



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education, and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

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SUBJECT: 2010 Diversity/Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement

TO: All Employees

FROM: Edward B. Knipling
Administrator

Secretary Vilsack and I ask that you join us to create and maintain a competitive and qualified diverse workforce that reflects the diversity of today's society, and promote an all inclusive environment free from discrimination, harassment (sexual or non-sexual), and retaliation. In 2009, ARS employees filed formal complaints on the bases of race, reprisal, sex, national origin, age, and disability. While the number of such complaints were relatively few given the large size of our Agency, even one such case is significant enough for us to be concerned. Discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, reprisal, marital/parental/familial status, political beliefs, receipt of public assistance, protected genetic information, or harassment (sexual or non-sexual) is not tolerated. Such behaviors require supervisors to take immediate and appropriate consultation steps and in such cases disciplinary or other adverse action. Supervisors and other managers are to lead by example and to effectively embrace, manage, and leverage diversity when making employment decisions without biases, as well as providing leadership, educating employees on diversity and EEO issues in the workplace and ensuring that lines of communication are open at all levels.

When EEO issues and concerns arise, employees and supervisors/managers are encouraged to discuss them and seek assistance without concern of retaliation. I strongly encourage the utilization of the Cooperative Resolution Program that offers effective techniques for alternative dispute resolution such as mediation, facilitation, and team building. This program is an excellent management tool for settling disputes and resolving issues and concerns before they become a major problem.

Each employee is encouraged to be proactive in helping to prevent and eliminate barriers that may hinder the goal of a diverse workplace. An excellent way of doing this is by participating in mentoring, career development and special emphasis programs, serving on EEO Diversity Committees, and getting involved in other innovative activities.

This policy statement will be posted at <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/files/ARS-EEO-2010-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.

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