



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

# MyUSDA

## A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 5, Issue 4

March 2015

### USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TALENT MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUT-REACH

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### Pledge to Participate in Telework Week, April 6-10

USDA 2015 Telework Week is April 6<sup>th</sup>– 10<sup>th</sup>. If you are telework eligible and have an approved telework agreement, please pledge to participate. Telework eligible employees should work with their supervisor to obtain an approved [Telework Agreement](#) and fully participate. You must pledge to be counted by completing this survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2015TeleworkPledgeWeekSurvey>. The survey will remain open until the close of business on April 10, 2015. Participants may pledge a minimum of one day up to a maximum of five days during this week. *(Note: Bargaining Unit employees must follow their collective bargaining agreements and corresponding policy.)* If employees have any questions regarding Telework Week or the survey, please send inquiries to [Telework@dm.usda.gov](mailto:Telework@dm.usda.gov).

### Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Facts

Here are a few facts about the upcoming Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) that will be coming out in May to a random sample of USDA employees.

**Why is this survey important to me?** This survey is about hearing employee opinions about leadership and management practices that contribute to agency performance and measures employee satisfaction with the agency. As well as the satisfaction of employees with the agency's work environment, rewards and recognition for professional accomplishment and personal contributions to achieving organizational mission, opportunity for professional development and growth, and opportunity to contribute to achieving organizational mission.

**How will the survey be administered?** The FEVS is a web-based survey. Randomly selected permanent full and part-time employees will receive an e-mail invitation from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to participate.

**When is the survey administered?** The survey is scheduled to be sent to USDA employees by OPM sometime during the first full week of May.

**Who is eligible to take the survey?** OPM will send the survey to a randomly selected sample of full-time permanent and part-time permanent, non-seasonal employees on-board as of October 31, 2014. Completing the survey is voluntary. For more FEVS facts go to the FEVS tab at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vu/index.php>.

You can contact MyUSDA by emailing [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov), and be sure to visit the [USDA Cultural Transformation Website](#).

## New Recruiting Strategy Piloted at Major Ag Expo

By Karen Comfort, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

The 30,000 people attending the 2015 International Production and Processing Expo (IPPE) in Atlanta, Georgia set an attendance record for the world's largest annual poultry, meat and feed industry event. AMS staffed a booth at the IPPE and—even more importantly—piloted an innovative and efficient recruiting initiative at the same time.

An AMS recruiting team from the Livestock, Poultry and Seed (LPS) Program, Commodity Procurement (CP) Program and Office of the Administrator, along with Human Resources Specialists from USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and a representative from Departmental Management, teamed up to pilot a "direct-hire event" at the nearby Sam Nunn Federal Building. They capitalized on the IPPE's own recruitment event that pulls in hundreds of students from approximately 30 colleges and universities from around the country. AMS received dozens of applications from a highly diverse, talented group of students for positions within LPS' Quality Assessment Division and CP.

AMS was able to conduct interviews and offer jobs all within the same three-day window! The recruitment event not only allowed AMS and APHIS an opportunity to try out this hiring mechanism, but it served as a perfect outreach venue to teach students about careers at AMS and how to navigate USAJobs to find positions. AMS processed 12 applicants and extended seven tentative job offers, two of which have been accepted to date.

At the IPPE booth, AMS employees proudly informed their visitors about the Agency's many services and answered their questions. Booth visitors included representatives from industry, large-volume food buyers, colleges, state governments, U.S. territories and organizations such as 4-H and FFA.

**Photo:** Human Resources Specialist Brian Fleming from USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (second from right) and Greta Samuel from AMS Commodity Procurement Program (far left) talk to students interested in learning about AMS job opportunities.



## 10<sup>th</sup> Immigrant & Minority Farmers Conference

It's hard to believe that a conference that began with a couple of people has grown to an event that includes over 350 conference participants. The 10<sup>th</sup> Immigrant and Minority Farmers Conference (IMFC) took place February 7-8, 2015, at the University of Minnesota Continuing Education Center in St. Paul, Minnesota. During this 10-year period the IMCF has grown significantly and participants are coming from Wisconsin, Ohio, Maine, and other states. About 60% of the attendees were farmers from different ethnic backgrounds. The entire conference was simultaneously interpreted into the languages of Hmong, Spanish, Bhutanese, Nepalese, Karen and Somali.

During the opening session on Saturday, Feb 7<sup>th</sup>, Susan Stokes, Executive Director for Farmers Legal Action Group, acknowledged two employees from the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service ([NRCS](#)) for the contributions they have made to IMFC. Both Dr. Nigatu Tadesse of FSA and Cutrina Moreland of NRCS were involved in planning the IMFC conferences for the last 10 years. Tadesse and Moreland's contribution helped shape the direction of this annual conference. In January, 2015, Ms. Moreland passed away unexpectedly. Her presence and involvement will be sorely missed.

"February 7<sup>th</sup> marked the anniversary of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill)," said Walter Albarran, Acting Minnesota NRCS State Conservationist. "The Farm Bill has helped thousands of people in our country." Albarran encouraged conference participants to stop by their local NRCS field office to discuss goals and work with staff on developing a conservation plan.

## Michigan's USDA Interagency Black History Program

**By Diane G. Gardin**  
**Federal Women's Program Manager**  
**Support Services Specialist, Forest Service**

Michigan's USDA Interagency Black History Program was held recently at the Green Stone Farm Credit Services in East Lansing, Michigan. The agencies attending were Northern Research Station, Forest Service, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development. There were over 40 diverse attendees. The guest speaker was Dr. William Anderson a Professor of Surgery and Senior Advisor to the Dean of Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr. Anderson is best known for his active involvement in the Civil Rights Movement of the sixties. He along with his late wife Norma, earned a place in American History with Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy as part of the Greatest Generation that changed the face of the nation.



**Photo** (left to right): Lucretia Stewart (FS-FIA,) Dr. William Anderson, Professor of Surgery (Speaker), Troy Nichols (FSA), Tamarra Roseburgh (NRCS), Diane Gardin (FS-NRS), Reggie Magee (RD), and Elva Rosenthal (RD).

### LATINOS LEADING AT USDA

**By Jacqueline Padron, Office of Human Resource Management** “Best gathering for Latino employees yet.”

“Didn’t want the panel to end.” This is some of the feedback received from Latino employees participating in the newly-launched Leadership, Education, and Development (LEAD) Initiative. This initiative is co-led by Anne Alonzo, AMS Administrator, and Jacqueline Padron, USDA’s Hispanic Employment Program Manager, OHRM, in partnership with the Virtual University. It is a voluntary and informal program scheduled during brown bag lunch gatherings.

LEAD’s objective is to encourage GS-13 to GS-15 Latino employees to continue on their leadership journey into the executive ranks by offering networking, training and developmental opportunities, and mentorship. According to the Office of Personnel Management, Latinos, women, and individuals with disabilities are the groups that remain underrepresented across the Federal government. At USDA, while we are trending positively at 7.67%, we remain below the Federal government average of 8.3% and the Civilian Labor Force of 10%. In the USDA executive ranks, Latinos comprise 8.12%.

Employees recognize the importance of becoming better prepared to assume future USDA leadership roles. LEAD also fulfills the objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding between Secretary Vilsack, USDA, and the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda, a nonprofit and nonpartisan coalition of the 37 leading national Hispanic organizations. With USDA’s senior leadership support, LEAD is a pilot initiative that can be replicated with other groups. For more information, contact Jacqueline Padron ([jacqueline.padron@dm.usda.gov](mailto:jacqueline.padron@dm.usda.gov)).

AMS Administrator Anne Alonzo (far right) provides opening remarks at the LEAD kickoff gathering.

**¡Adelante!**





## Farm Service Agency (FSA) Workforce Engagement

**By Theve Gray, Farm Service Agency**

*"No farmer sows the seeds of their crops and then walks away for the rest of the year. A healthy harvest doesn't happen on autopilot. Farmers need to assess and monitor the crop, land, weather and other influencing factors from planting to harvest. Without attention, the crop will not flourish."*

This quote from a recent Town Hall meeting is a great Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) analogy for FSA. It is important to assess and monitor the health of our people and our organization. Understanding our successes and challenges helps us foster those opportunities to continue growing into one of the best places to work.

Since 2012, the FSA FEVS team has been analyzing and conducting focus groups. These focus groups provide employees the opportunity to impact change and determine unique strategies and resolutions relevant to each Deputy Area (DA). The feedback helps senior leaders better understand the strengths and challenges and establish the FSA FEVS Action Plan.

The Workforce Engagement (WE) team, made up of members from various FSA offices, collaborates on the FEVS Action Plan. This team reports directly to Administrator Dolcini. Leadership support and active communication from the Administrator through a series of e-mail communications has been an asset in signifying the importance of employee engagement. Mr. Dolcini has spoken with managers and employees on FEVS scores and proposed actions to address challenge areas. On April 21, 2015 he will hold a WE Town Hall.

In addition to the FSA Action Plan, each DA is required to submit an action plan to help them address their specific successes and challenges. Change does not happen overnight but when people of good will come together, great things can happen. It is always important to celebrate successes and accomplishments. Together, we'll make our organization one of the best places to work.

Are you curious about where your organization ranked in the Best Places to work? Find that information at 2014 Best Places to Work Rankings: <http://bestplacestowork.org/BPTW/about/>

## USDA Participates in New Beginning Veteran Farmer/Rancher Workshop

**By Karen Comfort, AMS**

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, Richard Marowski, a Southeast Territory Federal Program Manager with the Agricultural Marketing Service Fruit and Vegetable Program's Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Division, participated in a New Beginning Veteran Farmer/Rancher Development Workshop hosted by Veterans Farms in Jacksonville, FL. Veterans Farms mission is to help Veterans reintegrate back into society through the use of their "Beginning Farmer Fellowship Program," which empowers veterans to start their own local farm or to work for larger farming organizations.

Representatives from USDA's Farm Service Agency, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and several for-profit organizations participated in the event. They provided information to veterans, family members and service members interested in agricultural careers. Marowski provided information to Veterans Farms on AMS' Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Program and benefits associated with inspections services. The event supports Secretary Tom Vilsack's goal for [New and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers](#) initiative. In addition to hiring qualified and motivated veterans into its program, SCI has had great success across the country in enhancing the economic vitality and quality of life in rural America through the [USDA StrikeForce Initiative](#).



**Photo:** (Left) Fruit and Vegetable Program Federal Program Manager Richard Marowski (left) reaches out to veterans transitioning to the civilian workforce at the New Beginning Veteran Farmer/Rancher Development Workshop hosted by Veterans Farms in Jacksonville, FL.

## Selma Remembered

As reported in the press, thousands of marchers, along with government officials, participated in an event over a few weeks ago to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday. On “Bloody Sunday,” March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965, civil rights protesters were beaten and sprayed with tear gas as they attempted to walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, just outside of Selma, Alabama.

While in Selma for a SNAP EBT Farmers Market Sign-Up event last week, several staff members from Food Nutrition Service’ Southeast Regional Office (SERO), based in Atlanta, took time to visit the Edmund Pettus Bridge and reflect on the events of that day, which many believe helped spur passage of the Voting Rights Act.

**Photo (left):** *SERO staff members, Bernadette Adams, Gina Bell, Erin Swanson-Hall, Rajonia Roberts, Damasi Bell and Karen Powell, pose in front of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama recently.*



## USDA Employees Graduated from OPM’s First Federal Internal Coach Boot Camp

**By** Steve Sanders (OCIO-NITC)

On February 5, 2015, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) celebrated the graduation ceremony for 64 first graduates of the Federal Internal Coaching Boot Camp training. Among the graduates, ten USDA employees completed the rigorous 128 hours of coach training required to complete the program. Katherine Archuleta, OPM’s Director was the keynote speaker for this event. She offered words of inspiration and challenged the newly graduated coaches to be a part of the cultural change needed in the Federal government to attract today’s best and brightest talent. USDA’s coaches represent many agencies and bring a broad range of talent and coaching experience to their coaching practice. For more information about engaging a coach, contact [virtualuniversity@dm.usda.gov](mailto:virtualuniversity@dm.usda.gov)

## Unsung Hero’s Awards

**Submission date is closing fast, Tuesday, April 14th!**

The nomination form may also be found with event information at <http://opeda.org/Events.html>. Please submit completed nominations to [Opeda.UnsungHero@dm.usda.gov](mailto:Opeda.UnsungHero@dm.usda.gov) no later than Tuesday, April 14th, 2015. Completed nominations may also be mailed to OPEDA, P.O. Box 23762, Washington, D.C..

If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to: [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov) or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).



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**If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov)**

### Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

**The monthly deadline for submissions is the last work day of the month.**

## Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to *MyUSDA* should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing some aspect of the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. The ideal submission includes photos or graphics along with a brief description of the event. The ideal word count for articles is 150-200. All submissions are subject to editing and Departmental review.

Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline, a first-person account, or any work-related activity, event, or observance demonstrating the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Action Items: Leadership; Recruitment & Retention; Talent Management; Employee Development; and, Customer Focus & Community Outreach.

**Email submissions or further inquiries to [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov).**