



New Computer Application to Improve USDA's Efficiency, Customer Relations

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency Administrator Jonathan Coppess today announced the launch of a major upgrade to the agency's Direct Loan System computer application. The application improves the delivery of supervised credit to the agency's 70,000 farm borrowers and became fully functional April 12, 2010. The system now provides Internet-based technology for all loan-making and loan-servicing processes.

"Modern, secure and reliable technology is a milestone in our quest to improve our services to farmers and ranchers," said Coppess. "We must continue to improve the tools that our dedicated state and county office workers use to serve our customers. Our new equipment is easier to use and much more practical in today's Internet-dependent business environment."

Modernizing USDA's business and information technology is part of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's goal to transform USDA into a premier organization of highly motivated, collaborative and mutually-supportive employees who are committed to creating an inclusive, diverse workplace environment that achieves high standards of performance and exceptional customer service.

In addition to expediting the delivery of new loan funds and assisting in servicing loans, this modernization facilitates greater information-sharing between various agency software applications to improve program delivery, enhance consistency throughout the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and provide increased oversight to meet the agency's mission. Farm loan managers in any of the agency's 2,249 offices nationwide will be able to use the system to interact with loan applicants and existing borrowers to gather data and provide information and to more effectively manage the customer relationship.

Development of the new software began in 2004, Coppess said, and the first phase, to improve the loan making process was launched in 2007. Since then, more than \$3 billion in new loans have been obligated through the system, including many made as a result of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

This latest launch brings FSA's loan-servicing functions into the 21st century," said Coppess. It provides an automated, user-friendly interface that improves reporting capabilities while eliminating antiquated systems and reducing the overall cost of maintenance. More than 4,000 FSA employees will be using the new application, with as many as 500 participating at any given moment.

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