

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Statement of Regulatory Priorities

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is dedicated to supporting American agriculture, farmers, ranchers, foresters, and rural communities, while ensuring the efficient delivery of services. For the upcoming year, USDA's regulatory focus will promote innovation, strengthening markets for U.S. agricultural products, enhancing program integrity, and improving operational efficiency. These priorities align with the Administration's emphasis on fostering economic growth, reducing regulatory burdens, and ensuring effective, lawful governance.

USDA's regulatory agenda reflects its commitment to implementing Executive Order 14192, *Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation*, and Executive Order 14219, *Ensuring Lawful Governance and Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Deregulatory Initiative*. Additionally, USDA will continue to implement the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA)* to enhance program payments, strengthen farm security, and provide long-term certainty for American farmers and ranchers.

Key Regulatory Priorities

The Administration is pursuing goals in four key areas: enhancing oversight, strengthening eligibility standards, streamlining regulatory burden(s), and promoting American energy.

Enhancing Oversight

USDA will pursue rulemakings to strengthen oversight, reduce fraud, and improve program integrity through the following actions:

- **Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA).** To strengthen the federal government's ability to monitor and safeguard U.S. farmland from foreign adversarial interests, USDA initiated an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to modernize the reporting requirements under the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA). This action supports the Administration's National Farm Security Action Plan and reflects a renewed emphasis on farmland security as a matter of national interest. The ANPR solicits public input on

how to close longstanding gaps in foreign ownership reporting, improve data accuracy and timeliness, and enhance USDA's coordination with federal partners. By updating and expanding the scope of 7 CFR part 781, USDA will replace a regulation that has not been revised since 2006 and ensure the Department has the tools necessary to detect, deter, and disclose foreign acquisitions of U.S. agricultural land.

- **Strengthening Integrity and Reducing Retailer Fraud in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).** To strengthen program integrity and reduce retailer fraud in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), this rule proposes new requirements designed to deter fraud, abuse, and non-compliance. The proposed regulations would enhance oversight for SNAP retailers and improve the program's overall integrity for all stakeholders.
- **Enhancing Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Card Security Measures.** USDA is advancing measures to strengthen Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card security and protect program participants against fraud. Implementing Section 501(a)(2) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) will modernize EBT requirements to combat card skimming, cloning, and similar fraudulent activities. These improvements will safeguard taxpayer funds and streamline program administration by reducing fraud and enhancing system integrity.
- **Enhancing Integrity in the Summer Meal Programs.** USDA will propose strengthening oversight of summer meal programs to ensure benefits reach children as intended while reducing waste and abuse. Building on recent experiences, the Department will update regulations for non-congregate meal service under the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Seamless Summer Option (SSO). These updates will tighten integrity controls, promote accountability, and focus participation on providers best equipped to deliver meals efficiently and responsibly.
- **Combating Fraud in Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program.** This rulemaking proposes significant changes to combat fraud in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The proposed changes are intended to minimize false and fraudulent claims, providing state agencies and sponsoring organizations with new tools to identify and remove fraudulent operators. The proposed rule will protect taxpayer dollars through strengthened integrity measures, including

reciprocal disqualification procedures as mandated by Section 12(r) of the National School Lunch Act. Additionally, oversight is enhanced through modified monitoring and recordkeeping requirements.

- **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program Integrity.** To strengthen program integrity in the WIC program, this proposed rule modernizes vendor integrity requirements by shifting from paper-based to electronic benefits transfer (EBT) processes nationwide. The regulations will protect WIC participants' personal information and taxpayer funds. Furthermore, the rule enhances state agency vendor selection criteria and investigation techniques to reduce vendor fraud, abuse, and waste. Stronger regulatory requirements for vendor investigations, violations, and sanctions will significantly improve oversight.

Strengthening Eligibility Standards

USDA will refine eligibility requirements to ensure programs responsibly serve their intended populations:

- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Modification to Work Requirements for Able-Bodied Adults.** This proposed rule refines eligibility requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to ensure it serves its intended population. It codifies provisions of Public Law 119-21 that includes modifying which participants are subject to the time limit and changes to the waiver requirements to ensure that exemptions from work requirements are provided only in appropriate circumstances.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Reforming Categorical Eligibility.** This proposal refines SNAP eligibility requirements by reforming categorical eligibility to serve households that have demonstrated a need for assistance. Under the proposed rule, categorical eligibility would be limited to households that receive cash or other substantial assistance from the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. This change would align categorical eligibility with its statutory purpose of streamlining program administration while ensuring only households truly in need are deemed eligible.

- **Updated Staple Food Stocking Standards for Retailers in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.** This final rule refines the eligibility requirements for retailers participating in the SNAP program in accordance with a provision of the Agricultural Act of 2014 that increases the minimum number of varieties for staple foods from three to seven. These changes aim to ensure that authorized retailers can effectively serve the intended population of SNAP participants by offering a wider variety of staple foods. The rule also provides some flexibility for retailers while simplifying the overall criteria.
- **Amendment of definition of "eligible food" in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).** In support of the Administration's Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) initiative, USDA proposes to update the definition of "eligible foods" under SNAP to better align program benefits with national nutrition goals. This action reinforces SNAP's statutory purpose—helping low-income households obtain a more nutritious diet—by promoting access to wholesome foods and discouraging purchases inconsistent with dietary health. Through this reform, USDA will strengthen the program's role as a cornerstone of the MAHA movement to improve health outcomes, reduce diet-related disease, and advance self-sufficiency.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Alien Eligibility.** Consistent with the Administration's commitment to restore lawful governance and ensure that federal benefits serve their intended recipients, USDA will refine eligibility standards for aliens in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). By implementing provisions of Public Law 119-21, this action reaffirms that SNAP benefits are reserved for U.S. citizens and certain lawfully present aliens, as established by federal law.
- **Revise Conditions for Payment of Indemnity and Compensation for HPAI.** To strengthen disease prevention and ensure taxpayer-funded indemnities reward responsible producers, USDA will finalize the conditions for payment related to highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) announced in the earlier interim final rule. These regulations will require commercial poultry premises to pass a biosecurity audit before receiving compensation, thereby ensuring that payments are directed only to operations that have implemented robust measures to prevent the

spread of disease. By tying eligibility to compliance, this action promotes accountability, protects animal health, and reduces the overall risk of future outbreaks.

- **Eligibility Requirement to Serve on a Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committee.** USDA is strengthening standards for service on Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees to ensure these bodies operate with integrity, professionalism, and respect. Under this update, any individual who has been formally restricted or banned from entering an FSA office—for example, due to misconduct or harassment—will be ineligible to serve on a county committee. This safeguard ensures that committee members can fully and safely participate in meetings, protects staff and producers, and upholds public confidence in the program's administration.

Streamlining Regulatory Burden(s)

To modernize and streamline its regulatory processes, USDA is proposing several changes to improve efficiency and reduce unnecessary burdens.

- **Modernize food safety inspection:** USDA is modernizing meat and poultry inspection to strengthen food safety outcomes, reduce cross-contamination risks, and improve operational efficiency for industry and inspectors alike. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) will propose updates allowing establishments under the New Swine Inspection System and New Poultry Inspection System to increase line speeds where process control is maintained, supporting innovation without compromising safety. FSIS will also remove outdated inspection procedures—such as the incision of mandibular lymph nodes and palpation of viscera—that research shows are unnecessary and can increase contamination risk. Finally, the agency will update staffing standards to reflect actual operational needs, ensuring resources are deployed effectively to safeguard the food supply.
- **Removal of Standard of Identity for Canned "Tripe with Milk":** To reduce redundant regulatory requirements, FSIS is proposing to remove the standards of identity for canned "Tripe with Milk, eliminating needless rules while not impacting food safety. FSIS has determined that the existing standard for the finished canned article is unnecessary.

- **WIC program modernization:** FNS is proposing to modernize the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) regulations to provide greater program flexibility. This includes updating outdated regulations, incorporating electronic benefits transfer (EBT), and streamlining processes to better align with the changing retail marketplace and improve customer service.
- **Outdated regulatory removal:** FNS plans to remove multiple outdated or duplicative regulatory provisions to simplify the program and reduce administrative burden.
- **Streamlined regulations for loan and grant programs:** Rural Development is consolidating and simplifying regulations for several programs to improve efficiency and customer experience.
 - **Community Facilities (CF) Program:** The CF Program will move from seven separate regulations to a single, streamlined rule, which will improve loan servicing options for borrowers.
 - **Single Family Housing (SFH) Direct Programs:** The Rural Housing Service (RHS) is proposing changes to its SFH programs to create a more efficient application process and simplify regulations that impose burdensome requirements on borrowers and applicants. This will improve regulatory efficiencies and customer service.
 - **SFH Self-Help Technical Assistance Grants:** Proposed improvements aim to streamline and simplify requirements, reduce paperwork, and improve processes for organizations that assist low-income families in constructing their own homes.

Unleashing American Energy

To advance the goals of Executive Order 14153, "Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential," and Executive Order 14154, "Unleashing American Energy," USDA is modernizing several regulations to increase resource development, improve energy independence, and streamline processes.

Advancing Alaskan Resource Development

- **Special Areas: Roadless Area Conservation Repeal:** The Forest Service is repealing the rule that established prohibitions on road construction and timber harvesting in inventoried roadless areas on National Forest System lands. This change, which is consistent with Executive Order 14153, will allow management requirements to be guided by individual land management plans, supporting sustainable communities in Southeast Alaska through increased management flexibility.

Expanding American Energy and Mineral Production

- **Oil and Gas Resource Revision:** USDA will modernize and streamline the framework governing oil and gas activities on National Forest System lands to reduce delays, improve coordination, and support responsible energy development. Consistent with Executive Orders 14154 and 14153, the revised approach will clarify leasing consent and surface use permitting processes, align analytical requirements with other federal agencies, and eliminate duplicative reviews. These improvements will provide regulatory certainty for operators and advance the Administration's goal of unleashing American energy. USDA published a final rule on January 28, 2026, 91 FR 3643.
- **Update and Clarification of the Locatable Minerals Regulations:** USDA will modernize and clarify the framework governing locatable mineral activities on National Forest System lands to deliver timelier, more predictable reviews for critical mineral projects. Consistent with Executive Order 14154, this action will improve coordination with partner agencies, align procedures across the federal government, and remove outdated or duplicative requirements. These improvements will enhance efficiency, strengthen consistency, and support the Administration's goal of expanding domestic critical mineral production to bolster national defense and economic prosperity.
- **Unleashing American Energy and Economic Prosperity under the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP):** USDA will streamline and simplify the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) to help agricultural producers and rural small businesses access affordable energy solutions more efficiently. Consistent with Executive Order 14154, these improvements

will reduce compliance burdens, accelerate processing times, and promote cost-effective investments in renewable energy systems and energy efficiency upgrades. By modernizing program delivery, USDA will expand participation, lower energy costs, and advance rural prosperity while supporting the Administration's goal of unleashing American energy.

Conclusion

USDA's regulatory priorities for the coming year reflect its commitment to supporting American agriculture, ensuring program integrity, and improving operational efficiency. By focusing on oversight, eligibility, and streamlined implementation, USDA will continue to deliver on its mission to serve farmers, ranchers, and rural communities while reducing regulatory burdens and promoting economic growth.