrition in communities with high rates of poverty. If group meals aren’t available, families in certain rural communities can pick up free summer meals for their kids or have them delivered to their homes through SUN Meals To-Go. With SUN Bucks, families in participating states, territories, and Tribes can receive \$120 per eligible school-aged

⁸ CY 2024 data will be available fall 2025.

child to buy groceries during the summer. This inaugural summer, 37 states, the District of Columbia, all U.S. territories, and two Tribal Nations partnered with USDA to make SUN Bucks available in their communities. About 21 million children were projected to benefit from SUN Bucks in 2024. In FY 2024, FNS supported states, Tribes, and territories in making the SUN Programs a success by providing trainings, tools, resources, and other technical assistance. For example, FNS provided \$100 million in one-time grants to support development and modifications to state technology systems that are needed to effectively run the SUN Bucks program with proper controls and integrity.

- **Funded an external study to explore and test the feasibility of alternative methods to the current optimization model for reevaluating the Thrifty Food Plan that reflect current statutory requirements and data sources.** FNS has also initiated an evidence scan on household food waste, which was identified as a research need in the Thrifty Food Plan, 2021 report. In FY24, FNS awarded contracts for several other Thrifty Food Plan-related studies outlined in the FNS FY2024 Study and Evaluation Plan, including studies that will: (1) link USDA nutrition data to retail and household food scanner data to calculate national average food prices, (2) classify and measure household food waste, (3) collect food price data in Alaska, Hawaii, and the U.S. territories, (4) evaluate approaches for defining and measuring the level of convenience and amount of variety in the Thrifty Food Plan market basket, and (5) assess the feasibility of calculating updated Thrifty Food Plan economies of scale adjustment factors by household size. Throughout FY 2025, FNS will continue to publish costs of the USDA Food Plans monthly to inform Federal policies and programs.
- **FNS completed the scientific process supporting the 2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's review of evidence as specified in their Charter.** FNS has conducted approximately 30 systematic reviews of nutrition evidence prioritized by the Committee, including 28 reviews and 1 evidence scan on critical public health topics, all of which informed the Committee's Scientific Report. FNS implemented analyses across 10 Food Pattern Modeling protocols, generating over 300,000 data points to support transparency and quality control in reporting. These efforts are essential for developing evidence-based recommendations for the 2025-2030 edition of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which plays a vital role in shaping national nutrition policy, improving public health, and guiding individuals toward healthier eating habits.
- **FNS continued its progress to improve child nutrition and give schools more options to prepare meals that students enjoy, impacting about 30 million children.** On April 25, 2024, FNS published the final rule titled, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. While this rulemaking took effect July 1, 2024, FNS is gradually phasing in required changes over time and providing widespread support to schools and childcare providers.

Annual Average Monthly Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation Rate

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 82.1 | 82.2 | 82.3 | Participation Rate (%) | Increase |
| Actual | 78 | N/A ⁹ | 88 | TBD ¹⁰ | TBD ¹¹ | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

In Fiscal Year 2022, 88 percent of eligible individuals participated in SNAP, marking the highest participation rate since the program began estimating reach nearly 50 years ago. The increase in participation in FY 2022 might be related to policies that States implemented in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, such as applying for waivers to forgo eligibility interviews or extend certification periods. Monthly SNAP benefits were also higher due to both SNAP emergency allotments and a reevaluation of the Thrifty Food Plan. FNS does not have available data on the participation rate after FY2022; FY2023 data will be available in fall of 2025 and FY2024 data in fall of 2026.

During FY 2024, FNS worked with State agencies to ensure access and reduce barriers to SNAP benefits for eligible people and promote SNAP Employment and Training Programs. Further, FNS took steps to improve benefit security and conduct studies to support data driven decision making and the sharing of best practices. These efforts included:

- **Published the “Promising Approaches and Challenges for SNAP State Agencies in Implementing Corrective Action Plans (CAP)” report** which reviewed eight States and describe the approaches used to develop, implement, and monitor CAPs; identify challenges and promising practices throughout the CAP process; and develop recommendations for improving States’ abilities to conduct corrective action activities.
- **Prepared the “SNAP Participants’ Fitness for Work” report**, which published on October 1, 2024. This study provides insight into how State agencies determine whether individuals were excused from the general and Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD) work requirements or had a good cause for not meeting work requirements due to physical or mental limitations.
- **Drafted a proposed Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Modernization rule** requiring States to implement nationwide EBT card security and issuance standards, which is expected to publish in FY 2025. FNS collected feedback from 16 EBT modernization listening sessions and the X9 USDA Card Industry Forum to inform the rule development.
- **Awarded approximately \$4.9 million in SNAP Fraud Framework grants** to support state’s efforts to improve and expand recipient fraud prevention, detection, and investigation efforts using the procedures, ideas and practices outlined in the SNAP Fraud Framework.

⁹ FNS will not have SNAP Participation Rate for FY 2021 because the collection of SNAP Quality Control data was waived due to the pandemic. This data is used in the numerator of the participation rate.

¹⁰ FY 2023 rates are anticipated in fall 2025.

¹¹ FY 2024 rates are anticipated in XX.

- **Launched the SNAP EBT Modernization Technical Assistance Center (SEMTAC)** which is helping smaller, independent grocery stores navigate the SNAP online purchasing process. As of May 2024, over 100 businesses had reached out to SEMTAC for assistance with SNAP online.
- **Launched the "More Than a Job" campaign** to enhance engagement and public awareness of the SNAP E&T program. At least five states have adopted the campaign, with North Carolina rebranding its SNAP E&T program to "More Than a Job NC."

Number of States/Territories Participating in the Summer EBT Program

| | CY 2020 | CY 2021 | CY 2022 | CY 2023 | CY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | Number of States/territories | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | --- | 43 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

Summer EBT is a new program established by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328) that provides grocery benefits to children from low-income households during the summer months to provide continued access to nutrition when school is not in session. Eligible families in participating states, territories, and tribes can receive \$120 per eligible school-aged child to buy groceries during the summer. During FY 2024, the inaugural implementation of Summer EBT, FNS published the interim final rule, Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs, developed comprehensive implementation and outreach toolkits, and supported states, U.S. territories, and Tribes through technical assistance and training. FNS shared technical insights at key conferences, created a household online application, and hosted monthly calls with State Commissioners. In addition, FNS invested in outreach and partnered with stakeholders across the country to promote the SUN Programs. Thirty-seven states, the District of Columbia, all U.S. territories and two Tribal nations are currently participating in the Sun Bucks (Summer EBT) program, which was expected to reach more than 21 million students in CY 2024. In 2025, FNS will support States, territories and Tribes in implementing the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Program through technical assistance informed by feedback from Summer EBT implementing agencies.

Number of Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) Participating in the Summer EBT Program

| | CY 2020 | CY 2021 | CY 2022 | CY 2023 | CY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | Number of ITOs | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | --- | 2 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

During Summer 2024, two Tribal Nations participated in Summer EBT. Cherokee Nation estimated issuing benefits to over 148,000 eligible children and Chickasaw Nation estimated to issue benefits to over 110,000 eligible children. These benefits provide critical nutrition assistance to children in Tribal communities during the Summer.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SCIENTIST – RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS

Number of Firms Associated with Delivery of Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program Nutrition (GusNIP) Incentive or Produce Prescription Program

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | Firms | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | --- | 1,959 | 2,928 | | |

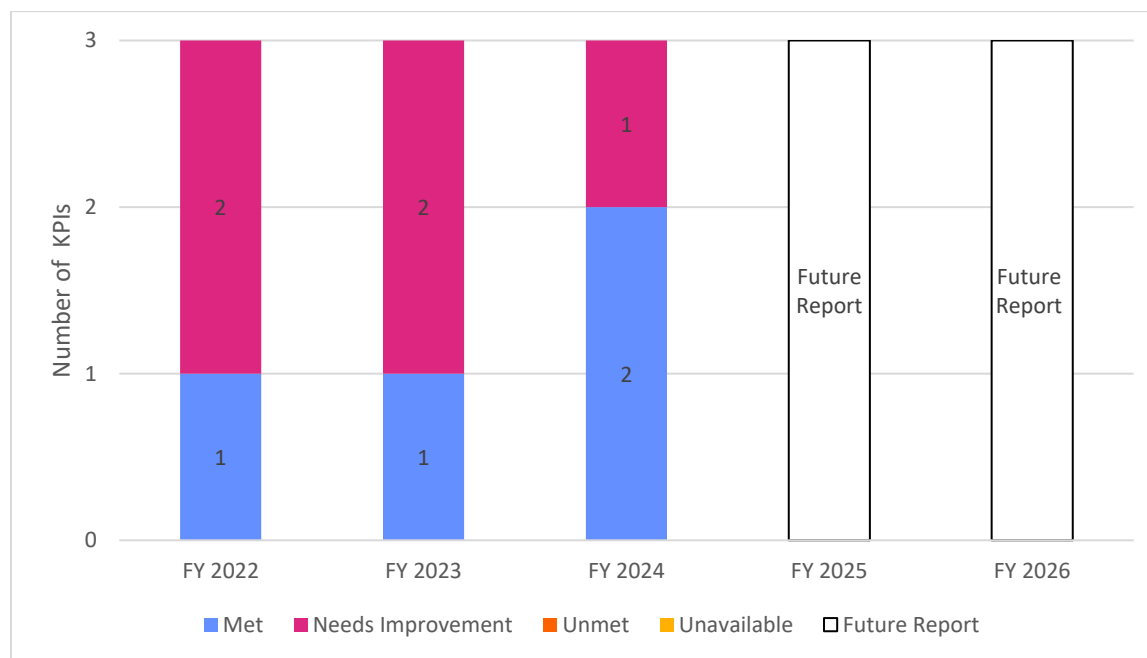
New KPI Description

This KPI is being introduced in FY 2025. This measure represents the scope of service or the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program by proxy of the number of firms engaged in incentive or program delivery. Nutrition Incentive (NI) Projects provide incentives to individuals using SNAP or Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables. Produce Prescription Program (PPR) projects provide prescriptions in the form of incentives for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Objective 4.2: Encourage Healthy Dietary Choices through Data-Driven, Flexible, Customer-Focused Approaches

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

- In June 2024, regulations regarding the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) food package became effective to provide participants with a wider variety of foods that align with the latest nutritional science; provide WIC State agencies with greater flexibility to prescribe and tailor food packages that accommodate participants’ dietary needs and personal and cultural food preferences.
- On April 25, 2024, FNS published the final rule titled, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. While this rulemaking took effect July 1, 2024, USDA is gradually phasing in required changes over time and providing widespread support to schools and childcare providers.
- FNS published a final rule to expand schools' access to the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), giving more schools the option to elect CEP and offer free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students. This rule, which took effect October 26, 2023, was expected to give approximately 3,000 school districts serving around 5 million students the option to elect CEP. FNS issued 28 statewide waivers in FY 2024, allowing eligible districts to elect CEP mid-year. Additionally, FNS collaborated with the Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics to ensure that Title I and application data did not hinder schools from adopting the CEP.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Food and Nutrition Service

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE

Annual Average Monthly Participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 6.3 | 6.4 | 6.8 | Million Participants | Increase |
| Actual | 6.2 | 6.2 | 6.3 | 6.6 | 6.7 ¹² | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

The WIC program aims to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children who are at nutrition risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care. In June 2024, regulations regarding the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) food package became effective to provide participants with a wider variety of foods that align with the latest nutritional science; provide WIC State agencies with greater flexibility to prescribe and tailor food packages that accommodate participants’ dietary needs and personal and cultural food preferences. In addition, FNS carried out outreach, innovation, and program modernization efforts to increase WIC’s participation rate through increased enrollment, retention of participants for the full length of their eligibility, and an improved participant experience. These activities included:

- **FNS’ grantee, the Center for Nutrition and Health Impact (CNHI), awarded five new 2024 WIC Online Shopping Project Subgrants** to New Jersey WIC, Mississippi WIC, DC WIC, Indiana WIC, and Rhode Island WIC (lead including Connecticut WIC and West Virginia WIC). These states will conduct feasibility assessments that consider online shopping partner needs and will engage with WIC participants to develop tailored plans to move them closer to online shopping.
- **FNS’ grantee, Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), solicited applications for the second round of Community Innovation and Outreach (CIAO) grants**, which are designed to expand partnerships with community-based organizations and use of community-level data to develop and test WIC outreach efforts.
- **Published the WIC Nutrition Assessment and Tailoring Study (NATS) Part 2 Report**, which is the first study to provide a comprehensive account of the WIC nutrition assessment and tailoring process. Study findings will inform FNS and WIC state and local agencies about how to enhance service delivery and improve retention of WIC participants.
- **FNS’s partner, USDA’s NIFA, awarded approximately \$29M in cooperative agreements to address the workforce needs** of WIC agencies, enhance diversity and cultural competency, and increase the uptake of WIC benefits and services.
- **FNS awarded a \$15 million WIC Management information System Strategy Cooperative Agreement** to the National WIC Association (NWA), in collaboration with Nava PBC and Code for America, to assist FNS in developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy for supporting WIC management information systems (MIS). This work is part of a larger WIC modernization

¹² Data reported is preliminary. Final FY 2024 data will be available in April 2025.

effort to maximize the program's potential to improve health outcomes for current and future participants. MIS help local agencies, State agencies, and FNS to administer the program and to track and understand program operations and performance.

Annual Percentage of Eligible Children Participating in the National School Lunch Program

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Target | 59 | 59 | 59 | 59 | 59 | % of Eligible Children | Increase |
| Actual | 43 | N/A ¹³ | 57 | 57 | 59 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

On April 25, 2024, FNS published the final rule titled, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. While this rulemaking took effect July 1, 2024, USDA is gradually phasing in required changes over time and providing widespread support to schools and childcare providers. For example, FNS:

- **Conducted over 300 trainings and developed 12 technical assistance resources** to assist program operators in meeting meal pattern requirements.
- **Awarded \$16.5 million in grants to help schools transform school food supply chains.**
- **Awarded more than \$2 million to 5 organizations to provide training and technical assistance to school nutrition professionals on procurement, preparation, and crediting of traditional Indigenous foods.**
- **Bestowed 203 Healthy Meals Incentives recognition awards** to School Food Authorities who demonstrated excellence in their school meals.
- **Awarded a record-breaking \$14.3 million in Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grants** to 154 projects in 43 states, the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico to help 1.9 million children eat more tasty, nutritious foods in school and support farmers and producers in their local and regional communities.
- **Provided \$10 million in grants for schools to invest in new food service equipment** that will enable them to continue serving nutritious meals

FNS also published a final rule to expand schools' access to the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), giving more schools the option to elect CEP and offer free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students. This rule, which took effect October 26, 2023, was expected to give approximately 3,000 school districts serving around 5 million students the option to elect CEP. FNS issued 28 statewide waivers in FY 2024, allowing eligible districts to elect CEP mid-year. Additionally, FNS collaborated with the Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics to ensure that Title I and application data did not hinder schools from adopting the CEP.

Annual Percentage of Eligible Children Participating in the School Breakfast Program

¹³ FY 2022 actual was 57%, including children receiving lunch through the Seamless Summer Option (which most schools used to provide school meals during SY 21-22). No rate is available for FY 2021 as there is not complete data due to waivers in place during SY 20-21.

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Target | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 | % of Eligible Children | Increase |
| Actual | 24 | N/A ¹⁴ | 30 | 29 | 32 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

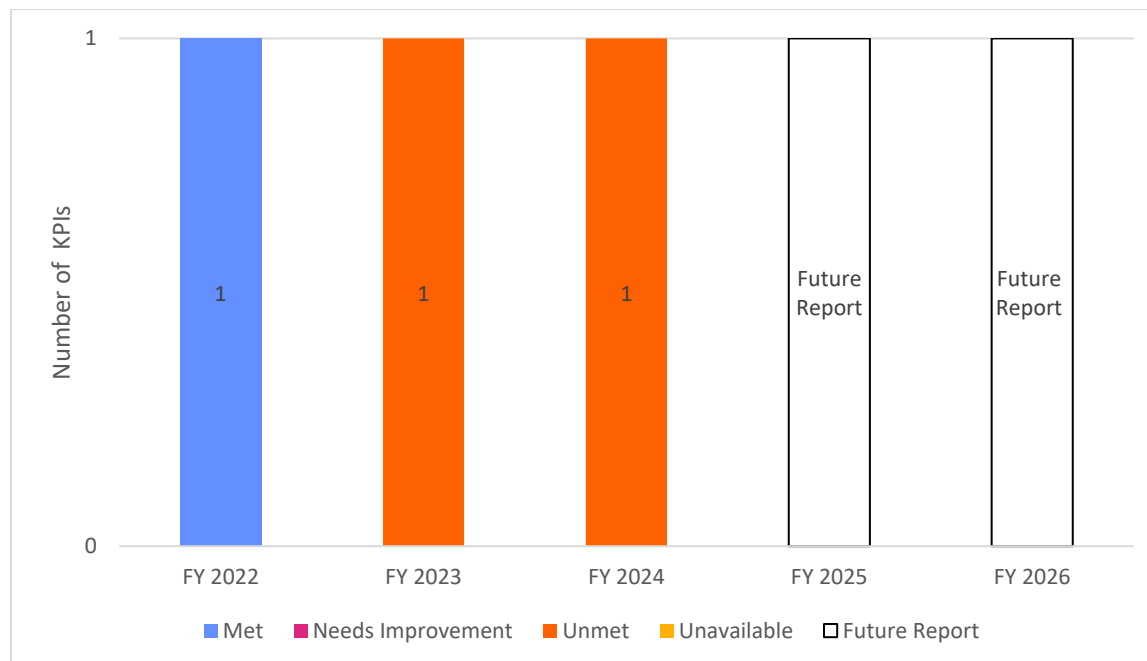
The final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, has made it easier for schools to offer meats and meat alternates at breakfast. This change, which took effect in July 2024, is expected to help schools serve more appealing, filling, and protein-rich breakfast foods, including vegetarian options such as yogurt, tofu, eggs, and nuts and seeds. Providing more menu planning options can help Program operators to plan menus that students enjoy, which may encourage student participation. As noted above, USDA is providing widespread support to schools throughout the implementation of this final rule. Please see the KPI “Annual Percentage of Eligible Children Participating in the National School Lunch Program” description for more detail about how USDA is supporting nutritious school meals.

¹⁴ FY 2022 actual was 31%, including children receiving breakfast through the Seamless Summer Option (which most schools used to provide school meals during SY 21-22). No rate is available for FY 2021 as there is not complete data due to waivers in place during SY 20-21.

Objective 4.3: Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

- FSIS finalized a policy under which raw breaded stuffed chicken products that contain *Salmonella* at levels of 1 colony forming unit per gram (CFU/g) or higher are adulterated.
- On August 7, 2024, FSIS published the *Salmonella* Framework for Raw Poultry Products proposed rule and determination, which specifically addresses serotypes of public health interest through enforceable product standards. The public comment period will close on January 17, 2025.
- On September 9-10, 2024, FSIS held an industry webinar covering the risk assessment and analysis used in the decision-making for the *Salmonella* Framework for Raw Poultry Products proposed rule and determination.

Challenges

- As of the end of FY 2024, there was an increase in samples that tested positive for the *Salmonella* serotypes most commonly associated with human illness. FSIS is in the process of proposing regulatory action to help reduce *Salmonella* in poultry products through the proposed *Salmonella* framework.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Food Safety and Inspection Service

FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE

Reduction in the Proportion of Poultry Samples with *Salmonella* Serotypes Commonly Associated with Human Illness

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | -2 | -4 | -6 | % of Samples | Decrease |
| Actual | --- | --- | -3 | +22 | +16 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

FSIS successfully implemented pilot programs focused on pre-harvest interventions for *Salmonella*. As part of the pilot programs, establishments examined the merits and logistics of using pre-harvest results to optimize establishment interventions and excluding vaccine strains from FSIS *Salmonella* performance categorization.

As a result of the pilot programs, FSIS implemented a policy change to exclude live-attenuated *Salmonella* vaccine strains from categorization under the performance standards. This update is intended to remove barriers to the use of pre-harvest interventions in poultry establishments.

Goal 5: Expand Opportunities for Economic Development and Improve Quality of Life in Rural and Tribal Communities

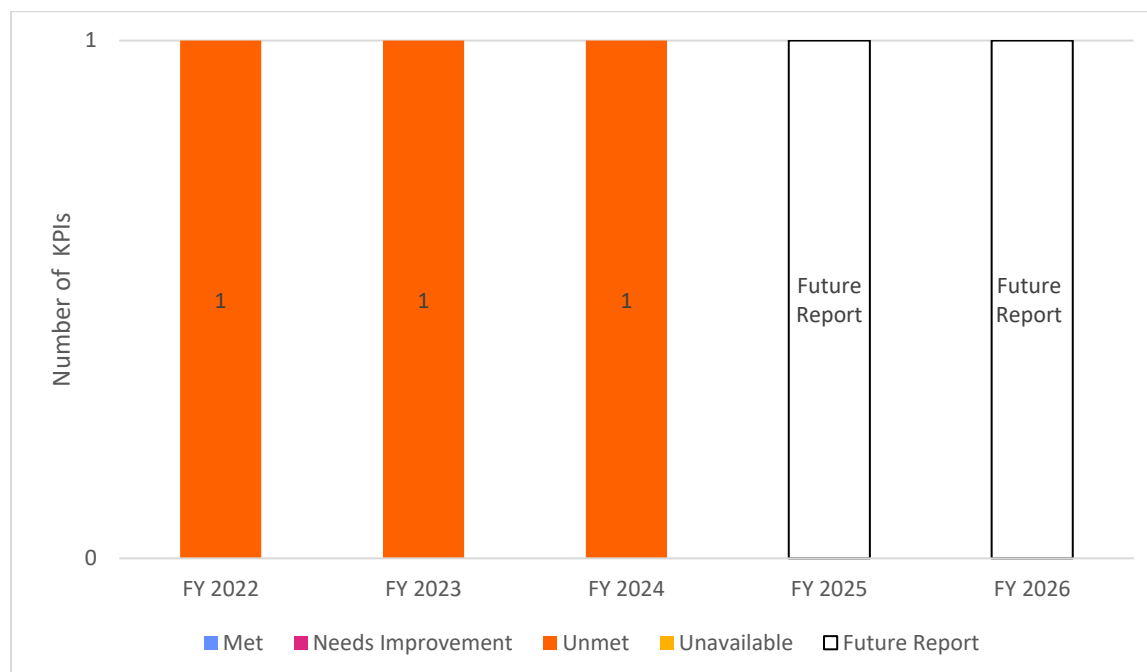
Rural America provides the Nation’s food and energy resources, produces the fiber for goods and manufacturing, contributes more than 35 percent of the Nation’s military members, and operates about 80 percent of the Nation’s critical infrastructure lifelines. Unfortunately, it is also where the country’s majority of underserved communities and persistently poor families reside and where repeat disaster losses and climate change risks occur. It is also home to the country’s fastest aging population and the majority of the Nation’s aging infrastructure. USDA is taking bold action to promote rural prosperity and economic development by providing technical assistance and financing investments in rural water, electric, broadband, housing, community facilities, local and regional food systems, and rural businesses and cooperatives. USDA will leverage funds, stimulate private-public partnerships, and collaborate with communities to increase economic opportunities in underserved communities and build rural infrastructure. This includes working with Federal partners and various stakeholder groups to help rural and Tribal communities thrive.



Objective 5.1: Improve Rural and Tribal Community Infrastructure, Including Affordable E-Connectivity, Cornerstone Community Facilities, Sustainable and Reliable Power, and Clean and Safe Water and Sewer Systems

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

For funding announcements beginning in FY 2022, RD began assigning priority points for projects across a variety of programs that advance new and better markets, climate goals, and equity priorities. These points help raise the score of qualifying projects and can increase their likelihood of receiving funding. This effort helps ensure equitable access to programs and benefits from projects for underserved communities.

Challenges

- The biggest challenge to implementing priority points is the statutory requirements and varying regulations for each program.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Rural Development

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Number of Households with Potential Access to Rural Development-Funded New and/or Improved E-Connectivity Services

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 200,000 | 250,000 | 125,000 | Households | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | 134,804 | 98,811 | 26,856 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

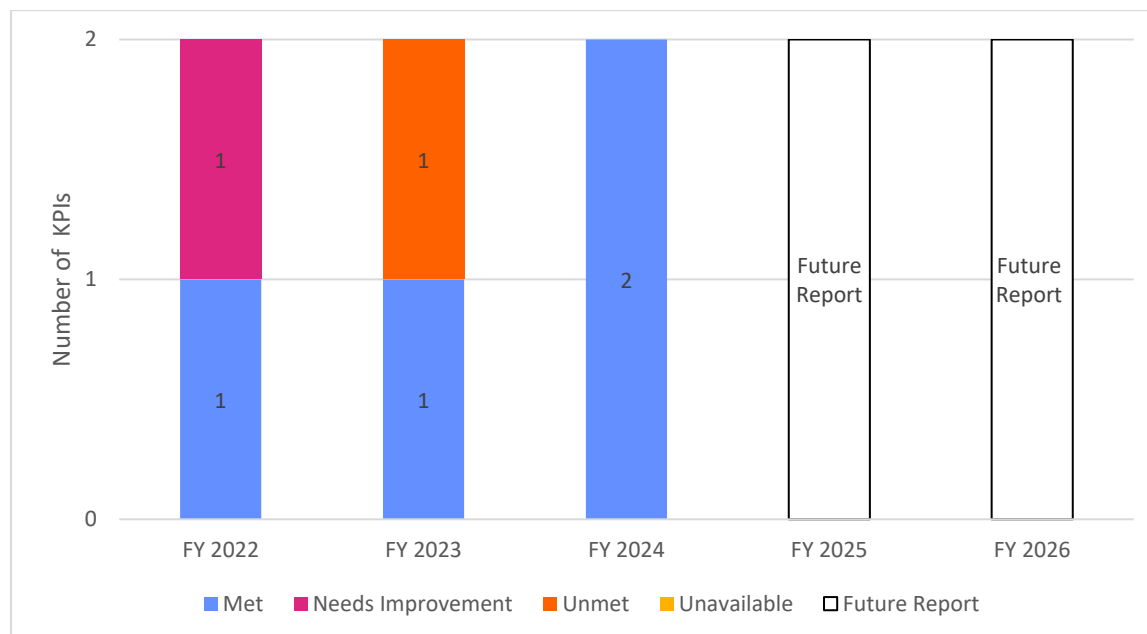
In FY 2024, the e-connectivity KPI target was unmet. RD’s e-connectivity funding has become more focused on remote, unserved areas so the estimated number of households located in a single project is much lower than what RD financed under previous rounds of funding.

Some general barriers to meeting this target included delays in funding announcements, high level of applications that needed to be reviewed, and length of time required to conduct environmental reviews. The majority of Round 5 ReConnect projects will not be obligated until the first quarter of FY 2025.

Objective 5.2: Boost the Financial Security of Rural and Tribal Communities through Access to Affordable Housing

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Strategic objective 5.2 has been designated as an area making noteworthy progress.

Accomplishments

- Through the FY 2024 Appropriations Act, USDA was provided the authority to decouple up to 1,000 Section 521 rental assisted units maturing from the existing Multifamily Housing Section 515 and Section 514 mortgage. Decoupling Authority will provide RD a critical new tool for the preservation of affordable rural housing.
- RD continues to prioritize the access and reduction of barriers to funding for Tribes, Tribal entities, and Tribal members. RD has several efforts to support the reduction of barriers and expand funding supporting Tribes. For example: Expansion of Native American Tribal Demonstration Program Appraisals and home repairs under SFHG, Native CDFI Relending Program, and Staff Training.

Challenges

RD is at historically low staffing levels when compared to the RD-wide loan portfolio. With an increase in workload and servicing expectations, it is challenging for RD to meet its mission responsibilities and customer expectations if it does not improve its automated loan and accounting systems and allocate staff to meet highest priority needs. Increased staffing resources would allow RD to meet the growing priorities in critical areas that have a direct effect on the agency’s ability to be sustainable, relevant, and results-oriented in delivering much-needed programs and services across rural America.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Rural Development

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Number of Underserved, Socially Disadvantaged, and Vulnerable Rural and Tribal Communities Engaged in Field-Based Programs

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 460 | 230 | 92 | Communities | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | 425 | 191 | 125 | | |

Investment in Underserved, Socially Disadvantaged, and Vulnerable Rural and Tribal Communities in Field-Based Programs

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 12 | 60 | 60 | Million Dollars | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | 165.8 | 221.5 | 238 | | |

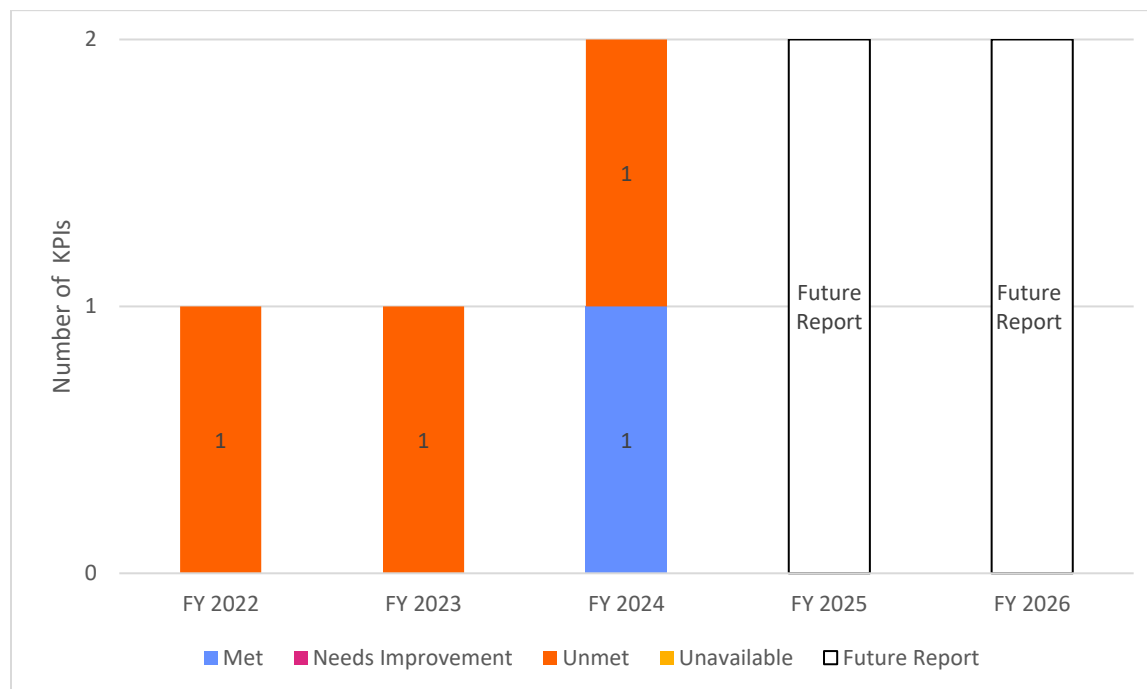
Progress Made in FY 2024

Ensuring that all eligible areas, entities, and residents have equitable access to RD programs and can benefit from RD-funded projects is vital to the future economic growth and prosperity of the United States. As such, RD is leveraging its extensive field network, data, and strategic investments resources to support the Equity Project, recently rebranded as CORE (Creating Opportunities through Rural Engagement). While the name changed, the essence, structure, and goals remain the same, as the change simply reflects how central equity is to RD activities. Through RD’s network of field offices, RD is actively engaging underserved rural and tribal communities in every state to better understand and identify the barriers they face to participating in RD programs. In FY 2024, RD was able to engage 1,251 new CORE communities and invest \$238 million dollars into these communities.

Objective 5.3: Increase Capacity, Sustainability, and Economic Vitality in Rural and Tribal Communities

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

- Launched in Spring of 2022, the Rural Partners Network (RPN) is an all-of-government effort led by RD. The Rural Partners Network is a collaboration of 20 federal agencies and regional commissions through the Rural Prosperity Interagency Policy Council, co-led by the White House Domestic Policy Council and USDA. The RPN helps selected underserved rural communities navigate federal resources that can support their economic development vision and priority projects. Federal staff known as Community Liaisons help with this navigation and identify barriers to these resources. They can then work with respective federal agencies to address program or policy changes for the benefit of all rural communities. RPN Community Networks were launched in Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.
- In FY 2024, the Rural Partner’s Network supported the investment of \$326.5 million and over 1,700 projects funded by USDA Rural Development in RPN communities. In addition, the federal wide network supported the creation of over 2,500 partnerships.

Challenges

- RD needs additional staff to fully support the implementation and expansion of RPN.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Rural Development

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Percentage of Rural Development Assistance Directed to Distressed Communities¹⁵

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Target | 13 | 14 | 25 | 30 | 30 | % of Assistance | Increase |
| Actual | 12.5 | 12.3 | 21 | 24 | 24 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

In FY 2024, the Distressed Communities KPI target was unmet. The target set for FY 2024 was ten percentage points higher than the 5-year baseline for investments in Distressed Communities. The target was purposefully aspirational. RD will continue to target investment in Distressed Communities with the goal of increasing the percentage of funding invested in these communities. Limited staffing to fully engage Distressed Communities and limited grant funding made it difficult to reach the FY 2024 target.

Percentage of Rural Development Commercial and Infrastructure Investments that Leverage Non-Federal Funding in Distressed (DC) and Socially Vulnerable (SV) Communities

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|---------------------|
| Target | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 70 | % of Investments | Increase |
| Actual | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 172 | | |

This measure is being revised for FY 2024 to include “Distressed (DC) and Socially Vulnerable (SV) Communities”.

Progress Made in FY 2024

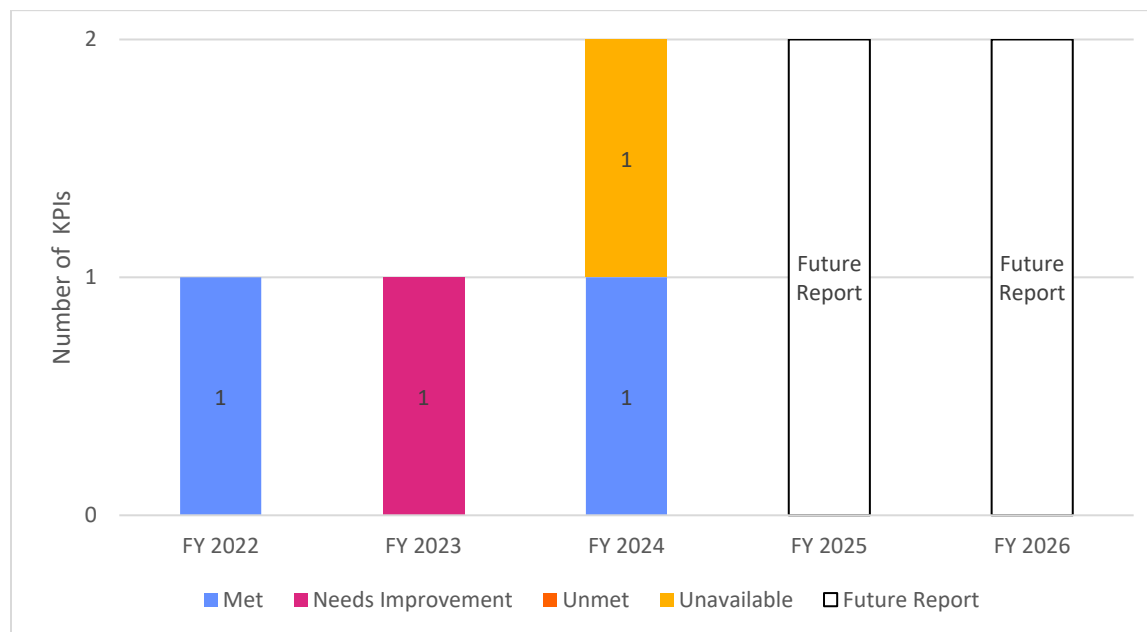
RD is placing an emphasis on staff to seek out funding partners who can make projects more affordable through the blending of RD funds with other state, local, or philanthropic funding. Through the leverage of these partnerships in Distressed and Socially Vulnerable Communities, RD’s partners are investing \$1.72 for every \$1 RD invests.

¹⁵ Measured at the zip code level.

Objective 5.4: Promote Environmental Justice by Maximizing Sustainable and Green Economic Development in Rural and Tribal Communities

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

- Built a climate adaptation tool that can effectively assess the impact of RD’s investment portfolio to weather-related disasters. The tool increases decision-makers’ awareness of the relative sensitivity of the rural communities to the projected economic impact of weather-related disasters.
- Continue to work with Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Housing and Urban Development to conduct an analysis of past, current, and projected weather risk to housing portfolios. Climate risks from hurricanes, tornados, and riverine and coastal flooding do not present a major financial risk to housing portfolios; however, the human costs of these disasters are substantial and often disproportionately affect the most vulnerable communities.
- Continuing a trend over the past several years, 96% of visitors to the nation’s national forests remain satisfied with the recreation facilities, services, and settings they experienced.

Challenges

- Visitation to National Forest System lands increased significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic and has remained above pre-pandemic levels over the past three years. This increase has created challenges in meeting new demands while ensuring the safety of visitors and the health of the environment.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Rural Development
- Forest Service

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Percentage of Total Investments Made into Energy Communities, as defined by the Inflation Reduction Act, through Rural Development Programs

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|---------------------|
| Target | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 19 | % of Investments | Increase |
| Actual | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 23 | | |

FOREST SERVICE

Percentage of Customers Satisfied with Recreation Facilities, Services, and Settings in National Forests

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Target | 95 | 95 | 95 | 98 | 98 | % of Customers Satisfied | Maintain |
| Actual | 95 | 95 | 96 | 95 | TBD ¹⁶ | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

The recreation program administers recreation sites, including campgrounds, day-use and dispersed areas, trails, and special use authorizations, such as ski areas, year-round resorts, and numerous outfitter and guide permits. This program provides recreational access to over 193 million acres on National Forest System lands containing more than 31,000 campgrounds, picnic areas, trailheads, and day-use areas; 220,000 miles of fishable streams; almost 160,000 miles of trail opportunities, 33,000 special use permits, and 122 ski areas. Visitation to National Forest System lands increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic and has remained above pre-pandemic levels over the past three years. This increase has created challenges and opportunities in meeting new demands while ensuring the safety of visitors and the health of the environment. Customer satisfaction levels for Forest Service recreation users in FY 2023 remained high, continuing the trend over the past several years. Analysis of FY 2024 is underway and visitor satisfaction levels will be available in spring 2025.

¹⁶ Data collection for FY 2024 is still on-going and visitor satisfaction levels will be available in spring 2025.

Goal 6: Attract, Inspire, and Retain an Engaged and Motivated Workforce that's Proud to Represent USDA

USDA is committed to reaching new heights by recruiting, onboarding, supporting, and retaining a diverse and talented workforce and cultivating a workplace environment that is collaborative, service-oriented, mission-centered, healthy, inclusive, and welcoming. This includes leaders and staff who work together to build a culture that welcomes, respects, and supports everyone in reaching their highest potential by ensuring equal opportunity compliance, providing proactive civil rights, and championing USDA's zero-tolerance policy for unlawful discrimination and sexual harassment for all employees. USDA believes this focus on organizational culture will enable it to build the USDA back better as a premier organization and model employer that lives by its values.

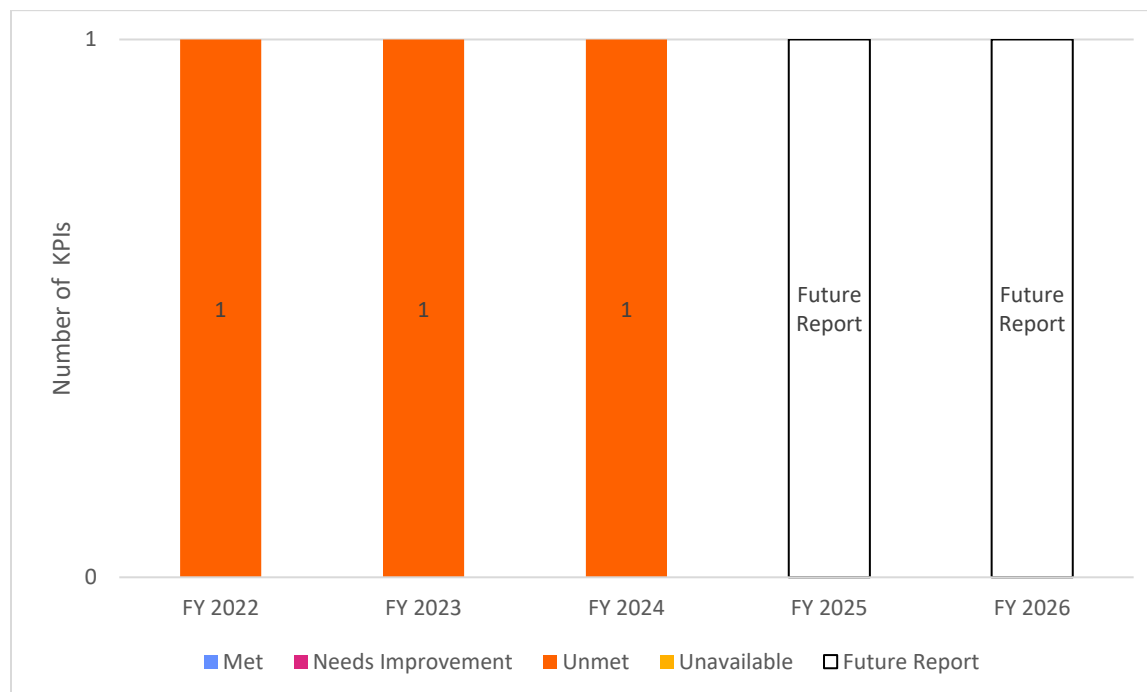
As the landscape of talent continues to evolve, it is imperative that USDA seek to continuously find ways to attract talent that represents the diversity of America. The COVID-19 pandemic has also catapulted leaders to rethink and reimagine where and how the Department works. In the coming years, USDA will build on best practices for a hybrid work environment and continue to evaluate the future of work at USDA. As such, the Department is committed to being a learning organization that tolerates risk-taking, explores the untested and unknown, and nurtures innovative ideas at all levels of the organization. USDA will prioritize learning and training throughout the employee experience.



Objective 6.1: Foster a Culture of Civil Rights, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, Transparency, and Accountability

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Accomplishments

- Developed the Department's first-ever People Metrics Dashboard which allows all USDA employees to explore high-level workforce metrics, including hiring activity, separations, promotions, award distribution, and workforce breakdowns for various key demographics in addition to aggregated responses to the indices from the Federal Employment Viewpoint Survey.
- Developed and launched the USDA Inclusive Hiring Toolkit (IHTK), the result of a collaborative effort between the USDA Office of the Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer (OCDIO), Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR), and agency representatives. The Toolkit introduces the concept of inclusive hiring throughout the hiring cycle, from before a vacancy to onboarding a new employee and is appropriate for any employee leading people at USDA, as well as all HR personnel and hiring managers.

Challenges

- Delivering compelling communications from OSEC through the Department's complex structure of staff offices, mission areas, and sub agencies, and ultimately reaching field employees.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Office of Human Resource Management

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Period of Time (Days) Between Request Hiring Validation Date (SF-52 Approved Date) and New Hire Actual Start Date (Entry on Duty Date) (Percentage hired within 80 days)

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|------------------|---------|---------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 60 | 60 | 60 | % Hired Within 80 Days | Increase |
| Actual | --- | 22 | 26 ¹⁷ | 26 | 33 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

In FY 2024, the Department focused on further improving its hiring processes to attract, retain, and maintain a qualified workforce through various initiatives. Key improvements included the development and implementation of enterprise-wide, data-driven dashboards to consistently track hiring metrics and make informed adjustments at the Agency level. For example, by monitoring time-to-hire and mission-critical occupation hiring trends, the USDA was able to identify bottlenecks and implement targeted solutions. Mandatory pre-recruitment consultations between hiring managers and HR specialists ensured that positions were accurately defined and that effective recruitment strategies were in place. Many of these strategies included the focused utilization of direct hire authorities, non-competitive hiring authorities, and Pathways and student hiring authorities. This collaborative approach also helped to address potential concerns and historical recruitment challenges experience with traditional merit promotion and delegated examining actions. To streamline the hiring process and reduce redundancy, the USDA encouraged the use of pooled hiring and shared certificates. This allowed applicants to apply once for similar positions available in multiple offices, saving both time and resources.

In addition to these initiatives, the USDA issued comprehensive guidance documents, conducted training sessions, and developed resources to support both hiring managers and applicants. For instance, the Department provided detailed information on hiring authorities, leave entitlements, and promotion procedures through monthly Lunch & Learn sessions.

These efforts have not only resulted in a successful hiring record but have also positioned the USDA as a leader in federal hiring practices. By continuously adapting and refining its approach, the Department is committed to attracting and retaining top talent while fostering a positive and inclusive work environment.

The time-to-hire metric challenges are being mitigated with the trend analysis completed post the pandemic era. The coordination of a dispersed hiring workforce and applicant pool post-pandemic era requires an overhaul of the blended HR operational components for selections, communications, security clearances, and managerial involvement. Although faced with budgetary and resource constraints for Human Resources staff, as well as process complexities, including delays in approvals, document reviews, position updates, delays in the security clearance process, and response times from various stakeholders the timelines are improving. OHRM is working to collaboratively identify and

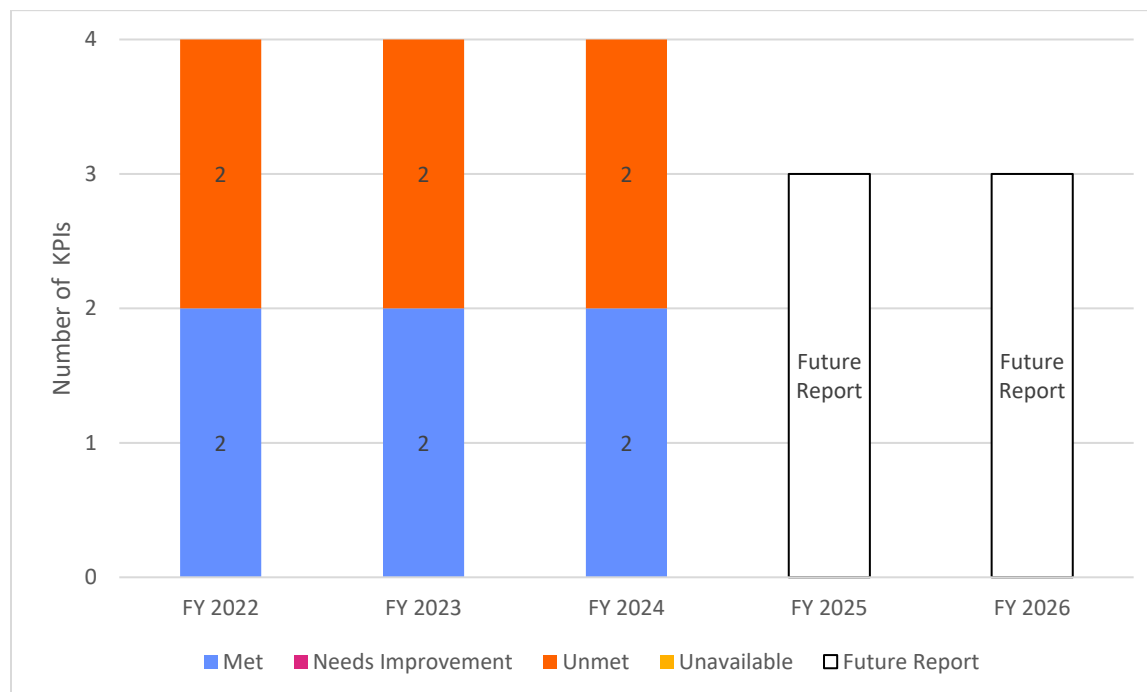
¹⁷The FY 2022 actual was changed from 33% to 26% due to an update in the dashboard calculations that contribute to the methodology of the time-to-hire KPI.

resolve bottlenecks and improve coordination in pursuit of this KPI target as well as enhance the entire process. Some improvements included the establishment of an enterprise-wide Onboard Program, implemented the use of shared certificates, evaluated positions to ensure security clearance designations and the position duties are properly aligned to expedite the security process, and established an HR Development Program to train incoming and existing HR Specialists.

Objective 6.2: Establish a Customer-Centric, Inclusive, High-Performing Workforce that is Representative of America and the Communities We Serve

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Strategic objective 6.2 has been designated as an area making noteworthy progress.

Accomplishments

- REE established a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to recruit Commissioned Corps Officers from the U.S. Public Health Service, enhancing interagency collaboration to address workforce needs.
- NextGen funding has effectively supported a range of outreach and engagement activities, including scholarships and internships. These initiatives aim to raise awareness of career opportunities, remove participation barriers, and equip students with essential job skills.

Challenges

- Borrowers have little to no transparency into their accounts. USDA must develop a solution that will serve various types of borrowers at the enterprise level or multiple integrated solutions that leverage capabilities across the enterprise while customizing functionality for different borrowers.
- Difficulties in transitioning students, fellows, and post-doctoral researchers into permanent positions. REE is utilizing post-doctoral hiring authorities and exploring additional streamlined hiring avenues to support the conversion, strengthening the USDA workforce pipeline.

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Office of the Chief Scientist – Research, Education, and Economics
- Farm Service Agency
- Rural Development

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SCIENTIST – RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS

Number of Agriculture and Food Research Initiative-Supported Undergraduate, Graduate Students, and Post-Doctoral Fellows

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------------------|
| Target | 1,423 | 2,495 | 3,831 | 4,222 | 4,392 | Students | Increase |
| Actual | 1,167 | 4,462 | 5,026 | 7,811 | 8,965 | | |

This KPI is being retired in FY 2025.

Targets for FY 2023 and FY 2024 -have been previously communicated as 5,659 and 5,951 respectively (in FY 2024 explanatory notes (1) <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/22-2024-NIFA.pdf>)

Progress Made in FY 2024

This KPI exceeded the target in the past three fiscal years. In FY 2024, a total of 8,965 students were supported by AFRI, 41% were undergraduate, 45% were graduate, and 14% were post-doctoral. This KPI will be retired at the end of FY 2024 and three new KPIs are being introduced for the FY 2025 budget cycle.

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Average Number of Days to Process Direct Loans

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------------------|
| Target | 32 | 32 | 34 | 34 | 33 | Days | Decrease |
| Actual | 34 | 36 | 31 | 31 | 32 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

The average number of days to process a direct loan application has lengthened over the past decade as the complexity of work has increased, attrition has reduced the level of experience of loan officers, and paper-based manual processes and archaic IT systems are used. To improve customer experience, Farm Loans has underway an initiative to simplify and streamline its business processes for customers and employees, and to modernize or sunset its more than 20 IT systems. Since October 2022, Farm Loans has implemented online tools for direct loan customers that guide them through the loan eligibility and origination process. Direct loan applications and most loan payments can now be submitted electronically. A pilot in 2023 in 166 offices to expedite underwriting for direct loan borrowers was expanded in January 2024 to all offices nationwide which for the ~22% customers who are fast tracked is reducing their loan application processing time by 6 days. Plans are being made for the replacement of the 50-year loan transaction and accounting system that is hampering loan origination and loan servicing support for customers. Investments such as this are providing some efficiencies.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Percentage of OneRD Customers Whose Application Processing Time Does Not Exceed 30 Days¹⁸

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 45 | 55 | 65 | % Applications Processed in < 30 Days | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | 38 | 35 | 21 | | |

Percentage of OneRD Program Customer (Lender) Satisfaction Survey Ratings of 4 or Above

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Target | --- | --- | 60 | 65 | 70 | % Survey Satisfaction | Increase |
| Actual | --- | --- | 47 | 46 | 41 | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

OneRD Customer Experience targets were unmet. Progress has been made in both processing times and customer satisfaction but delays in environmental reviews and insufficient staffing created a setback in meeting the FY 2024 targets. A key barrier is lack of funding to meet demand for Business and Industry (B&I) guarantees. The change to the OneRD approach has increased demand for the program. RD lacks the staff to meet customer expectations. One issue raised by customers is the time it takes for RD to complete environmental reviews and a perceived higher level of documentation in reaction to recent State Internal Reviews OneRD system automation is still unfunded.

RD is committed to cutting red tape and streamlining investment, so we can be a better partner to America’s rural leaders in building prosperity. Through a series of regulatory reforms, USDA eliminated duplicative processes and launched a single platform for the Agency’s four key loan guarantee programs. These programs are:

- Water and Waste Disposal Guaranteed Loan Program
- Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program
- Business and Industry Loan Guarantee Program
- Rural Energy for America Guaranteed Loan Program

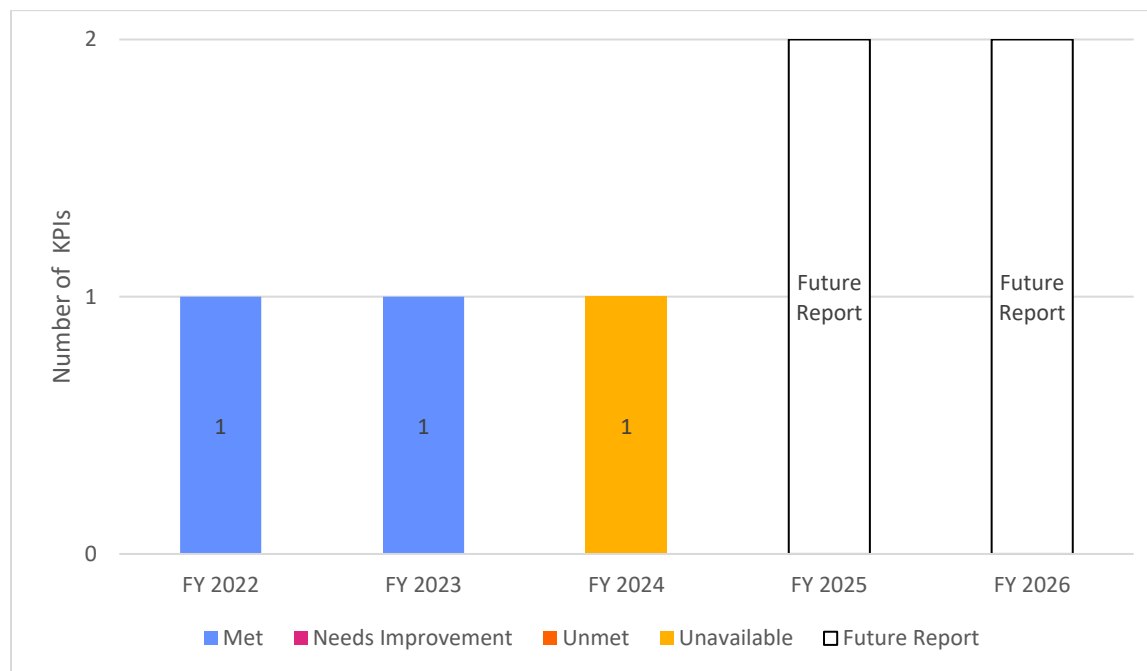
Customer input has been a core component of the development of the rules, processes, and procedures under OneRD. Customer engagement continues on a regular basis with regularly scheduled Lender Office Hours and quarterly Lender Feedback Forums. While RD did not meet its key performance targets for OneRD loan processing or Lender satisfaction, staff remain committed to the streamlined delivery of the commercial guarantees despite the barriers experienced in demand for funds, lack of staffing and IT systems to support the programs.

¹⁸ Receipt to Conditional Commitment.

Objective 6.3: Promote USDA Operational Excellence Through Better Use of Technology and Shared Solutions

Overview of Performance

Performance toward target throughout the Department’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



Strategic objective 6.3 has been designated as a focus area for improvement.

Accomplishments

- Made progress in strengthening USDA’s data program and use of dashboards and data.
- Released a new 3-year USDA Data Strategy for FY 2024-FY 2026, which was developed with all Mission Area involvement and support.
- Made progress to stand up an enterprise artificial intelligence program at USDA, including the development of a new 2-year USDA AI Strategy for FY 2025 and FY 2026. The AI Strategy is scheduled for release Fall 2024.
- Sponsored the inaugural USDA Innovation Symposium, a virtual forum to attract innovators across USDA and showcase their work.

Challenges

- USDA data leadership is key to address opportunities and challenges on:
 - Leveraging governance to manage data as a strategic asset
 - Recruitment and retention of the data workforce
 - Cost-effective data and analytics modernization
 - Leveraging data for internal and external stakeholder decision making
 - Ethical and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Contributing Agencies and Offices

- Office of Property and Environmental Management

OFFICE OF PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Reduction in the Department’s Overall Real Property Footprint through Effective Disposal and Consolidation Efforts

| | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | Units | Preferred Direction |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Target | 31.2 | 31.1 | 31.0 | 30.8 | 30.1 | Million Square Feet | Decrease |
| Actual | 31.2 | 31.1 | 31.0 | 30.1 | TBD ¹⁹ | | |

Progress Made in FY 2024

USDA continues to right-size its real property portfolio in alignment with government-wide return to the physical workplace needs and telework/remote work policy. USDA has identified over 1.2 million square feet of office space to release to GSA. The overall goal of space management and utilization is to create a modern workplace, retain and recruit workers, cut costs, and deliver programs and services. Since the beginning of FY 2023, USDA reduced its footprint by 1.8 million SF resulting in over \$40 million in cost avoidance annually. Final numbers and savings are realized at the end of a lease.

¹⁹ Square footage reductions are realized 3-5 years upon lease termination/release. Federal Real Property Profile data for FY 2024 will be available Mid-February 2025.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------|--|
| AMS | Agricultural Marketing Service |
| APG | Agency Priority Goal |
| APHIS | Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service |
| ARP | American Rescue Plan |
| ARS | Agricultural Research Service |
| ASF | African Swine Fever |
| BIL | Bipartisan Infrastructure Law |
| CEP | Community Eligibility Provision |
| CJEST | Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool |
| CNP | Child Nutrition Program |
| CNPP | Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion |
| CSP | Conservation Stewardship Program |
| CTA | Conservation Technical Assistance |
| DEIA | Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility |
| DGA | Dietary Guidelines for Americans |
| EBT | Electronic Benefits Transfer |
| EQIP | Environmental Quality Incentives Program |
| ERS | Economic Research Service |
| FAS | Foreign Agricultural Service |
| FDPIR | Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations |
| FNS | Food and Nutrition Service |
| FS | Forest Service |
| FLP | Farm Loan Program |
| FSA | Farm Service Agency |
| FSIS | Food Safety and Inspection Service |
| FY | Fiscal Year |
| GPRAMA | GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 |
| HPAI | Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza |
| IP | Intellectual Property |
| IRA | Inflation Reduction Act |
| ITO | Indian Tribal Organization |
| KPI | Key Performance Indicator |
| NASS | National Agricultural Statistics Service |
| NIFA | National Institute of Food and Agriculture |
| NRCS | Natural Resources Conservation Service |
| OBPA | Office of Budget and Program Analysis |
| OCE | Office of Chief Economist |
| OCS | Office of Chief Scientist |
| OCX | Office of Customer Experience |
| RECP | Rural Energy Community Partnerships |
| RMA | Risk Management Agency |
| SNAP | Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program |
| USDA | U.S. Department of Agriculture |
| USTR | U.S. Trade Representative |
| WIC | Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children |