



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

April 9, 2021

## USDA Civil Rights Policy Statement

At USDA, we are recommitting ourselves to the values of equity, inclusion, and equal opportunity for each other and those we serve. As Secretary, I will work with our dedicated team to actively advance racial justice and equity for one another. We will do so by rooting out systemic racism and strengthening civil rights programs while building trust within and outside the Department, ensuring transparency and the equitable delivery of quality programs and services, and holding ourselves accountable toward meeting those goals.

As a Department that operates with excellence in leadership, we must affirm and ensure USDA provides equal employment opportunity for all employees and applicants for employment, regardless of race, religion, color, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity and sexual orientation), national origin, age, genetic information, or disability. All employees have the freedom to compete on a fair and level playing field with equal opportunity for available employment and advancement opportunities. Equal employment opportunity covers all personnel/employment programs, management practices, and decisions, including recruitment/hiring, merit promotion, transfer, reassignments, training and career development, benefits, and separation. These civil rights principles are more than employees' rights by law—they are core values at the USDA.

USDA strives to become a leader in EEO and a model employer. All USDA applicants and employees have the right not only to be free from harassment and discrimination but also to raise an allegation of harassment of discrimination and not fear reprisal. I will continue to enforce zero tolerance toward any form of workplace harassment. Agencies are required to respond to, address, and correct any harassing conduct before it becomes severe or pervasive. USDA will continue to quickly process complaints of harassment, discrimination, and reprisal and provide robust EEO training to all employees.

I will hold all employees and managers accountable for doing their part to ensure all USDA applicants, customers, constituents, and stakeholders are provided equal access to all opportunities, programs, and services available through USDA. Accordingly, all senior leaders, managers, and supervisors must model values-based leadership and appropriate behavior, leading always by example, treating everyone with dignity and respect, and promoting an ethical, equitable, and inclusive culture. All employees must comply with EEO principles as we perform the Department's mission.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas J. Vilsack".

Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary