



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education, and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

May 8, 2003

SUBJECT: ARS FY 2003 Competitive Sourcing Studies

TO: All ARS Employees

FROM: Edward B. Knipling /s/
Acting Administrator

As a follow on to Under Secretary Jen's April 2 message to all Research, Education, and Economics (REE) employees, this memorandum is to notify you that the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) has selected several specific work functions for competitive sourcing study in 2003. These activities are located at Ames, Iowa, and the Beltsville Area (BA)/National Agricultural Library (NAL).

The functions under study at Ames are the facilities operations and maintenance services supporting the National Animal Disease Center (NADC) and the National Soil Tilth Laboratory (NSTL); and the research support services at NADC. Functions under study at Beltsville Area (including the U.S. National Arboretum) and at the National Agricultural Library are the facilities operations and maintenance services, the research farming services, and the security services. No other ARS activities are scheduled for study at this time.

The studies are scheduled to begin May 8, 2003, with an estimated completion of all studies within 18 months. At town hall meetings conducted this morning in Ames and Beltsville, employees working in these functional areas were notified.

Competitive sourcing is a major initiative of the President's Management Agenda and is being implemented in various ways throughout the Federal Government. The competitive sourcing initiative is a management tool for Federal agencies to find the best, most cost effective ways to carry out agency functions that are considered as not inherently governmental. It is important to note that the objective of competitive sourcing is to increase organizational efficiency, not to replace Federal workers with private-sector contractors. Experience with these public-private competitions in other Government



agencies, and even in ARS in the past, shows that in-house workers are successful in a significant proportion of these competitions. When they are, it is because they can provide the best service for the best price. As a result, the agency, as well as the American taxpayer benefits.

I recognize that the lengthy process before the current studies are complete and decisions are made will lead to some apprehension about the potential outcomes. However, I am confident the studies will proceed in a professional and objective manner to define the most efficient organization. ARS is committed to open communication throughout the study process and whatever transition assistance, if any, may ultimately be required. To this end, an REE Competitive Sourcing website address has been established at <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/initiatives/a-76/>. This website provides a Communications Plan with key actions and timelines required to conduct the studies as well as some of the commonly asked questions about competitive sourcing.

If you have additional questions, please contact your immediate supervisor.