



Office of Budget and Program Analysis  
USDA, Jamie L. Whitten Building  
Room 101-A  
1400 Independence Ave. SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Re: Request for Information on Proposed USDA Reorganization

North Dakota Farmers Union (NDFU) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Federal Register (Volume 82, No. 95) regarding the Executive Order 13781, "Comprehensive Plan for Reorganizing the Executive Branch," and Secretary Perdue's notice on the proposed reorganization of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). As the largest general farm organization in North Dakota, we represent over 40,000 members. We are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the economic well-being and quality of life for families on the land and their rural communities.

USDA must be retained and revised to support the American family farmer. We believe that USDA should be reorganized in order to be more efficient and farmer-friendly, and believe the proposals regarding farm production and conservation will accomplish that. For instances, placing the Farm Service Agency, Risk Management Agency, and Natural Resources Conservation Service under the same Mission Area should make interfacing with each agency more convenient for farmers and ranchers. Moving forward, maintaining field offices and field staff should be a high priority.

That said, there are areas in the proposed plan that do not accomplish that goal. The Distinct functions of each USDA agency should be recognized and preserved.

We believe that expansion of trade can only be achieved by first stabilizing current trading conditions. The current system has led to a \$500 billion trade deficit, leading to millions of lost jobs and lower wages across rural America. If the United States continues to trade internationally under these circumstances, it will be a dangerous destabilizing force in world food production which will lead to boom and bust market cycles for producers and price swings for consumers.

Finally, it is important to recognize that rural areas have not enjoyed the same recovery from the Great Recession as more urban areas. As a result, Rural Development serves an essential function in ensuring that rural Americans have access to efficient transportation infrastructure, high-speed broadband, affordable housing and water, quality schools and public safety. It is evident that the President's budget does not align with the Secretary's commitment to rural economic development, as it slashes funding for this important program. NDFU believes that USDA Rural Development field offices and staff should be maintained, as any cuts would disproportionately affect the smallest and most remote businesses, communities, farmers and ranchers.

Sincerely,

NORTH DAKOTA FARMERS UNION

Mark Watne, President