



## Agency Priority Goal Action Plan

# Increase Utilization of Agriculture Research

### Goal Leader(s):

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# Overview

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## Goal Statement

- Increase the utilization of Departmental research results into real world technology improvements to USDA customers, producers, and industry. By September 30, 2021, USDA will develop data-driven methods to measure the impact of research in sustainable agricultural intensification; agricultural climate adaptation; food and nutrition translation; and value-added innovations.

## Challenge(s)

- Metrics to measure, track, and communicate the impact of USDA research.
- Existing paradigms surrounding the ability to link scientific research to real world impact.

## Opportunities

- Demonstrate the value and impact of USDA research investment.
- Drive operational excellence through assessment of USDA research data and metrics.
- Align agricultural science agenda to identified research priorities.

# Leadership & Implementation Team

**Deputy Under Secretary of Research, Education, and Economics (REE) Mission Area**

Mission Area coordination of science research utilization and related data.

**USDA Chief Scientist**

**Agricultural Research Service (ARS)**

USDA's chief scientific in-house research agency tasked with finding solutions to agricultural problems that affect Americans every day from field to table and includes about 690 research projects within 16 National Programs.

**National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA)**

USDA's primary extramural research, education, and extension funding agency, providing leadership and funding for programs that advance agriculture-related sciences.

**Economic Research Service (ERS)**

One of USDA's two principal Federal statistical agencies that anticipates trends and emerging issues and conducts economic research.

**National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)**

Chief USDA statistical agency that conducts hundreds of surveys every year and prepares reports covering virtually every aspect of U.S. agriculture.

**Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS)**

USDA Science and Research coordination and oversight of the Agency Priority Goal (APG).

# Goal Structure & Strategies

<p><b>Goal</b></p>	<p>Increase the utilization of Departmental research results into real world technology improvements to USDA customers, producers, and industry. By September 30, 2021, USDA will develop data-driven methods to measure the impact of research in sustainable agricultural intensification; agricultural climate adaptation; food and nutrition translation; and value added innovations.</p>
<p><b>Strategies</b></p>	<p>A) Conduct and support a continuum of research activities* to be effectively translated into public benefit for various stakeholders.</p> <p>B) Develop and identify indicators that illustrate how USDA research translates into real world technology improvements.</p>
<p><b>Strategic Outcome (Connection)</b></p>	<p><u>USDA Goal 1</u>: Ensure USDA Programs Are Delivered Efficiently, Effectively, With Integrity and a Focus on Customer Service.</p> <p><u>USDA Objective 1.4</u>: Improve Stewardship of Resources and Utilize Data-Driven Analyses To Maximize the Return on Investment</p> <p><i>REE Priority: Demonstrate the value and impact of USDA research investments using data analytics.</i></p>

\* Research activities include basic and applied research; development; demonstration; individual and community education; workforce development; extension and outreach; and technology transfer.

# Summary of Progress – FY20 Q1-Q2

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FY 2020 is a cornerstone year for USDA Research (through the Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) and Research, Education, and Economics (REE) Mission Area)) to develop, track and report Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) demonstrating the value and impact of USDA research investments. Building upon the momentum achieved in Q1, the following advancements were made during Q2:

- Introduced three new KPI's and established agreement on a unified methodology for each of the three new measures.
- Reviewed historical data for each of the new KPIs and established FY20 baselines.
- Launched a first-of-its-kind USDA Science KPI Innovation Team to unite synergistic efforts in KPI and performance metric development across the REE Mission Area and other USDA science agencies. In support of this APG, the KPI Innovation Team's objectives are:
  - Reduce Duplication & Enhance Collaboration
  - Foster KPI Innovation
    - Develop new performance measures and metrics
    - Improve existing performance measures
    - Identify data collection methods and sources
    - Develop new KPI's and/or improve existing KPI's
  - Communicate the Impact of USDA Science
  - Partner in Resource Management
  - Support Data-Driven Decision Making

# Summary of Progress – FY20 Q1-Q2

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- To date, the KPI Innovation Team has:
  - Identified USDA agency representatives and held inaugural bimonthly meetings.
  - Launched efforts to address the inclusion and completeness of data in external applications and platforms feeding KPI measurement.
  - Explored alternative data sources to streamline reporting through automation and dashboarding.
  - Conducted parallel testing with manual calculations for current KPIs against automated dashboard data algorithms. (Currently investigating the causes of deltas between outputs.)
  - Examined methods to explore the possibility of improving the frequency of reporting for the two annually-reported KPIs.
  - Conducted an internal assessment of other USDA Science agencies' existing performance metric activity that might be leveraged for future USDA Science KPIs.

# Key Milestones

- The following key milestones are intended to cultivate and establish an infrastructure and culture of quantifying research-to-impact within the USDA science portfolio. This effort is predicated on the Agency identifying and developing meaningful KPIs in alignment with the *Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of (2018)*.

Milestone Summary			
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Comments
1) Conduct inventory of data for measures development within the mission area.	Q1 FY 2020	Completed	The Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) and the REE Mission Area developed an initial catalogue of its existing data as a first step within a larger effort to evaluate existing data utility and note gaps for measure (KPI) development.
2) Determine the appropriate strategies that support USDA's research initiatives based on revolving needs and infrastructure within REE. Craft performance measures using available data.	Q1 FY 2020	Completed	Thus far, the Agency has identified three areas where research utilization can be measured: 1) Technology Transfer, 2) Agriculture Workforce Development, and 3) Influence of USDA Research on Public Policy. The Agency began tracking these metrics in Q1 of FY20. This is a "first step" in analyzing USDA research impact and utilization by its customers.
3) Review historical (baseline) data for 2-3 KPI test metrics and set targets.	Q1 FY 2020	Completed	For each new KPI, a uniformed methodology was codified and initial data sources identified. Next, multi-year historical data was reviewed and baselines were established. Finally, FY20 targets were set for each of the 3 new KPI's.

# Key Milestones (cont'd.)

Key Milestone	Milestone Summary		
	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Comments
4) Track “test-KPIs” against targets and evaluate findings.	Q2-4 FY 2020	In Progress	A Q1 and Q2 FY20 “actual” (against target) was reported internally for the KPI, “Influence of USDA Research on Public Policy.”
5) Conduct analysis of test-KPI’s tracking performance to determine contribution to research utilization. Review results of KPI test.	Q4 FY 2020		
6) Explore opportunities to create efficiencies in data tracking.	Q1 FY 2021	Started	Initial activities and data sources are being investigated to explore the possibility of increasing reporting frequency for the two annual KPIs.
7) In parallel with the development of USDA’s learning agenda in support of the Evidence Act, identify other areas and needs in support of measuring the utilization of the Agency’s research.	Q1-2 FY 2021	Started	Launched the KPI Innovation Team to explore future KPIs representative of USDA Science.
8) Drive continuing improvement by identifying new, potential KPIs for measuring USDA’s research utilization.	Q2-4 FY 2021		



# Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- To demonstrate the value and impact of USDA research investment, the Agency will develop and identify indicators that illustrate how research translates into real world technology improvements.
- The following three KPIs have been identified as “test measures” for the performance areas of technology transfer, workforce development, and influence of USDA research on policy.

KPI Performance Measure	KPI	Data Source (Current)	Report Frequency
Technology Transfer	<u># of REE Patents Licensed</u> # of REE Patents Issued	OTT*/ARS	Annually
Agriculture Workforce Development	# of AFRI-supported Undergraduate/Graduate/ Post-doctoral Students	NIFA	Annually
Influence of USDA Research on Public Policy	Citations of REE reports	ERS, NASS**	Quarterly

\* Office of Technology Transfer  
 \*\* Tracked individually but consolidated for reporting

# Data Accuracy and Reliability

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Existing methods to collect KPI data are labor intensive. The Agency will investigate options for improving data collection efficiencies.