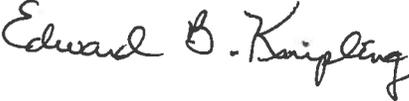




July 23, 2013

SUBJECT: 2013 Diversity/Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement

TO: All Employees

FROM: Edward B. Knipling 
Administrator

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) top priorities include eradicating discrimination, sexual/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. In accordance with Secretary Vilsack's Cultural Transformation Initiative, the ARS is charged with creating a work environment as diverse as our customers.

ARS' zero tolerance policy prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment based on race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or where all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department of Agriculture (not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities).

If an employee feels he/she has been discriminated against and wishes to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint, he/she must contact the Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) Staff at 202-720-3410 or 800-340-4289 or through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339 or 800-845-6136 (Spanish). If an employee requires alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) or other reasonable accommodation, please contact the Research, Education, and Economics Disability Program Manager at 202-720-6161.

Hiring managers should utilize the Area's Management Directive 715 in recruitment and hiring processes to leverage diversity and ensure all demographic groups are fully represented. I strongly encourage the utilization of the ODEO's Cooperative Resolution Program, which offers effective techniques for dispute resolution such as facilitated dialogues, mediation, conflict coaching, and team building. 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 and preventing ARS from being a model EEO employer.