USDA

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

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SUBJECT: 2012 Diversity/Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement

TO: All Employees

FROM: Edward B. Knipling
Administrator

Edward B. Knipling

In accordance with President Lincoln's expectations of "The People's Department" and Secretary Vilsack's Cultural Transformation Initiative, the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is charged with creating a work environment as diverse as our customers. ARS' top priorities include: eradicating discrimination, sexual or non-sexual harassment, and retaliation; improving and successfully managing diversity in the workplace; and creating and maintaining an environment where all ARS employees are valued, respected, and free to develop and perform to their fullest potential.

ARS' zero tolerance policy prohibits any form of discrimination and/or harassment based on race, color, national origin; age; disability; and where applicable, sex (including gender identity and expression); marital/parental/familial status; religion; sexual orientation; political beliefs; genetic information; reprisal; or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program (not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). This standard is applicable to every employee and for every action taken at ARS. Senior leaders, managers, and supervisors should lead by example and leverage diversity when making employment decisions without biases, by providing leadership and education on diversity and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) topics, ensuring lines of communication are open at all levels and take immediate consultation steps, and in some infractions proceed straight to disciplinary action if they notice any kind of discrimination.

I encourage all employees to participate in mentoring, career development, special emphasis programs, serving on EEO Diversity Committees, and other innovative activities to help prevent and eliminate barriers hindering our diversity goal. I encourage hiring managers to utilize their Area's Management Directive 715 in recruitment processes to leverage diversity and ensure all demographic groups are fully represented. I strongly encourage the utilization of the ARS Cooperative Resolution Program, which offers effective techniques for dispute resolution such as mediation, conflict coaching and team building.

Through our continued commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion for all, let us seek to reap the benefits of a diverse ARS workforce that is rich in talent, ideas, background, and expertise making us a model Agency. I look forward to fulfilling the Agency's vision together with you.

ars

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An Equal Opportunity Employer

This policy statement will be posted at the Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) web site (http://www.ars.usda.gov/sp2UserFiles/Place/00000000/2012DiversityEEOPolicy.pdf and must be posted in all work areas to ensure that the ARS workforce is aware of and promotes its civil rights responsibilities.