

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION	NUMBER: DR 1043-055
SUBJECT: U.S. Department of Agriculture Science Council	DATE: January 5, 2021
OPI: Office of the Chief Scientist	EXPIRATION DATE: January 5, 2026

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1. PURPOSE

This Departmental Regulation (DR) permanently authorizes the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Science Council to facilitate and support cross-department collaboration on issues pertaining to science and science policy.

The DR sets forth the objectives, policies, procedures, and responsibilities of the USDA Science Council as defined below.

2. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS/CANCELLATIONS

- a. This DR supersedes the DR 1043-055, *Permanent Establishment of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Science Council*, dated November 19, 2015.
- b. This DR will be in effect until superseded or the expiration date.

3. SCOPE

This DR applies to all USDA Mission Areas, agencies, staff offices, employees, contractors, cooperative partners, and others working for, or on behalf of, the USDA.

4. BACKGROUND

On June 18, 2008, the 110th Congress enacted [Public Law 110-246](#) titled the *Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008*. Part II, Sec. 7511 created the position of Chief Scientist and provided that the Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics (REE) concurrently hold the title of Chief Scientist for the Department and be responsible for coordination of research, education, and extension activities of the USDA.

The USDA Science Council advises the Secretary and Chief Scientist on the priorities for USDA's science agenda, reflecting high priority issues affecting all aspects of United States food, agriculture, natural resources, energy, and communities. Scientific discovery, technological breakthroughs, and innovation remain indispensable to the USDA mission for ensuring that science informs the policies and programmatic decisions of the Department.

5. POLICY

- a. The USDA Science Council, herein referred to as the "Council," shall:
 - (1) Support the Chief Scientist in promoting inter-agency cooperation and collaboration on science and technology research to leverage the Department's resources. This includes:
 - (a) Encouraging agencies to develop unified approaches to data collection;
 - (b) Creating incentives for agencies to more readily exchange information at the beginning, middle, and end stages of their scientific and technical research in a way that invites input, promotes collaboration, and avoids duplication of efforts.
 - (2) Recommend to the Chief Scientist areas for scientific research that will support the priorities of the Department and its leadership.
 - (3) Disseminate and promote the research, education, and extension activities of USDA to their respective agencies to ensure that the best science and best practices are available for decision-making.
 - (4) Provide feedback to the research agencies of USDA regarding the effectiveness of research programs in meeting the missions of the Department. This includes

encouraging them to consider the needs of their customers (internal and external) and developing the data, methodologies, and tools to measure, the outcomes of USDA work.

- (5) Provide advice to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief Scientist of USDA on issues that require or involve scientific research within the Department.
- (6) Enhance the visibility of USDA as a premier Science agency.
- (7) Conduct other science related duties as requested by the Secretary, the Chief Scientist, or as decided by the Council.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The Chief Scientist serves as the Chair of the Council.

The Director of the Office of the Chief Scientist, will be responsible for providing administrative support for the USDA Science Council. In this capacity, the Director will serve as Executive Secretary, whose duties will include, but not be limited to:

- (1) Preparing an agenda for each Council meeting;
- (2) Keeping records of the activities, decisions, projects and initiatives of the council; and
- (3) Compiling and distributing meeting notifications, agendas, and notes of the meetings to all members.

- b. The Council shall be composed of members from each of the following:

- (1) USDA mission areas, including:
 - (a) Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs;
 - (b) Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services;
 - (c) Food Safety;
 - (d) Farm Production and Conservation;
 - (e) Marketing and Regulatory Programs;
 - (f) Natural Resources and the Environment;
 - (g) Research, Education, and Economics; and

- (h) Rural Development.
- (2) USDA staff offices, including:
 - (a) Office of Budget and Program Analysis;
 - (b) Departmental Administration;
 - (c) Office of the Chief Economist;
 - (d) Office of General Counsel; and
 - (e) Office of Homeland Security.
 - (3) The principal research, program, and statistical agencies, including:
 - (a) Agricultural Research Service;
 - (b) Economic Research Service;
 - (c) National Agricultural Statistics Service;
 - (d) National Institute of Food and Agriculture;
 - (e) Food Safety and Inspection Service;
 - (f) Natural Resource Conservation Service;
 - (g) Food and Nutrition Service;
 - (h) Forest Service; and
 - (i) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.
 - (4) Membership is comprised of the Under Secretary or his or her delegate for each mission area and a delegate from each member agency and staff office.
 - (5) Members can be changed or rotated at the discretion of the leadership of the respective mission area, member agency, or staff office.
 - (6) The Council will meet a minimum of 4 times per year.
 - (7) Each member can invite two non-members to accompany the member to Council meetings. If a member cannot attend a scheduled meeting, a designated representative authorized to make decisions on behalf of the member should attend.

(8) The Council will develop recommendations for presentation to the Secretary and the Chief Scientist on high priority science issues.

(9) The Council may review and update this DR every 2 years, as members deem appropriate.

c. Decision-Making Protocol

(1) The Chair will lead the meetings, but will not participate in forming recommendations.

(2) The Council will determine decisions by consensus, so long as a quorum is present. If a member is absent, a designated representative from the same member organization may participate.

(3) Each member organization will have one vote or opinion.

The Council may create subcommittees as necessary to further effect the policy and objectives of the Council.

(4) To establish a new subcommittee, a charter outlining the following criteria shall be drafted and submitted to the Science Council for consideration:

(a) Purpose;

(b) Objectives;

(c) Sponsorship;

(d) Membership;

(e) Operating procedures;

(f) Decision-making protocol; and

(g) Relationship to the Science Council and Other Relevant Bodies.

(5) Existing subcommittees shall continue operation as is, unless the Chief Scientist decides upon changes to their charters. Refer to the OCS website for more information on subcommittees.

7. INQUIRIES

Please direct questions and comments concerning the requirements of this regulation to OCS mailbox: OCSPolicy@usda.gov.

-END-

APPENDIX A

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DR	Departmental Regulation
OCS	Office of the Chief Scientist
REE	Research, Education, and Economics
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

APPENDIX B

AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, [Public Law 110-246](#), June 18, 2008