



Secretary Rollins:

We write to you to express our serious concerns regarding the recently announced reorganization of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Thus far, limited detail has emerged about a plan that stands to significantly disrupt and weaken the Department's ability to deliver essential services to farmers, ranchers, and consumers across the country. This is a decision of enormous consequence, and yet neither Congress nor the labor unions representing employees were consulted in its development, despite statutory requirements and longstanding norms of good governance.

While we support the goal of strengthening USDA's engagement with agricultural communities, it is important to note that over 90% of USDA employees already live and work outside the National Capital Region, embedded in the very communities they serve. We are also skeptical that the current public comment process will meaningfully influence the final outcome. Public reporting quotes USDA leadership as saying the plan is already "95% baked" and implementation will begin by year's end – suggesting that stakeholder input, including from employees, unions, and Congress, will be largely symbolic.

This is not the first time USDA has pursued such a move. In 2019, the relocation of the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture led to the departure of more than half of their staff. According to the Government Accountability Office, this resulted in reduced research output, delayed processes, and a drastic loss of institutional knowledge. There is no reason to expect a different outcome if the current plan proceeds without serious adjustments. To alleviate these concerns, we urge USDA to address the following critical issues:

Publicly provide a Cost-Benefit Analysis.

To date, no cost-benefit or operational impact analysis has been released. How were the hub locations selected? Were other locations considered? Was the cost of this move weighed against alternative uses of funds, such as expanding crop insurance, supporting disaster recovery, or investing in commodity research? Did the Department factor in the costs to the taxpayer of worsened services and decreased oversight

resulting from staff losses? Without answers, this reorganization appears arbitrary and politically motivated.

Publicly provide the rationale and stakeholder impact for choosing the five hubs.

If a state did not receive a hub, will its farmers now need to navigate multiple regions to access USDA support? Will they face reduced access to agency leadership or delays in service? How will the Department oversee tens of billions of dollars in nutrition assistance if it eliminates regional offices? Rather than improving access and equity, this reorganization may deepen regional disparities and create new bureaucratic burdens for producers and rural communities.

Provide a plan to ensure Service Continuity and workforce retention.

The 2019 relocation left essential work unfinished, programs stalled, and public services undercut. USDA has already lost over 15,000 employees since January 2025. What is being done to prevent a repeat of the 2019 disruption? How will USDA retain skilled staff, transfer institutional knowledge, and ensure no lapse in mission-critical operations?

Publicly provide the received reorganization comments.

USDA has reportedly told House Democrats it will not release public comments on the reorganization, only a summary. This undermines trust and transparency. We urge USDA to commit to a transparent process that includes the full publication of comments, appropriate Congressional oversight, and meaningful engagement with employee representatives.

Farmers, ranchers, foresters, and consumers depend on a strong USDA to deliver essential services from crop insurance and market development to food safety and nutrition assistance. The employees who carry out USDA's mission deserve respect, transparency, and a voice in where and how they work. So do the communities and stakeholders who will bear the consequences of this sweeping change.

We share USDA's commitment to strengthening American agriculture. But that shared mission cannot succeed if workers are sidelined, if decisions are made in the dark, and if the needs of farmers and consumers in non-hub states are ignored. We strongly urge the Department to slow down, engage with Congress and the labor unions in good faith, and fully assess the true impacts of this reorganization before proceeding further.

Sincerely,

AFGE Local 1331, Agricultural Research Service, Eastern Utilization Research and Development Division

AFGE Local 1657, Agricultural Research Service, Western Regional Research Center

AFGE Local 2735, Food and Nutrition Service, Mid-Atlantic Regional Office

AFGE Local 3147, Agricultural Research Service
AFGE Local 3247, Agricultural Research Service, Northern Regional Research Center
AFGE Local 3403, Economic Research Service
AFGE Local 3748, Agricultural Research Service, Midwest and Plains Area
AFGE Local 3839, Farm Production and Conservation Business Center
AFGE Local 4016, Office of the Chief Information Officer
AFSCME Local 3870, Rural Utilities Service, Rural Business Cooperative Services, Office of External Affairs, Office of the Chief Risk Officer, and the Innovation Center
AFSCME Local 3925, Farm Service Agency, Risk Management Agency, and Farm Production and Conservation Business Center
AFSCME Local 3976, Foreign Agricultural Service
NFFE Local 34
NFFE Local 276
NFFE Local 376
NFFE Local 466
NFFE Local 1650
NFFE Local 1753
NFFE Local 1781
NFFE Local 1836
NFFE Local 1865
NFFE Local 1968
NFFE Local 2086
NFFE Local 2165
NFFE Local 2198
NFFE Forest Service Council
NTEU Chapter 226, Food and Nutrition Service Headquarters
NTEU Chapter 237, Food and Nutrition Service, Midwest Regional Office
NTEU Chapter 240, Food and Nutrition Service, Mountain Plains Regional Office
NTEU Chapter 255, Food and Nutrition Service, Northeast Regional Office
NTEU Chapter 265, Food and Nutrition Service, Southwest Regional Office