



Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# **Equity Action Plan**

**(July 2023)**



[www.usda.gov/equity/action-plan](http://www.usda.gov/equity/action-plan)

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## Message from the Under Secretary



*Under Secretary Alexis Taylor*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs (TFAA) Equity Action Plan highlights the great work we accomplished last year to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in the U.S. agricultural community; it also shows our work is not complete and also highlights the work we will continue to do moving forward.

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*We at TFAA are dedicated to working vigorously to promote equal employment and to ensure equal access to our programs by removing any barriers that may prevent underserved communities from participating fully in our programs.*

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TFAA continually strives to build a workplace that welcomes and embraces all employees, empowering them to be their authentic selves. We believe in honoring the diverse experiences and contributions that each individual brings to our team. Our staff’s unique voices and perspectives contribute immensely to the success of our agency, and we are proud to lead a team that values diversity.

To ensure the long-term success of TFAA’s mission, we are also 100 percent committed to serving our stakeholders—both external and internal—and continuing to identify opportunities that will advance equity, diversity, and inclusion across the agricultural industry and rural America.

*–Alexis Taylor  
Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs*

## Message from the Administrator



*FAS Administrator Daniel Whitley*

USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) is the lead agency at USDA tasked with promoting exports of U.S. agricultural products through market intelligence, trade policy, trade capacity building, and trade promotion programs. Together, these capabilities allow FAS to engage foreign markets along the market development spectrum—from developing economies to mature markets—facilitating an environment for trade growth opportunities for U.S. agriculture.

FAS also serves as the voice for U.S. agriculture in international affairs, bringing together the diverse views of American farmers, ranchers, processors, and trade associations, as well as U.S. Government agencies and non-governmental organizations. Given the broad scope and critical importance of the Agency’s mission, FAS recognizes the importance of maintaining a diverse, inclusive, and dynamic workforce in fulfilling its mission responsibilities. To lead by example and fully represent U.S. values, we must also ensure that our trade policies prioritize inclusivity and equity, provide opportunities for economic growth and development for all communities, and include historically marginalized populations.

– Daniel Whitley  
FAS Administrator

FAS's Equity Action Plan follows three chief strategies. First, we are growing opportunities for diverse farmers, producers, and businesses. This is the goal of the first five of our seven priority equity actions, presented below. Second, we are ensuring that our support of organizations is a force against discrimination. This is the goal of Action 6. And finally, we are working to lower the barriers that have limited access to agricultural careers for members of some communities by strengthening partnerships with minority-serving institutions (MSIs). This is the goal of actions 7-8.

## GROWING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIVERSE AGRIBUSINESSES

### Summary of Accomplishments

- In 2022, FAS hosted 100 U.S. agribusinesses across 5 agricultural trade missions. Of those U.S. businesses, 45 were small and medium enterprises (SMEs), a proportion that has increased substantially. Additionally, of those 100 U.S. agribusinesses, 30 self-identified as minority-owned, 21 as female-owned, 4 as veteran-owned, and 2 as tribal-owned, with 13 identifying across multiple categories. U.S. companies in these categories totaled 44 businesses, of which 33 were also SMEs. The 44 total minority-owned businesses accounted for \$10.6 million in projected 12-month sales to their respective trade mission markets, more than one quarter of all trade mission projected sales in 2022.
- FAS is engaged in its public-private partnership with the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) through FAS export market development programs. In Program Year 2022, IAC was [awarded Market Access Program funding](#) to promote tribal agricultural food and agricultural products abroad. FAS works closely with IAC to support their strategic planning and program implementation, which has resulted in increased tribal agricultural exports and an increasingly diverse product mix, starting with seafood and expanding to processed products and beverages. Also in 2022, IAC participated in two USDA trade missions and three USDA-endorsed trade shows.
- In June 2022, the USDA Agriculture Post at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations (UN) Mission in Rome, Italy, organized a session at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to share what USDA has learned and is doing to address longstanding discrimination and inequities in agriculture. The goal was to demonstrate how the United States is tackling these problems head-on and to encourage FAO members to reflect on how this relates to their own countries and regions.

### Actions

#### Action 1: Continue to Grow the Diversity of Companies Participating in Trade Missions

- FAS will continue its emphasis on small- and medium-sized business participation in USDA [trade missions](#) and will implement an outreach plan for diverse community participation. USDA's Agribusiness Trade Mission program strongly encourages participation from small- and minority-owned businesses. In 2022, nearly 40 percent of U.S. companies that

participated in USDA trade missions were women-, minority-, or tribal-owned, and 45 percent were small- and medium-sized.

- FAS will continue and expand outreach and collaboration with the IAC, as well as work with State Regional Trade Groups to find more diverse businesses interested in exporting.
- FAS will explore new ways to reach minority and underserved communities with announcements for USDA trade mission participation, including utilizing contacts with the USDA Equity Commission and colleagues at Commerce, the Small Business Administration, and minority-focused chambers of commerce.

#### Action 2: Expand Foreign Markets for Tribal-Produced Products

FAS's Global Program remains engaged in its public-private partnership with the IAC through FAS export [market development programs](#) and will continue to include tribal equity considerations in internal strategic planning and market prioritization exercises. In Program Year 2023, IAC used Market Access Program funding to promote tribal agriculture abroad. FAS works closely with IAC to support their strategic planning and program implementation, which has resulted in increased tribal agricultural exports and an increasingly diverse product mix. FAS will continue working with IAC to share best practices for market development and conduct regular outreach, including providing training to tribes and tribal companies seeking market information and export guidance and encouraging the participation of tribal-owned businesses in USDA trade missions and USDA-endorsed trade shows.

#### Action 3: Increase the Diversity of Agricultural Trade Advisory Committees' Representation of U.S. Agricultural Products, Exporters, Experts, and Geography

Starting in early 2023, FAS developed a recruitment strategy, a new brochure, and a plan to target and focus on minority participation in the [agricultural trade advisory committees](#). In addition to traditional recruitment efforts such as issuing a news release and making announcements on Twitter, GovDelivery, and LinkedIn, targeted efforts include:

- Meeting with USDA Liaison Officers at 1890 Land Grant and National and Regional Outreach Coordinators and following up with an email of the news release and recruitment brochure for further dissemination.
- Conducting targeted outreach to the Cultivating Change Foundation, Black Professionals in Food and Agriculture, Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences, and the National Black Growers Council.

Based on applications received and initial recommendations for applicant acceptances, the overall gender, racial, and geographic diversity of committees will likely increase. We expect new members to begin their term in the fall of 2023.

#### Action 4: Translate Materials to Reach Diverse Audiences

FAS will work with USDA to translate our website so that people speaking any language can read our materials and learn about our programs. In addition, by translating our International Climate Hub website, we will be able to share globally the best practices and research developed through the Partnership for Climate Smart Commodities.

#### Action 5: Focus on Empowering Women Internationally

FAS will continue to support international women scientists, producers, and business owners through FAS' fellowship and scientific exchange programs. This includes the prioritization of training topics focused on supporting women in learning skills to better participate in commerce both locally and internationally. In FY22, 77 women were trained from FAS' fellowship and scientific exchange programs.

### ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

#### Action 6: Ensure that Grantees are Committed to Non-Discrimination

FAS is working to update the terms and conditions governing FAS grants and agreements to include non-discriminatory language and options, consistent with the White House's [Memorandum](#) on "Advancing the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI+) Persons Around the World."

- FAS is working with the Office of the General Counsel and USDA grants specialists to put together an appropriate template for all USDA agencies to be able to insert in their grants and agreements.
- FAS is strengthening its partnership with Equality USDA to provide materials to our agricultural attachés serving in embassies abroad so that they can disseminate the updated USDA non-discrimination policy on LGBTQI+ once it becomes available.
- FAS is working with the U.S. State Department to encourage foreign affairs agencies, including FAS, to strengthen efforts to recruit, hire, retain, and promote LGBTQI+ persons internationally.

### LOWERING BARRIERS TO ENTRY INTO AGRICULTURAL CAREERS BY STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS WITH MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS

#### Summary of Accomplishments

- FAS entered into a [cooperative agreement with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities](#) (HACU) to implement the *Agricultural Export Market Challenge*, an experiential learning activity aimed at junior- or senior-year undergraduate students attending a minority-serving educational institution.
- In FY22, FAS' Fellowship Programs Division, through the Scientific Cooperation Research Program (SCRIP), [awarded funding to Texas State University, Tennessee State University, and the University of Hawaii at Manoa](#). SCRIP supports joint research, education, and extension projects between the U.S. and international agricultural professionals.
- The [FAS Diversity Fellowship Program \(FDFP\) was established](#) in 2022. The new FDFP funds the relevant graduate studies of four students from MSIs and introduces them to FAS' work in the United States and abroad. The FDFP will be administered by the Office

of Diplomatic Fellowships at Howard University, targeting aspiring graduate students majoring in agricultural studies at MSIs across the United States. Fellows will complete a 10-week domestic internship in FAS DC starting this summer and a 10-week international internship with an FAS office overseas after the first year of their studies. The FDFP advances the Department’s goal of increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion across the Foreign Service.

## Actions

### Action 7: Strengthen Relationships with Minority-Serving Institutions

FAS will continue to increase outreach efforts with 1994 Tribal Land-Grant Colleges and Universities and the 1862 and 1890 Land-Grant Institutions to raise awareness of funding opportunities through FAS’ fellowship and exchange programs. This includes expanding outreach efforts, such as hosting bi-annual webinars and attending MSI conferences, seminars, and workshops. These platforms will be used to expose MSIs to FAS’ numerous programs and demonstrate opportunities to collaborate on international agriculture. The Fellowship Programs Division will track the number of fellowship and exchange opportunities awarded to MSI affiliates.

### Action 8: Invest in Underserved Communities Through the Agricultural Export Market Challenge

As part of the mission to promote international agricultural research, extension, and teaching (7 USC § 3291), the [Agricultural Export Market Challenge](#) (the Challenge) is an immersive learning experience using the case study method and roleplaying to simulate the work that FAS performs every day to increase export opportunities for U.S. food and agricultural products. The Challenge is designed to increase student awareness around the work of FAS, stimulate student interest in a career in the Agency or international agriculture, and provide a rich learning experience for students, all while fostering FAS’ relationships with participating institutions. In 2023, 50 of the participating students requested and signed up to receive information on FAS career opportunities and press releases. The Challenge gives students experience and knowledge regarding international agricultural trade negotiations that they may use to secure employment post-graduation.

- FAS employees worked with HACU and professors from Texas A&M Kingsville, a Hispanic-Serving Institution, to develop a detailed case study that the students used. This year’s case study topic was a climate-smart processed agricultural product.
- To expand the project, three more teams were accepted in 2023 than were accepted in 2022. Each team partnered with one or two FAS employees, who served as mentors throughout the Challenge. More than 30 FAS employees (both Foreign and Civil service) served as mentors.

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For more information on equity at TFAA and all of USDA, see [usda.gov/equity](https://usda.gov/equity)



## Selected Equity-Related Resources and Information

### USDA Equity-Related Summary Reports and Guidance

#### Programmatic Equity at USDA

- [Equity Website](#)
- [Equity Accomplishments](#)
- Equity Action Plan: [Full Plan | Summary](#) (February 2022)
- [USDA Environmental Justice Scorecard](#)
- [USDA Advisory Committees](#)
- [Get Started! A Guide to USDA Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers](#) (July 2022)

#### Equity Commission

- [Equity Commission Website](#)
- [2023 Interim Report | USDA Response \(English\)](#) (February 2023)
- [Informe Interino 2023 | Respuesta al Informe Interino de la Comisión de Equidad del USDA | \(En Español\)](#) (Febrero 2023)

#### TFAA Resources

- [Internships, Fellowships, and Career Opportunities at FAS](#)
- [The Export Credit Guarantee Program](#)
- [International Fellowship Programming](#)
- [Market Development Programs](#)

#### Selected Equity-Related Executive Orders and White House Resources

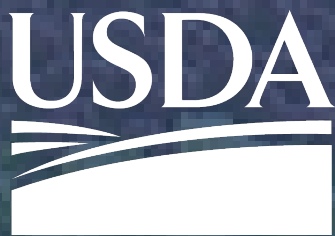
- [White House Equity Page](#)
- [Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#)
- [Executive Order 14091, Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#)
- [Executive Order 14096, Revitalizing our Nation’s Commitment to Environmental Justice for All](#)
- [Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments](#)
- [Presidential Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships](#)
- [The Path to Achieving Justice40](#)

## USDA Mission Statement

“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 delivering equitable and climate-smart opportunities that inspire and help America thrive.”

## Department Equity Action Plan Strategies

- **Reducing Barriers to USDA Programs**  
USDA is reducing barriers to programs and improving support for underserved farmers, ranchers, landowners, businesses, and communities, including by providing ways for stakeholders to share their experiences, insights, and needs and by incorporating that input into policy development and implementation improvement.
- **Partnering with Trusted Technical Assistance Providers**  
USDA is partnering with trusted technical assistance providers to ensure that underserved producers and communities have the support they need to access USDA programs.
- **Directing USDA Programs to Those Who Need Them the Most**  
USDA programs are targeting those who need them the most, including by increasing infrastructure investments that benefit underserved communities.
- **Expanding Equitable Access to USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs**  
USDA is expanding equitable access to USDA nutrition assistance programs to ensure that those who qualify can participate, those who participate get benefits, and those who receive those benefits can use them conveniently and in ways that promote improvements in their health and well-being.
- **Advancing Equity in Federal Procurement**  
USDA is advancing equity in Federal procurement by providing underserved and disadvantaged businesses with tools and resources to increase access to funding opportunities and expand their network to develop critical local, State, regional, and National relationships.
- **Upholding Federal Trust and Treaty Responsibilities to Indian Tribes**  
USDA is upholding Federal trust and treaty responsibilities to Indian Tribes, removing barriers to accessing USDA programs, expanding Tribal self-determination policies, and incorporating indigenous values and perspectives in program design and delivery.
- **Committing Unwaveringly to Civil Rights**  
USDA is upholding general Federal trust and treaty responsibilities to Indian Tribes, removing barriers to access USDA programs, embracing Tribal self-determination principles, and incorporating indigenous values and perspectives in program design and delivery.
- **Operating with Transparency and Accountability**  
USDA is operating transparently and accountably, providing information on Department programs that Congress, stakeholders, and the general public need to hold us to account on our equity agenda, and working systematically to collect and take account of public feedback.



<https://www.fas.usda.gov/about-fas/civil-rights>  
USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.