United States Department of Agriculture
Research, Education, and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

FEB 11 2011

SUBJECT: 2011 Diversity/Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement

TO: All Employees

FROM: Edward B. Knipling
Administrator

Aligning with Secretary Vilsack's Cultural Transformation Initiative, I ask that you join us to create and maintain a workplace where all employees and customers are treated with dignity and respect, foster professional growth, and help us become a top-notch service provider. The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) workforce should reflect the diversity of today's society and promote an all inclusive environment free from discrimination, sexual or non-sexual harassment, and retaliation. In 2010, ARS employees filed formal complaints on the bases of race, color, religion, reprisal, sex, national origin, age, and disability. While the number of such complaints were few given the large size of our Agency, even one case is significant enough for us to be concerned. Discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, reprisal, marital/parental/familial status, political beliefs, receipt of public assistance, protected genetic information, or harassment is not tolerated. Such behaviors require supervisors to take immediate consultation steps, and in some cases, disciplinary action. Supervisors should lead by example and effectively manage and leverage diversity when making employment decisions without biases, as well as providing leadership, educating employees on diversity and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) issues in the workplace, and ensuring that lines of communication are open at all levels.

I strongly encourage the utilization of the Cooperative Resolution Program, which offers effective techniques for dispute resolution such as mediation, conflict coaching, and team building. This program is an excellent management tool for settling disputes and resolving work issues. I support your participation in mentoring, career development and special emphasis programs, serving on EEO Diversity Committees, and getting involved in other innovative activities to help prevent and eliminate barriers hindering our diversity goal.

Teamwork is vital to our success in this regard. I look forward to fulfilling the Agency's vision together with you.

This policy statement will be posted at http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/files/ARS-EEO-2011-Policy.pdf and must be posted in all work areas to ensure that the ARS workforce is aware of and promotes its civil rights responsibilities.

Office of the Administrator
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An Equal Opportunity Employer