

Date: June 28, 2002

Refer  
reply to: Ethics - 6/02

Subject: Ethical Standards

To: OCFO Employees

As Federal employees of the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Executive Branch, each of us must always make every effort to know and understand the rules of ethical conduct. Consequently, understanding and observing these ethics rules is essential to placing loyalty to high ethical standards above private gain.

Executive Order 12674 outlines the "*Fourteen Principles of Ethical Conduct for Federal Employees*," and is the foundation for all ethical conduct regulations cited under Title 5 Code of Federal Regulation, Part 2635. In certain instances, a violation of these rules could result in disciplinary action and/or prosecution under related criminal statutes regarding conflict of interest.

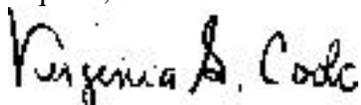
As a reminder that public service is a public trust, the following overview of general ethics rules governing ethical conduct for Federal employees of USDA is being provided.

### **Fourteen Principles of Ethical Conduct for Federal Employees**

- 1.) Public service is a public trust, requiring employees to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws and ethical principles above private gain.
- 2.) Employees shall not hold financial interest that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
- 3.) Employees shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
- 4.) An employee shall not, except as permitted by the Standards of Ethical Conduct, solicit, or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by the employee's agency or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the employee's duties.
- 5.) Employees shall put forth honest effort in the performance of their duties.

- 6.) Employees shall not knowingly make unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the Government.
- 7.) Employees shall not use public office for private gain.
- 8.) Employees shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
- 9.) Employees shall protect and conserve Federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.
- 10.) Employees shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, which conflict with official Government duties and responsibilities.
- 11.) Employees shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
- 12.) Employees shall satisfy in good faith their obligations as citizens, including financial, especially all financial--such as Federal, State, or local taxes that are imposed by law.
- 13.) Employees shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability.
- 14.) Employees shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or the ethical standards set forth in the Standards of Ethical Conduct. Whether particular circumstances create an appearance that the law or these standards have been violated shall be determined from the perspectives of a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts.

Inquiries regarding this memorandum should be referred to your supervisor. Supervisors, with inquiries, should contact the National Finance Centers Ethics Office, at Extension 5-5679.



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