USDA

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Strategic Plan FY 2019-2023

Safeguarding American Agriculture

Table of Contents

A Message from the Administrator

Our mission to protect the health and value of America's agriculture and natural resources is no simple task, and cannot be accomplished on our own. Achieving this mission requires the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to work collaboratively with other governmental agencies and industry, and to consult regularly with partners and stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of our programs. We cannot accomplish alone what we can accomplish together.

With that in mind, I am pleased to present our Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2019 – 2023. This plan sets our course for safeguarding the health, welfare, and value of American agriculture and natural resources over the next five years. We will accomplish the plan's goals by delivering our programs and services efficiently, effectively, with integrity, and a strong focus on customer service.

APHIS takes the appropriate measures to protect agricultural health by preventing and mitigating the spread of plant and animal pests and diseases, and to enable safe agricultural trade to ensure the prosperity of U.S. producers and the growth of the economy. We will improve the customer experience by modernizing and consolidating our information technology infrastructure, as well as other structures and services throughout the agency. We will seek innovative solutions to best serve the needs of our customers. We will streamline our processes and reduce regulatory burdens. We will carefully and responsibly manage our resources and use accurate and reliable data to make decisions and to maximize our return on investments and deliver value to our customers.

APHIS will maintain a high performing workforce by maximizing employee performance and providing safe work environments. We will keep employees engaged and empowered because employees who are passionate about their work have a positive effect on the quality of the agency's products and services. We will also leverage the diversity of our workforce to create a more inclusive and fair work environment.

In the coming years, this plan will guide our work to ensure our efforts meet the needs and expectations of our customers and the American public. We will remain accountable to each other and to the people who rely on our services. Together, we will meet the goals and objectives set forth in this plan.

Kevin Shea

Kevin Shea, Administrator
USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Mission

To safeguard the health, welfare and value of American agriculture and natural resources.

Core Values

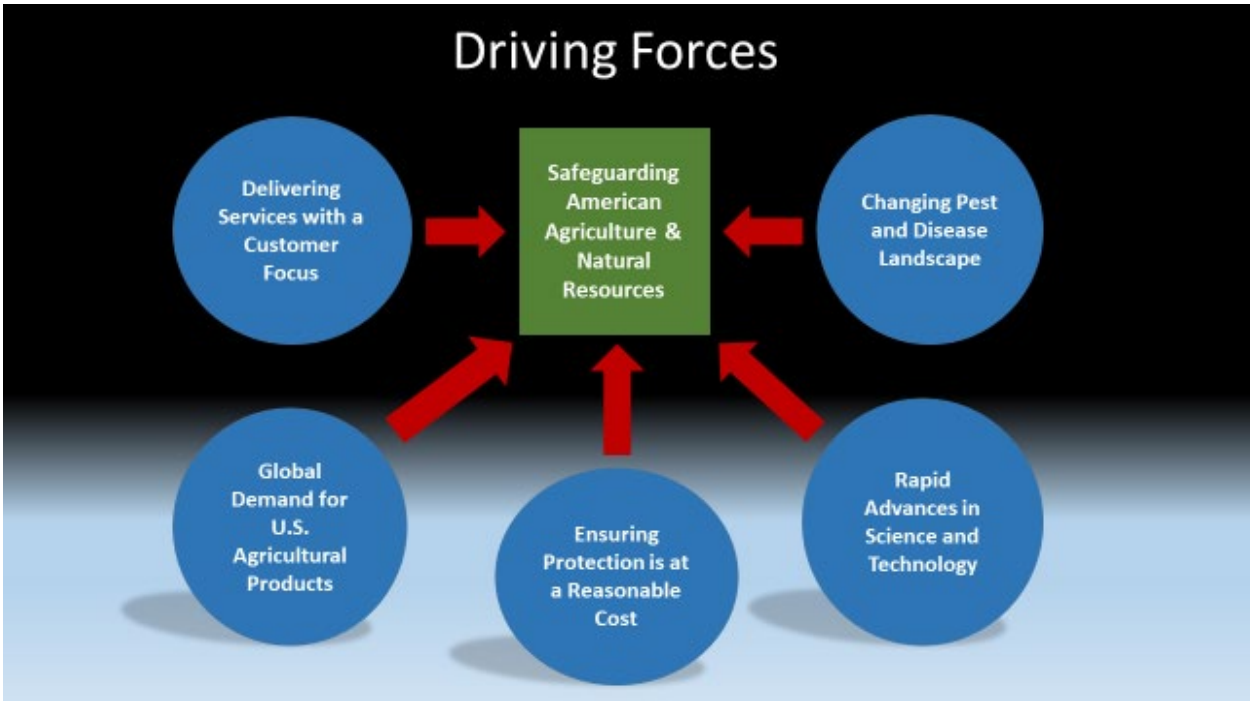
The USDA's Strategic Plan for fiscal years (FYs) 2019–2023 identifies the Department's core values. As part of the USDA, APHIS embraces the same values, thereby contributing to the success of the Department as a whole.

The success of USDA depends on the following core values:

- **Honesty & Integrity** – We expect and require complete honesty and integrity in all we do.
- **Commitment** – We make commitments with care and live up to them.
- **Accountability** – We own up to problems and are always responsive.
- **Reliability** – We provide service to our customers on time, every time.
- **Responsible Stewardship** – We guard, conserve, and preserve USDA resources the taxpayers have entrusted to us.

Driving Forces

Agriculture and the global marketplace continue to evolve, and APHIS must progress and change to keep pace. The driving forces below require that we take a critical look at how we strategically conduct our activities to best meet our mission. While some of these driving forces are predictable and have become established over time, other forces, such as the changing pest and disease landscape are less predictable and present more uncertainties.



A Closer Look at the Driving Forces

Delivering Services with a Customer Focus

Today, customers expect more transparent, accessible, and responsive services from the public sector. While the public sector has made changes in recent years to improve the delivery of services, more can be done. According to a recent survey conducted by the McKinsey Center for Government, customers feel frustrated by cumbersome websites and processes, and dealing with multiple parties before their needs are met. In addition to traditional customers, the public sector must also be prepared to meet the needs of new and less traditional customers. For example, the growth of nontraditional producers in recent years has required APHIS to expand its services to cover additional species, and new production methods and practices. With this in mind, we will seek out opportunities to engage with our customers so we can better understand their needs and gather feedback on our services. This will include reaching out to underserved communities, socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, and tribes. We will focus on being more efficient and effective. We will base our decisions on robust and timely analysis of data to better meet the needs of our customers. For a number of APHIS programs, our customers and stakeholders may have differing viewpoints, and we value these differences. Engaging partners, stakeholders, and customers including the regulated community with differing viewpoints is important in managing the risks associated with program operations and policymaking.

Global Demand for U.S. Agricultural Products

Expanding international marketing opportunities for U.S. farmers and exporters is crucial to business and income growth across rural America. In fact, today the U.S. farmers export more than 20 percent of what they produce, and support more than 1 million jobs in communities across the country for ranchers, growers, truckers, brokers, dockworkers, and other agricultural businesses. APHIS contributes to this robust export market by providing technical and scientific expertise to animal and plant health issues, and by preventing and resolving barriers to U.S. food and agricultural exports. This scientific and technical know-how is vital to the success of those that negotiate, monitor, and enforce trade agreements. Without it, the task of retaining or expanding foreign markets would be more challenging than it already is, given the unpredictability of the trade arena. APHIS plays a crucial role in helping prevent or mitigate market disruptions for U.S. producers and foreign consumers.

Ensuring Protection is at a Reasonable Cost

APHIS is dedicated to protecting the health, welfare, and value of American agriculture and natural resources. At the same time, APHIS understands this protection should be at a reasonable cost. With this understanding, APHIS is committed to easing regulatory burdens on the American people. Easing regulatory burdens makes it easier to create jobs and promote economic growth. Agriculture and commerce operations have changed over the years, and the regulatory tools that worked in the past may not be the best tools to use today. We need to go beyond regulations and seek out other means for safeguarding animal and plant health, and animal welfare. We will continue to work closely with our partners, stakeholder, and customers to explore alternatives to regulations. This may include employing outreach initiatives or leveraging industry standards. We will look at flexible approaches to apply to existing

regulations and identify older regulations that are outdated, unnecessary, ineffective, and no longer supported by science or sound policy.

Rapid Advances in Science and Technology

Rapid advances in science and technology provide APHIS with opportunities to continually change how we provide services to our customers. This includes adapting our current practices and adopting new best practices. Communications and commerce occur electronically—hard-copy forms are quickly becoming obsolete. Plant and animal sciences are changing quickly with developments in the areas of genetic engineering, disease detection and veterinary biologics, among others. Other developing technologies, including unmanned aerial systems (drones) are increasingly utilized by the public and private sectors to increase efficiencies in surveys and monitoring. Like USDA's initiative to provide faster, friendlier and easier service to its customers, APHIS too is committed to making it easier and faster for customers to find the information they need. With an eye toward excellence, value, and the future, we are always finding new ways to accomplish our work so that APHIS' way of doing business reflects the way agriculture and commerce operate today. We use more technology to ensure industry moves at the speed of commerce and keeps up with demand for agricultural commodities. Our science centers will lead the way by developing and delivering science-based knowledge and methods to identify and analyze risks and mitigate threats. Along with traditional communication tools such as publications and public service announcements, we also use new technologies to reach our partners, stakeholders, and customers.

Changing Pest and Disease Landscape

Today, the landscape for pests and diseases is changing. Pest and disease events are more frequent, more complex, and less predictable. These changes are occurring for many reasons, including human population growth, urbanization, economic development, changes in land use, increases in global travel and trade, and changing farming and production practices. These global developments are contributing to the worldwide redistribution of pathogens, vectors, and infected hosts. Examples of recent global emerging disease events include the Middle East respiratory syndrome outbreak in 2012, the H7N9 avian influenza outbreak in China in 2013, the Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus (PEDV) outbreak in the United States in 2014, the H5N2 avian influenza outbreak in the United States in 2015, and the Zika virus outbreak in 2016. Many of these events involve zoonotic diseases with the potential to impact human health and that requires new partnerships with experts in public health, wildlife, and the environment. It is essential that APHIS adapts to this changing landscape by preventing the entry and spread of these pests and diseases in the United States and by strengthening its early detection, preparedness, and response capabilities. APHIS will employ an integrated systems-based One Health approach, which focus on the interconnection between people, animals, plants and the environment, to minimize the risk of pest and disease events, to protect the national food supply.

Goals and Objectives

To respond to these driving forces, APHIS needs to be faster and more agile to meet the needs of our partners, stakeholders and customers. APHIS will constantly strive to improve and deliver our services in a way that is less costly, faster, and more effective for American agriculture, farmers and ranchers, and the public.

To accomplish our mission, our goals are to:

- Deliver efficient, effective, and responsive programs.
- Safeguard American agriculture.
- Facilitate safe U.S. agricultural exports.

These three strategic goals represent our overall priorities. They include 14 objectives that comprise the agency's major programmatic efforts and services. To support the objectives of each goal, APHIS employs numerous proven tactics in the programs. The tactics in this plan represent only a portion of APHIS activities and by no means embody all the important work APHIS does to fulfill its mission.

Goal 1. Deliver efficient, effective, and responsive programs

APHIS delivers efficient, effective, and responsive programs, with integrity and a focus on customer service. APHIS will improve the customer experience by modernizing and consolidating IT systems and services, strengthening facility and property management, and streamlining business practices and processes to better serve customers. APHIS will investigate and incorporate big data tools to enhance research and statistical analyses, as well as support future data systems investments to create efficiencies and enhance decision-making.

APHIS will also remove obstacles in its programs by reducing regulatory burdens. APHIS will safeguard the health, welfare, and value of domestic agriculture and natural resources, but will ensure this effort is at a reasonable costs to American producers. APHIS will also maximize the return on taxpayer investments by conserving resources and being accountable for the spending of these resources. To improve its program delivery, the agency will expand use of performance data and program evaluations to drive its decisions. Information resulting from these evaluations will help the agency to identify areas of improvement to improve the quality of services providing by APHIS programs. Additionally, APHIS will embrace workforce differences to better serve its customers. This includes holding managers accountable for ensuring all customers receive equal access to programs, activities, and services delivered or funded by APHIS, and treating employees fairly and equally in the workplace.

The agency will engage employees by listening to them, leveraging training and development opportunities, fostering effective communications between managers and employees, and offer work-life flexibilities so employees may perform at their highest levels while maintaining a balanced life. We will create a safe and modern space for employees.

Objective 1.1: Improve the customer experience by modernizing information technology infrastructure, facilities, and streamlining the delivery of our services.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Support One USDA approach to consolidate information technology structures into one organization.
- Develop a strategic framework for information technology that focuses on aligning information technology investments with mission and business priorities; enabling innovative business driven solutions; optimizing the use and value of information technology; securing information technology, supporting data collection, storage, and retrieving for decision-making purposes; and enabling information as a strategic asset.
- Transition to IT cloud services by closing APHIS data centers.
- Use innovative solutions for administrative projects such as strategic sourcing and marketplace approaches.
- Expand electronic processing of export documentation, adding digital signature capabilities, full electronic delivery and acceptance of documentation.
- Complete development and implementation of *eFile*, a system that will automate APHIS' permitting processes along with other processes like certification, registration, and licensing.
- Improve electronic sharing of information and data.
- Increase the number of National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) Laboratories that message test results and expand the number of diseases that can be messaged.
- Complete implementation of electronic submissions for biologic companies and diagnostic customers.
- Improve public search feature including for the location of accredited veterinarians.

Objective 1.2: Maintain a high performing workforce through employee engagement and empowerment, and provide a safe workplace.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Invest in developing effective and talented managers, along with building fundamental management practices that improve employee engagement, performance, recruitment, retention and work life quality.
- Increase the value of engagement by encouraging management to focus on talent production resulting from coaching and development that is based on people's strengths, placing them in positions to take advantage of these strengths, and giving feedback that build on these strengths.
- Enhance the leadership skills of current APHIS leaders and develop a cadre of future leaders.
- Improve APHIS leadership accountability by ensuring equal opportunity accountability assessments are submitted timely, consistently, and accurately.
- Enhance employee satisfaction by communicating realistic expectations, providing opportunities for professional development, both within APHIS and outside of the Agency, and opportunities for career progression.

- Increase the percentage of APHIS employees with Individual Development Plans and Learning Contracts.
- Develop and monitor employee development to ensure both the organization and employee are benefitting from learning opportunities.
- Encourage innovation from employees to enhance workplace environment and mission delivery.
- Renew and enhance our commitment to safety and health. Provide a workplace with zero tolerance for harassing, threatening, and violent behavior.
- Continue knowledge management initiatives to assist with succession planning.
- Enable leaders and managers to align workforce skills with mission needs, including reskilling and redeploying exisiting workers.

Objective 1.3: Remove obstacles in APHIS programs by reducing regulatory burden and streamlining processes.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Review and identify regulations not supported by current science and practices.
- Continue streamlining and deregulatory processes to reduce the burdens on stakeholders to comply with regulations not supported by current science or practices.
- Reinstate an internal executive regulatory management group of executive leaders to identify agency's regulatory needs early and track them through approval and publication.
- Continue to move forward with the VS laboratory approval consolidation initiative in order to simplify the process for gaining laboratory approval.
- Continue to review and improve business line processes to ensure the delivery of the services and products to customers and/or stakeholders is efficient, timely, and cost effective.

Objective 1.4: Maximize the return on taxpayer investment through stewardship of resources and focused program evaluations.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Prioritize the delivery of program services to customers, align agency staffing accordingly, and right size the size of the agency's permanent workforce.
- Deliver greater consistency and continuity to the review, approval, and operations of all APHIS Federal Advisory Committees.
- Optimize use of hiring flexibilities for temporary and TERM employees to leverage cooperator-provided funding.
- Enhance the agency's use of performance data and program evaluation results to drive decisions.
- Continue to reduce the footprint of leased and owned real property assets through consolidations and co-locations.
- Increase cross-program coordination on the acquisition and use of APHIS fleet vehicles to maximize use.

- Identify and implement additional procurement opportunities suitable for strategic sourcing within the agency and the Department.
- Seek opportunities to provide administrative support services through shared service operations.

Objective 1.5: Leverage workforce differences to better serve the Agency's customers.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Ensure employees understand the needs of all agency partners, stakeholders, and customers.
- Focus on new strategies and allocate resources to expand the traditional stakeholder base, and establish effective service delivery methods for groups that do not have access to services and technology.
- Hold APHIS' leaders, managers, supervisors and employees accountable for treating the agency's customers and employees in accordance with USDA's and APHIS' civil rights policies and applicable laws.
- Ensure all customers equal access to programs, activities, and services delivered or funded by USDA and APHIS.
- Provide a workplace that is free of discrimination.
- Enhance the diversity of the workforce through focused recruitment and retention efforts.
- Use the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process, whenever possible.
- Promote procurement with small businesses, small disadvantaged businesses, and minority owned businesses.
- Enhance special emphasis programs to expand diversity awareness and to increase employee understanding of minority, small, or disadvantaged customer needs.

Goal 2. Safeguard American agriculture

American agriculture faces many threats from foreign and domestic pests and diseases, which have the potential to negatively impact animal and plant agricultural production, trade, and the economy. Identifying these threats early enables APHIS to anticipate potential outbreaks and to act appropriately to prevent entry and prolonged damage if there is an incursion. Because these threats are ever-changing, APHIS adjusts it strategies for identifying these pests and diseases and applying appropriate mitigation measures.

By working collaboratively with its stakeholders and partners, APHIS maintains the capacity and capability to rapidly respond to an agricultural pest or disease outbreak. APHIS also actively engages other Federal agencies, State, Tribal, local governments, and industry to advance their emergency preparedness and response capabilities. If a pest or disease is established in the country, APHIS works with its stakeholders and partners to eradicate the pest or disease, or where eradication is not feasible, to manage the pest or disease, minimizing its impact to the economy.

APHIS also manages damage or other conflicts caused by wildlife, detects and controls wildlife diseases, and protects natural resources. APHIS will continue to ensure the safety, purity, and effectiveness of veterinary biologics and provide oversight of genetically engineered organisms. APHIS also conducts diagnostic laboratory activities to support the agency's veterinary disease prevention, detection, control, and eradication programs, and provides technology development to support plant protection programs. The agency will also conduct program operations to ensure the humane care and treatment of vulnerable animals covered under the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act.

APHIS must balance its safeguarding efforts against increasing requests for market access by international trading partners for agricultural products. The Agency makes trade safe by examining disease and pest risks and inserting mitigation strategies into international agreements and interstate movement protocols. This reduces the risk of unsafe agricultural imported products entering the United States and negatively impacting U.S. agricultural resources. Helping other countries under the Global Health Security Agenda build capacity for early detection helps protect the U.S. agricultural enterprises.

Objective 2.1: Prevent damaging plant and animal pests and diseases from entering and spreading in the United States to promote plant and animal health.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Monitor feral swine populations along the northern and southern borders with Canada and Mexico respectively for selected feral swine diseases of concern to US pork producers.
- Maintain the screwworm barrier at the Darien Gap of Panama.
- Maintain a sterile Medfly barrier in Guatemala preventing the northward movement into Chiapas, Mexico and the Yucatan, including Belize.
- Produce and provide sterile Medfly pupae to support preventive release operations in high-risk areas in Florida and California.
- Collaborate and work with states, foreign governments, and international partners to reduce risk pathways; support disease and pest-free zones and animal and plant pest and disease pathway analyses and risk assessments; identify sources of introductions and determine mitigations to prevent new introductions; obtain timely information on pests, diseases, trends and changing risk patterns; monitor and prevent the spread and introduction of pests and diseases; and develop regional cooperation and awareness.
- Collaborate with Canada to monitor for raccoon rabies variant and prevent the re-emergence of raccoon rabies along the broader landscape in Canada, monitor for canine rabies along the Texas-Mexico border to prevent the re-emergence of canine rabies in Texas, while continuing to monitor for the emergence of vampire bat rabies along the southern US borders with Mexico.
- Provide technical expertise and leadership to global and regional animal and plant health organizations in their efforts to support local, regional, and global pest and disease control and eradication efforts.

- Partner with other Federal agencies to fund, design, develop, and deliver animal and plant pest and disease training to foreign counterparts and to leverage infrastructure overseas and provide training and technical assistance on animal, plant and zoonotic diseases.
- Engage in capacity building activities to promote efficient use of exporting countries' Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) infrastructure, technical capacities, and inspection processes to safeguard agricultural exports destined to the United States.
- Conduct evaluations of the animal health status of countries and regions in response to their requests, completing risk assessments and regulatory recognition as appropriate. Conduct reviews of countries and regions that have been previously granted animal health status recognition.
- Conduct risk assessments for permits for imported veterinary biologics, thereby assuring that risks of foreign animal disease threats are mitigated.
- Coordinate a formal comprehensive countermeasures program to include: updating and maintaining a list of priority high-consequence diseases or pests; providing guidance on research needs and reviewing proposals; and providing guidance on purchasing (stocking) and on diagnostic preparedness priorities including surge capabilities.
- Partner with other reference laboratories around the world to advance collective expertise in diagnostics, including partnering with Canada and Mexico to harmonize diagnostic methods.
- Provide—through the National Veterinary Services Laboratories—national and international leadership on diagnostic techniques, assays, and new technologies, serving as the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) reference laboratory and as USDA's reference laboratory.
- Conduct disease surveillance to identify incursions of pests and diseases of concern, evaluating and improving surveillance for the most significant foreign animal diseases.
- Work with Texas to maintain a permanent quarantine buffer preventing cattle fever ticks from becoming established in the United States. Collaborate with Mexico to support cattle fever tick free zone(s) in Mexico, reducing risks of introduction at land border ports.
- Apply molecular diagnostic capabilities to plant pest and animal disease identification as a means to achieve efficiencies, improve consistency, and increase the precision of diagnostic services and associated quarantine or response decision-making.
- Manage inspections at Plant Inspection Stations (PIS) through Risk Based Sampling (RBS) to reduce inspections of low-risk shipments and proportionally increase inspections of higher-risk consignments.
- Develop the Regulatory Framework for Seed Health (ReFreSH) to prevent the introduction of seed borne pests using a systems approach for imported seed.
- Streamline the importation of plant cuttings produced in approved offshore facilities to expedite the entry of low-risk cuttings while refocusing APHIS inspectors on higher risk imports.
- Address the threat of invasive pests and diseases associated with the international movement of sea containers to mitigate pest risks associated with the sea container pathway.

- Strengthen the North American perimeter against pest threats from outside the region to prevent the introduction of agricultural, forest, and other invasive pests.
- Prevent the sale of prohibited plant material via the internet or e-commerce.
- Address gaps identified in the U.S. Joint External Evaluation (JEE).

Objective 2.2: Manage plant and animal pests and diseases once established in the United States to promote plant and animal health.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Work with the associated livestock industries to develop, implement, and enhance rational, affordable biosecurity programs to protect the health, wellbeing, and economic security of the livestock and poultry industries and the rural economies driven by those industries.
- Understand antibiotic use in livestock, conduct surveillance of antibiotic drug susceptibility of selected bacterial organisms, and monitor antimicrobial resistance in animals over time.
- Strengthen partnerships to develop strategies to control and potentially eradicate harmful plant and animal pests and diseases through effective and innovative education, surveillance, and border control efforts.
- Collaborate with industry, Tribes, and States to develop approaches that take advantage of best management and husbandry practices to minimize the damage and spread of plant and animal diseases.
- Implement innovative strategies to control diseases through testing, identifying, and removing infected and high-risk exposed animals without having to depopulate entire herds.
- Implement the Emerging Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Plan.
- Fully implement Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) and make significant progress in demonstrating and delivering value to producers for complying with the framework.
- Advance One Health goals by continuing to identify and work with relevant partners to address zoonotic disease issues and incidents; finalize operating procedures for conducting on-farm epidemiologic investigations; and continue to build and expand upon university partnerships to leverage international networks.
- Implement the National List of Reportable Animal Diseases.
- Deploy mobile data collection tools and transfer capabilities for data retrieval to optimize internal IT development resources to build stronger domestic pest management and trade safety missions.
- Improve poultry and poultry products under the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) by applying new technologies.
- Strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of programs for pest detection, mitigation, and wildlife damage assessments through the use of Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) and environmental DNA technologies.
- Train canine teams for early detection of pests and disease to more precisely target plant management and eradication activities in domestic programs.

Objective 2.3: Ensure effective emergency preparedness and response systems.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Partner with stakeholders and customers to evaluate response options and update response plans, adjusting for changing agricultural production systems and societal expectations (e.g., the potential for expanded use of vaccination as a response tool for FMD).
- Develop emergency preparedness responses for pest and disease outbreaks that include ensuring resources are available and personnel are trained.
- Assist industry in the design of secure food supply plans to ensure business continuity during disease outbreaks.
- Develop and use models to enhance emergency preparedness and response.
- Build upon APHIS' animal and plant health networks to deal with pest and disease emergencies.
- Continue to expand capabilities of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network.
- Coordinate with stakeholders and other Federal agencies on all-hazards agriculture and natural resources response support (Emergency Support Function #11 of the *National Response Framework*). Use APHIS animal and plant health networks, capabilities, and structures to support State, local, territorial, and Tribal governments as they assist with animal and agricultural emergency management.
- Evaluate and improve preparedness for the most significant foreign animal diseases as identified by stakeholders and partners.
- Expedite animal disease traceability by working with states to optimize their trace exercise performance metrics to enhance rapid response to disease control.
- Enhance data collection, quality, and reporting systems for emergency response through modernization of infrastructure, information technology, and integration.
- Design training and exercise plans to enhance the preparedness of APHIS and its partners to respond to livestock and poultry health incidents, as well as other hazards that include One Health and zoonotic disease preparedness and response trainings.
- Identify priorities and develop strategies around emergency preparedness and response exercises and other training.

Objective 2.4: Manage conflicts caused by wildlife, detect and control wildlife diseases, and protect agricultural and natural resources.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Develop and implement science-based, effective, and practical methods and new technology for eliminating and managing wildlife damage and threats posed by diseases to agricultural resources, livestock, property, human health and safety, and natural resources. Emphasize the development of methods that present a low environmental burden and a high degree of species-specificity.
- Expand feral swine damage management for agricultural, livestock, property, ecological, and human health and safety purposes.

- Provide Federal leadership to industry, organizations, and natural resource agencies for an effective, ecologically sound, and socially responsible integrated wildlife damage management program that is responsive to changes in agriculture, the livestock industry, natural resource agencies, wildlife populations, and societal values.
- Advance One Health goals by strategically focusing on wildlife disease and invasive species surveillance capacity and control on issues of greatest importance involving wildlife.
- Expand and improve collaborative efforts to enhance public safety within the aviation community through the implementation of science-based assistance by investigating methods and addressing wildlife hazards that meet continuing demands for safe air operations of civil and military partners, the aviation industry and travelling public.
- Enhance coordination and collaboration in research and management to prevent the spread of key terrestrial rabies variants in wild carnivores while working toward elimination of rabies in carnivores in North America.
- Provide outreach to State, Tribal, and international partners, and the general public about APHIS' role in reducing conflicts between humans and wildlife, detecting and controlling wildlife diseases, and protecting natural resources.

Objective 2.5: Ensure the safety, purity, and effectiveness of veterinary biologics and protect plant health by optimizing our oversight of genetically engineered (GE) organisms.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Modernize APHIS' biotechnology regulatory framework to ensure the most effective, science-based approach for regulating the products of biotechnology on the basis of risks to plant health.
- Improve processes to produce greater predictability and more timely completion of regulatory oversight.
- Improve compliance through rigorous inspection and compliance assistance programs.
- Pursue alternatives to rulemaking that optimize our oversight of GE organisms.
- Provide outreach to State, Tribal, and international partners, and the general public about APHIS' role regarding GE organisms.
- Streamline processes of evaluating, testing, and licensing veterinary biologics products used to diagnose, prevent, and treat animal diseases to safely move important new technology to the market faster.
- Explore new veterinary biologics licensing pathways and implement more efficient methods of regulating current, low-risk veterinary biologics products (e.g., antibody products) and other non-traditional products.
- Refine and enhance an electronic system for processing biologic licensing requests and for notifying manufacturers when biologic serials are approved for the marketplace.
- Participate in the Coordinated Framework for Regulation of Biotechnology.

Objective 2.6: Provide and coordinate timely diagnostic laboratory support and services.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Provide leadership and coordinate with other partners on diagnostic techniques, assays, and new technologies including scientific computing to support greater use of genomics and bioinformatics.
- Coordinate with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other partners to address timeliness of diagnostic capabilities for early detection of high consequence diseases.
- Partner with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians to enhance Federal, university, and State laboratory resources in the National Animal Health Laboratory Network.
- Implement the APHIS National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) workforce development plan to ensure sufficient foreign animal disease diagnostic subject matter expertise to establish VS operations at the NBAF, capture diagnostic institutional knowledge, and successfully complete the transition of VS operations from the Plum Island Animal Disease Center to the NBAF.
- Adhere to the principles of quality assurance and conform to the requirements of ISO 17025 for testing and calibration activities, ISO 17034 for reference material production, ISO 17043 for proficiency test production, ISO 9001 for products and services, and any other relevant ISO guides or requirements.
- Participate in the interagency consortium of laboratory networks to foster the exchange of data and bioinformatics and facilitate disease detection and response.

Objective 2.7: Ensure the humane treatment of vulnerable covered animals.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Coordinate with the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to assure adherence to animal care guidelines to enhance and enable agriculture production research while meeting public expectation for animal care.
- Combine appropriate inspection and enforcement activities with greater learning opportunities to protect vulnerable animals.
- Review companion animal programs to assure we are effectively partnering with state regulatory agencies.
- Expand the AWA-licensing exemptions for dealers and exhibitors whose size of business is *de minimis*, through rulemaking.
- Revise the licensing regulations to better promote sustained compliance, reduce licensing fees, and strengthen existing safeguards, through rulemaking.
- Complete a pilot project using the Business Process Improvement framework to determine whether a blended use of announced and unannounced inspections improves compliance and working relationships at regulated facilities.
- Ensure and maintain an effective emergency management point-of-contact program.
- Update selected content in the National Veterinary Accreditation Program's training materials.

Goal 3. Facilitate safe U.S. agricultural exports

APHIS plays a vital role in facilitating the safe flow of agricultural trade. The agency strives to ensure that U.S. producers and exporters can sell safe, wholesome food and agricultural products around the world. Sales from these exports promote the U.S. economy and sustain millions of well-paying jobs for Americans. APHIS' efforts include keeping U.S. agricultural industries free from pests and diseases, certifying that the millions of U.S. agricultural and food products shipped to markets abroad meet the importing countries' entry requirements, partnering with other countries to develop international standards, removing trade barriers through monitoring and enforcing existing trade agreements, and negotiating new trade agreements that benefit the U.S. agricultural economy.

APHIS will continue to work with foreign countries that lack the capacity to conduct required risk assessments and other activities needed to engage in agricultural trade to build animal and plant health regulatory capacity. Helping other countries strengthen regulatory capacity allows them to participate in safe agricultural trade and prevent the spread of pests and diseases beyond their borders. Ultimately, these activities will help protect the United States from foreign pests and diseases as well as potentially lead to new export opportunities in the future.

Objective 3.1: Create export opportunities for American producers.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Identify strategic opportunities for removing or reducing trade barriers that impact market retention, access, and expansion of U.S. agricultural products.
- Work closely with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, industry partners, and key international counterparts to better understand the changing profiles of business and commerce and their relationship to SPS issues.
- Play an active role in supporting U.S. Government (USG) negotiations and renegotiations of free trade agreements.
- Promote the development and worldwide implementation of science-based trade standards to ensure a safe, fair, predictable trade system and a level playing field for U.S. products abroad. This includes providing leadership and scientific expertise to OIE, IPPC, and regional plant protection organizations to promote science-based standards for animal and plant health and welfare.
- Provide technical assistance and support to emerging market countries on implementing international standards.
- Provide technical assistance to foreign regulatory counterparts to improve their capacity to implement scientifically sound regulations that affect U.S. exports.
- Provide outreach to State, Tribal, underserved communities and the general public about APHIS' role regarding expanding/participating in international trade.

Objective 3.2: Ensure resolution of sanitary and phytosanitary issues and trade barriers.

Tactics to achieve the objective:

- Identify and prioritize resolution of plant and animal trade issues with all trading partners.
- Play an active role in the USG delegation to the WTO-SPS Committee.
- Work with other Federal agencies (USTR, State Department, FSIS, and FAS) to develop strategies to engage trading partners that continue to impose unjustified plant or animal health-related restrictions.
- Engage trading partners in discussions and negotiations of forward-looking regionalization agreements that can limit trade restrictions in the face of a significant disease outbreak.
- Engage U.S. exporters and other countries to eliminate Avian Influenza (AI) barriers to export markets by initiating animal health discussions.
- Work collaboratively with state and industry to address gaps in animal disease traceability that impact trade.
- Fully deploy the service center concept for meeting animal and animal product exporter's certification needs, allowing for more timely and consistent service.
- Improve compliance of federal export and sanitary activities performed by accredited veterinarians by designing effective and targeted education, outreach, and e-messaging materials and standardizing and coordinating enforcement actions.
- Expand notification systems to accredited veterinarians who have allowed their accreditation to expire to include SMS (text) messaging and telephone calling.
- Facilitate the export of veterinary biological products through the issuance of Certificates of Licensing and Inspection.
- Demonstrate to trading partners that our regulations have the same results as Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) regulations by addressing "quality" in our regulations. This will make it easier for trading partners to find specific GMP requirements to help facilitate the export of biologics.
- Inspect and clear livestock, poultry, and germplasm at ports of entry consistent with regulations.
- Advance the adoption and implementation of electronic certification (ePhyto) to make certificate exchange fast, efficient, and fraud-resistant.
- Conduct technical meetings with trading partners to establish fair, practical, science-based plant health requirements for commodity imports and exports.

Appendices

Appendix A: Performance Measures

	Actual	Target	
Performance Measure	**FY 2017**	**FY 2018**	**FY 2019**
Goal 1			
Number of APHIS data centers (1.1)	4	2	0
Percentage of employees with IDPs and/or Learning Contracts (1.2)	32%	40%	47%
Number of permanent APHIS employees (1.2)	5,853	5,753	5,853
Number of formal process improvement projects completed annually (1.3)	7	3	3
Number of deregulatory actions published (1.3)	11	10	15
Goal 2			
Percent of incoming propagative plant material consignments arriving at a plant inspection station cleared using risk-based sampling protocol. (2.1)	N/A	20%	60%
Percent of high-risk target pests on the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) Priority Pest List for which surveys were conducted (2.1)	96%	93%	80%
Value of livestock, poultry, and specialty crops protected by APHIS animal and health and specialty crop pest programs (2.2)	$193 billion	$193 billion	$193 billion
Total elapsed time to conduct Traceability Performance Measures (TPM). This is the sum of averaged elapsed times to complete three TPM activities in participating states. (2.2)	72 hours	70 hours	68 hours
Number of on-farm longitudinal visits to gather Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) use and resistance data (2.2)	0	0	10
Number of hours it takes to mobilize resources once it is determined that a Federal emergency response is needed to manage an agricultural outbreak (2.3)	24	24	24
Number of states where feral swine populations were reduced or eliminated (2.4)	1	1	1
Number of methods developed that reduce damage causes by wildlife to agriculture, human safety, property, and natural resources (2.4)	17	17	17

Performance Measure	Actual FY 2017	Target FY 2018	Target FY 2019
Cumulative number of biotechnology products deregulated by USDA and available to market (2.5)	127	128	129
Percent of field release sites in compliance with biotechnology regulations designed to protect agriculture from plant pests (2.5)	90%	90%	90%
Number of Animal Diagnostic Laboratories collaborating in the development of laboratory network component for antimicrobial susceptibility testing efforts (2.6)	31	35	38
Percent of licensees inspected and registrants in substantial compliance of the Animal Welfare Act (2.7)	96%	96%	96%
Percent of facilities determined to be in substantial compliance at the first announced inspection after receiving a license (conducted 6 to 9 months later) (2.7)	95%	95%	95%
Goal 3			
Value of retained, expanded, and new country access for agricultural products (in billions) (3.1)	$2.6	$2.6	$2.6
Number of international and regional standards that have been adopted or substantially progressed (3.1)	9	10	10
Number of international and regional initiatives that have contributed to global harmonization	7	5	5
Number of shipments released (in foreign ports of entry) as a result of APHIS intervention (3.2)	275	275	275
Number of ePhytos issued from trading partners (3.2)	5,731	4,772	10,000
Number of ePhytos received from trading partners (3.2)	6,092	3,967	10,000
Number of resolved SPS issues with foreign trading partners to benefit U.S. export markets (3.2)	15	18	18
Number of technical meetings with NPPOs to meet established, new, or modified entry requirements for U.S. products (3.2)	10	8	6