

SECRETARY'S HONOR AWARDS CATEGORIES
Revised October 2003

1. Enhancing Economic Opportunities for Agricultural Producers

This category recognizes contributions which support expanding markets for agricultural products which are critical to the long-term economic health and prosperity of our food and agricultural sector. United States (US) farmers have a wealth of natural resources, cutting edge technologies, and a supporting infrastructure that result in a production capacity beyond domestic needs. This capacity can be used in expanding global markets and in the development of new uses for agriculture in industrial and pharmaceutical markets.

2. Supporting Increased Economic Opportunities and Improved Quality of Life In Rural Areas

This category recognizes contributions which support the enhancement of Rural America (RA), which is home to one fifth of the Nation's population, and is a collage of people and economic activity. Seven out of eight rural counties are now dominated by varying mixes of manufacturing, services, and other non-farming activities. While the majority of rural residents are not dependent on agriculture for their income, many small family farmers rely on local, off-farm employment to supplement their farm income.

Of the 60 million people who live in RA, only 2 million are directly engaged in production agriculture. A diversity of other enterprises, including support services for agriculture, forestry and mining, recreation, and manufacturing, provides most of the jobs and income in RA. The Department of Agriculture's (USDA) role is to enhance the economic opportunities and quality of life for rural residents by providing financial and technical assistance for business and industry, water and waste disposal and other essential community facilities, advanced telecommunications, electric utilities, and housing. Our objective is to ensure that rural residents have equal opportunity to share in the Nation's prosperity and technological advancement.

USDA takes a leadership role in fulfilling Presidential initiatives, such as increasing minority homeowner-ship by the end of the decade and encouraging the production of renewable energy. We will work with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and the full range of private sector interests to achieve a coordinated effort for the realization of Presidential initiatives, as well as other activities important to RA.

3. Enhancing Protection and Safety of the Nation's Agriculture and Food Supply

This category recognizes contributions which support USDA's unique and critical responsibilities to help ensure the safety of US food and fiber supply chain and the security of US agricultural production system. The Department will continue to assess current systems and develop countermeasures against threats to farms and ranches, in coordination with the private sector, other Federal agencies, and State governments. Research programs are essential to an

effective US agricultural biosecurity program to develop methods of early detection, rapid and accurate assessment, and immediate responses that prevent spread and control harmful agents. USDA facilities and operations must also be secure from external and internal threats.

4. Improving the Nation's Nutrition and Health

This category recognizes commitment by endorsing America's health through food and nutrition education, guidance and promotion to the general public and to targeted groups. We teach, inform and motivate Americans to use this information to improve their diets and physical activity patterns. We expand research and scientific knowledge about public health. By promoting better diets, reaching children early and ensuring access to healthy food, we make a major contribution to the Nation's health.

USDA is seeking to contribute to significant changes in the US population's nutrition status, and in management of the nutrition assistance programs for 2007. We are targeting:

- Reductions in overweight and obesity that are consistent with the Nation's Healthy People 2010 objectives published by the US Department of Health and Human Services;
- A 30 percent decrease in hunger among low-income people;
- A 15 percent increase in the participation rate among eligible people in the Food Stamp Program, a 12 percent increase in the participation rate in the National School Lunch Program, and continued high participation rate in the Women Infants and Children Program;
- Five point increases in the Healthy Eating Index (HE) scores of children and low-income people, and a 2-point increase among the general public (HE uses food intake data to measure the quality and variety of the American diet).

5. Protecting and Enhancing the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment

The category recognizes contributions supporting the management of our natural resources, both public and private, which is a continual balancing act between sometimes contrary and competing concerns. In maintaining this balance, it is imperative that a portfolio approach be utilized that incorporates various conservation management tools including technical assistance, cost-share, incentive, land retirement, easement and regulatory assistance programs. In ensuring these program funds are spent effectively and leveraged wisely, continued and increased cooperation with State, local, and Tribal governments, as well as private for-profit and not-for-profit partner organizations is needed.

6. Supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights

This category recognizes individuals who demonstrate a commitment by working to strengthen USDA's management through vigorous execution of the President's Management Agenda. Better management will result in more efficient program operations that offer improved

customer service and more effective stewardship of taxpayer funds. This goal may be accomplished by:

- Ensuring an efficient, high-performing, diverse, competitively sources workforce, aligned with mission priorities and working cooperatively with USDA partners and the private sector.
- Enhancing internal controls, data integrity, management information, and program and policy improvements as reflected by an unqualified audit opinion and a reduction of erroneous payments by USDA programs.
- Implementing business processes and information technology needed to make our services available electronically.
- Linking budget decisions and program priorities more closely with program performance, and recognize the full cost of programs.

7. Heroism and Emergency Response

This category recognizes USDA employees who perform acts of unusual selflessness or heroism in the line of duty. This category also recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in responding to floods, fires, storms, earthquakes, disease outbreaks, or other conditions requiring emergency response.

In making nominations, agencies must give equal consideration to all employees regardless of duty station or grade level. Agencies must also ensure that nominations are nondiscriminatory on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, protected genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal or source of income (public assistance).