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## A Message from the Chief Information Officer

As we begin 2003, I would like to take a moment both to reflect on the past year and discuss the eGovernment opportunities that lie ahead.

2002 was a year of significant progress for eGovernment at USDA. In the beginning of the year, we completed an enterprise-wide eGovernment Strategic Plan, including a bold vision of a "USDA electronically available any place, any time" and a set of initiatives to help us achieve that vision. This vision and strategy, along with the enabling initiatives, represent much of our "to-be" enterprise architecture, as well as the actions and investments necessary to transform our business.

Further, through a collaborative agency effort we completed 12 initial, high-level business cases for the Smart Choice initiatives from the Strategic Plan and have made progress toward achieving them. More detailed business cases were created for each of the Enabler Smart Choices in the fall in a collaborative process that involved individuals from every agency and staff office across the Department. Unfortunately, our progress in moving ahead with the Strategic Smart Choices has been slowed down due to '03 budget challenges.

Though many of us may take these accomplishments for granted, considering our daily involvement in the process, it is important to realize the progress they represent. Just over a year ago, USDA had no clear vision for eGovernment. Further, agencies operated in independent stovepipes, with little integration across mission areas, the USDA enterprise, or with other Federal departments. Now, not only does the Department have a clear vision and a roadmap for achieving it, but we are working together to implement the key initiatives that will provide a foundation for eGovernment at USDA. This includes a commitment to stop single agency purchases where enterprise solutions make sense. Indeed, USDA has earned a "green" rating—the highest available—on the eGovernment progress component of the President's Management Agenda Scorecard for four consecutive rating periods.

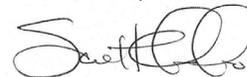
However, we still have further goals to meet and progress to achieve in 2003. The eGovernment Team is developing formal recommendations for implementing the Enabler Smart Choices, to be delivered to the Executive Information Technology Investment Review Board for its review in February. After this review, we plan to finalize

the implementation plans for the three Enablers and quickly begin implementation. We will make available a suite of services via an Enterprise Solutions Center, thus fostering collaboration and achieving economies of scale. Additionally, we plan to build a prototype of the capabilities in the Smart Choices. The prototype will be a combination of functional and mocked-up capabilities and will include such features as a common Web look and feel, delivery of data from multiple, disparate agency data bases, and access to online training services. A top priority of mine is making sure that we incorporate quick wins in data management that will help employees and customers make accurate and timely decisions. Finally, people across the Department are working hard to ensure that USDA meets the October 2003 deadline to electronically enable transactions with the public mandated by the Government Paperwork Elimination Act.

Looking back at 2002, I am appreciative of the hard work and dedication to advancing eGovernment continually shown by staff across USDA. Hundreds of individuals contributed to our progress in 2002; business case team members spent countless hours ensuring USDA's eGovernment Initiatives will provide the maximum benefit across the enterprise; Presidential Initiative liaisons worked to integrate USDA into the President's eGovernment Initiatives; eGovernment Working Group members developed eGovernment Tactical Plans and championed eGovernment in their agencies; and the eGovernment Executive Council continued to further USDA's eGovernment vision at the executive level.

eGovernment is a priority not only for myself, Deputy Secretary Moseley, and Secretary Veneman, but also for the President, as the President's Management Agenda dictates that we show tangible, measurable results in 18 to 24 months. Many feel we have moved quickly on eGovernment over the past year; nevertheless, with so much emphasis from within USDA and the White House on achieving concrete, measurable results, we must move faster still. We accomplished much in 2002; and although more work lies ahead in 2003, the coming year holds even more promise than the last.

Best wishes,



Scott Charbo  
Chief Information Officer

## CyberSeniors/CyberTeens Initiative Helping To Bridge the Technology Gap

Despite the rapid growth of the Internet over the past several years, many Americans still lack convenient access—especially core USDA customers such as rural Americans, farmers, and low-income families. USDA is helping to bridge this digital divide by supporting the innovative CyberSeniors/CyberTeens program.

CyberSeniors/CyberTeens helps senior citizens become comfortable with computers and use the Internet, while giving young Americans valuable skills and experience at teaching. Operating in a number of locations across the US, both urban and rural, the program pairs young people—some of the most avid and experienced users of the Internet—with older Americans, many of whom have no experience with computers.

Teens tutor seniors on computer- and Internet-related topics such as ‘Very, Very Basic Computers’ and ‘Introduction to the Internet and E-Mail’; additional modules help seniors with more specific topics like using the Internet to find health information, manage finances or see the latest photos of their grandchildren.

So far, USDA has been very pleased with the success of the CyberSeniors/CyberTeens program. Tom Tate, National Program Leader for Economic and Community Systems in Cooperative State Research, Education & Extension Service (CSREES), stated “this aggressive initiative is taking community technology to a new level, harnessing the life-long learning needs of adults with the need for youth learning beyond the classroom.”

A unique public-private partnership, the initiative is managed by CyberSeniors.org, a nonprofit, award-winning association dedicated to helping senior citizens become comfortable with and take advantage of the Internet. CyberSeniors’ partners include the National Retired Teacher’s Association (NRTA), the National 4-H Organization’s Youth Technology Corps, and USDA’s Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.

CyberSeniors/CyberTeens has developed a mutually beneficial relationship among the program’s partners and participants. Both seniors and young people benefit from intergenerational learning, while NRTA teachers learn valuable technology skills and 4-H volunteers gain useful teaching skills, working alongside adult mentors.

More information on CyberSeniors/CyberTeens is available at [www.cyberseniors.org/cyberteens](http://www.cyberseniors.org/cyberteens), where you will find learning center locations, a detailed curriculum overview, and recent projects and initiatives.

### Presidential Initiative Spotlight: Geospatial One Stop

Geospatial One Stop is one of the 19 Presidential eGovernment initiatives in which USDA is participating. It will

enable consolidated access to Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data across the Federal Government for easier access and sharing through a unified Web-based portal.

GIS, which uses information technology to store and analyze data related to land features and geography, has become a vital tool to help USDA fulfill its mission. Among other uses, geospatial data and analysis help the Department identify and understand trends relating to the land, enabling better and more accurate studies of crop production, natural resource conditions, and rural infrastructure. With such an array of uses, GIS is used in many USDA agencies, including the Farm Service Agency, Forest Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service. USDA is the largest user of GIS data in the Federal Government.

According to Dennis Lytle of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and USDA’s program director for Geospatial One Stop, by enabling easier access to better GIS data, the initiative will have a wide range of benefits. Improved GIS data can “reduce agriculture risks including; crop failure risk, environmental risk, fire risk, and terrorism risks,” said Lytle. Additional benefits of the improved GIS technology include improved farm records management for commodity programs and customers; program compliance; and USDA program delivery and management.

Geospatial One Stop will have added benefits as well. In its final form, the Geospatial One Stop initiative will serve as an enabler for a range of other USDA and Presidential eGovernment Initiatives. Additionally, by centralizing data and making all access available through a Geospatial One-Stop Portal, the initiative will produce significant monetary savings, as well as increase productivity, for USDA agencies and their customers.

The Geospatial One-Stop Initiative consists of 5 modules, with the final deployment stage for the public portal service currently scheduled for September 2004. Design and development of the Geospatial One-Stop portal, as well as consolidation and integration of separate GIS databases, is currently in progress. USDA has contributed both financial and human capital to this interdepartmental effort.

For more information on Geospatial One Stop, or USDA’s involvement in the initiative, contact the eGovernment Team.

**For more information on any of these topics, or for general comments or questions, contact the eGovernment Team at:**

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