

6. Reorganization and Innovation

FDR's Machine Gets Lean and Focused

"After years of leaders whose rhetoric attacked bureaucracy but whose actions expanded it, we will actually reduce it by 252,000 people over the next five years. By the time we have finished, the Federal bureaucracy will be at its lowest point in 30 years."

President Bill Clinton
1994 State of the Union Address

"We want to try to foster a different attitude within the USDA bureaucracy, to transition it from a Department that is of agriculture, to a Department which is for agriculture. We want USDA's agencies to be action oriented, not acronym oriented. We want them to be organized around ... missions or goals (seven) things, if you will, that we plan to do really, really well."

Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy
1994 Farm Credit Remarks

Around Washington, there is a famous joke regarding USDA: A tourist is walking down the street in Washington, DC, and sees a man sitting on the sidewalk crying. The tourist sits down next to the sobbing man, and asks why he is so upset. The man turns to him and says, "I work at the Department of Agriculture, and today my farmer died." This is a joke frequently told by tour guides as they drive their buses past the Department's headquarters. While the joke grossly misrepresents the work that takes place at USDA, as with most humor there is a nugget of truth. In this instance, the kernel of truth is that when President Clinton and Vice President Gore took office, nearly 130,000 employees worked for the Department of Agriculture. At the same time, there were approximately 2.2 million farms in the United States.

The ratio of approximately 18:1 sounds shocking--if one doesn't understand the true scope of USDA--if you don't know, for instance, that about half of the USDA budget is dedicated to fighting hunger in America and that half of the employees work in the Forest Service. USDA's duties span not only farm policy, but hunger and nutrition, forestry, international trade, rural development and other programs.

In 1993, USDA was a vast, sprawling Department with offices in virtually all of the Nation's 3,150 counties (even the urban ones). As President Clinton and Vice President Gore vowed to "reinvent" Government, cutting its size while improving its efficiency and effectiveness in order to build a Government that "works better and costs less" -- no Department was more ripe for change, and no Department would more test their resolve -- than USDA.

In other words, to achieve the goal it ultimately did achieve—the smallest Federal Government since the Kennedy Administration – the Clinton Administration would have to reorganize a Department that had successfully resisted fundamental change for decades. By the end of the process, USDA was nearly 23,000 positions leaner, reorganized around real-world missions such as food safety, farm and foreign agriculture services and rural development, and carrying out an on-going campaign – under the banner of Vice President Gore's reinventing Government efforts – to produce a more efficient and less bureaucratic USDA.

USDA'S Decentralized Structure

Beyond the sprawling mission and size of the Department, USDA's notoriously Byzantine ways (reflected in the bafflingly complex U.S. farm policy that had been in place since the Great Depression) were deeply entrenched. While many Federal departments have a history that dates back less than 50 years, USDA was founded during the war (not World War II, not World War I, but the *Civil War*). This bureaucracy had dealt with reform-minded politicians before ... and the bureaucracy had always won.

One particular reason the challenge of reorganizing USDA was so complex was the Department's unique, decentralized nature. As the General Accounting Office observed in 1991, USDA has "one of the largest most decentralized field structures in the Federal Government. The structure is a reflection of the era in which it was established – the 1930s, when communication and transportation systems were greatly limited by geographic boundaries."

While the need to modernize this archaic approach made sense on an intellectual level, on a political level it was a whole other ball game--hardball. Cutting the size of the Department and streamlining its operations would inevitably include staff reductions and office closings out in farm country--uprooting the Federal presence and eliminating jobs in small rural communities across the country. While Americans, generally, were all for smaller Government, they typically wanted the downsizing to occur in someone else's community. In many ways, the politics of streamlining USDA offices paralleled the difficult challenge of military base closures that the Clinton Administration also tackled in the 1990s.

The history of how USDA became a decentralized bureaucracy helps illuminate the political complexity of scaling back the Department's size. In 1993, the Department had offices in virtually every county across the country. A full 90 percent employees worked outside the Washington, DC, area in some 10,000 field offices across the country and around the world. The primary argument for this decentralized structure was that local employees enabled a one-to-one relationship with farmers, rural communities, and other constituents in order to tailor U.S. farm policy, conservation, and rural development program to local circumstances.

Without a doubt that is the primary value of the field presence, but it is not the reason it was created. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt established the county offices in the 1930s, so he could create foot soldiers across the country for his New Deal programs—building a national grassroots political machine with a powerful presence in every county in the country. Seventy years later, this FDR legacy offered a doubled-edge sword—tailored Federal programs and a deeply entrenched, politically powerful resistance to change.

What's in a Name?

Beyond the true bloat at USDA, the Department also persistently faced the *perception* of bloat. After all, in the conventional wisdom, USDA is the "Department for farmers." While this is true, the Department also performs many other vital tasks. What causes the confusion? Many point to the name—the U.S. Department of *Agriculture*. In fact, while a member of Congress and in his early days in the Administration, Secretary Glickman put forward a spirited argument to change USDA's name to the Department of Food, Nutrition and Agriculture. While clearly a more accurate reflection of the true breadth of the work done across the country and around the world, the proposal met a brick wall of resistance put up by members of Congress with large agricultural constituencies. They worried that the heart of the Department—production agriculture—would be lost. They also worried that the name change would further sever the connection between the food in our suburban grocery stores and the farms and ranches that produce it.

Although this effort to rename USDA failed, Glickman was determined to raise awareness about the true breadth of the Department's work. It became a standard mantra in virtually every speech he would give for his 6 years as Agriculture Secretary. In his typical down-to-earth style, whether speaking to leading business groups or schoolchildren, Glickman would share some variation of the following about his own experience making the transition from a member of Congress to a member of President Clinton's cabinet:

"The biggest surprise coming from Congress was the sheer magnitude of the Department and the diversity of things USDA does. I went from managing a staff of about 20 to more than 100,000. I went from focusing on wheat and cattle—the agricultural mainstays of my Congressional district—to focusing on not just all of agriculture, but world trade, the environment, food safety, hunger, research and rural America. As Secretary of Agriculture, I run the U.S. Forest Service; Smokey Bear works for me. I run the entire Federal antihunger effort, everything from food stamps to school lunches. I'm responsible for ensuring quality health care and education in remote rural towns, and for bringing safe, running water to home and whole communities that never had it before. I run the largest conservation program in the United States—paying private landowners to protect fragile acres, and the wildlife that depend on it. I'm in charge of food safety. Right now, I'm overseeing the largest overhaul of our meat and poultry inspections since Upton Sinclair wrote *The Jungle*. ... Because agriculture is a leading positive contributor to the U.S. trade balance, I'm also heavily involved in trade debates."

Throughout Glickman's tenure as Agriculture Secretary, he shared these basic facts about USDA. For 6 years, he never tired of the chore because his explanation never ceased to surprise his audience. Afterwards, Glickman would typically add that "no Federal department has a greater capacity to positively impact the life of every American every day." As a former member of Congress, Glickman understood that unless more Americans knew the true scope and value of USDA's vital work, than the tax dollars that funded it would be in jeopardy.

The 1991 General Accounting Office (GAO) report delicately explained it this way:

"Farmer-organized districts implemented soil conservation plans; locally elected farmer committees rather than bureaucrats oversaw the county offices that administered Federal program benefits and farmer payments. USDA is one of only a very few Federal entities that have direct, day-to-day, personal contact with their constituents, and in key programs, the Department is managed at the grass-roots level by its constituents. Although successful in making USDA responsive to its clients, the heavy constituent involvement has been criticized by some as the reason for the difficulty in instituting the reforms."

Momentum Makes the Difference

On October 13, 1994, President Clinton signed into law the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act. This capped off a massive effort at USDA, in the White House, and in the Congress to overcome a wall of bureaucratic inertia and overt resistance to change.

The legislative effort occurred on the watch of Secretary Espy, but it was driven in part by legislative efforts of then-Congressman Dan Glickman, of Kansas, who served on the House Agriculture Committee. The future agriculture secretary put forward his own proposal in 1992 that would merge all of USDA's farm programs into one "farm services" entity, would streamline county offices and reduce staff in Washington, DC—all moves that were included in the final Clinton Administration reform.

The difference between earlier failed efforts at reform and the Clinton Administration's successful drive was largely the momentum for change. In 1992, the Kansas City Star won a Pulitzer Prize for its series revealing the mass challenges and inefficiencies created by USDA's archaic structure. The opening headline for the series read, "Betrayals and Blunders at the Department of Agriculture." The ensuing articles launched a year of critical press coverage and GAO reports on the management of USDA revealed significant weaknesses in the Department's structure, massive inefficiencies in the allocation of administrative resources, and a grave lack of accountability for the activities of county-based employees. These reports produced a public clamor for change and, for the first time, gave the upper hand to reformers over those who favored the status quo.

An Intense Effort on Capitol Hill

Armed with this strong mandate for change, one of Mike Espy's first actions as Agriculture Secretary was to convene a conference of Department officials to take a fresh look at USDA's organization. This conference led to the proposal for a new structure—for both the headquarters and the field—that would be far more efficient and effective. The proposal also called for the Department to be reorganized around concrete "missions": Rural Development; Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services; Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services; Natural Resources and the Environment; Research, Education and Economics; Marketing and Inspection Programs, and Departmental Administration.

Espy endorsed the plan and its ambitious reach. Without a doubt, this would be the biggest overhaul of the Department in its history. Because change on this order of

magnitude required the consent of the Congress, Espy transformed the plan into a legislative proposal. He also made the crucial decision to merge two related plans: (1) the reorganization plan which would restructure the Department and (2) a streamlining plan, which would carry out President Clinton's call for smaller, more effective Government. By merging the plans, Espy now had one powerful proposal that would not only make the Department more efficient, it also would save taxpayers \$4 billion over 5 years.

The Department's legislative package was submitted to the Congress on September 27, 1993, (H.R.3171) with the hope that the general momentum toward Government reinvention and downsizing would drive its quick enactment. This hope was promptly dashed by entrenched interests in Congress that expressed wariness with the sweeping nature of the Department's proposals. Deputy Secretary Rich Rominger, who was charged with delivering this vital legislative victory, stepped back and opted for a more methodical approach. He and his team spent the Autumn of 1993 making the case for the plan to the various Congressional Committees. To convey the substance of their proposal, the Department created a 100-page document entitled "USDA Reorganization Implementation: Key Facts and Projections Briefing Book." The material was placed in a white binder and became known both in the Department and on the Hill as the "White Book." It provided organization charts, descriptions of every aspect of the reorganization, how it would occur and what it would deliver, and five-year projections of budget savings and personnel reductions.

This level of detail and the case it made for significant savings and improved service re-sparked momentum for the plan. It gave substance to the Department's proposals and allowed USDA officials to respond to questions with specifics. The White Book, and the effort to share its contents, also helped convince a critical mass of decisionmakers that the Department was sincere in its attempt to reduce overhead without hindering vital USDA services and programs.

The cost-savings in the end were the deciding factor. Espy, Rominger, and their Congressional allies made clear that smaller, leaner Government brought with it smaller, leaner budgets. Congress could either cut fat—by reorganizing and eliminating inefficiencies—or cut muscle—by taking benefits away from farmers, hungry families, rural communities, and others. Espy, in particular, made a passionate case that if USDA's budget were to go down and the Department was not reorganized, then all who rely on USDA to help ensure safe, abundant affordable food would bear the brunt of the budget cuts. Why not instead, Espy argued, streamline and reorganize USDA to work more efficiently. The Clinton Administration maintained that it was in everyone's interest to reorganize USDA to protect the vital benefits it provided.

At the beginning of 1994, the Secretary and other key Departmental officials met individually with Senators, Members of Congress and their staff members who would play a key role in

determining the fate of the legislation. Many in Congress who had long craved real reform became emboldened by the growing momentum. Hearings were held, staff briefings were provided, and the Department responded to hundreds of Congressional questions.

The Major Debates

The concerns dealt primarily with the three key aspects of the plan: 1) restoring broad authority to the Secretary of Agriculture to manage and organize the Department, 2) organizing USDA programs into six mission areas, and 3) providing additional power to the Secretary over the management of USDA field offices:

Secretarial Control

Congress passed a series of "reorganization plans" in the early 1950s, which provided each cabinet officer with general authority to manage and organize their department. But between 1953 and 1993, a growing level of distrust between Congress and the Executive Branch led Congress to severely limit the Secretary's authority over particular aspects of the Department. For example, without the permission of Congress, the Secretary could not merge farm programs into one farm services agency. USDA's proposal to restore broad authority to the Secretary reignited Congressional concerns. It quickly became clear that the Department would not be able to generate the political support necessary in Congress to permanently restore these powers. Congress repeatedly expressed concerns that while Secretary Espy might honor promises for how he would wield this broad authority, there was no assurance what future secretaries would do. Ultimately, a compromise was agreed to which offered the broad authority for 2 years, on the condition that USDA fulfill the promised savings and other goals that the Secretary vowed to use these powers to achieve.

Mission Structure

The Department's proposal would reorganize USDA activities into six mission areas: farm and international trade services; rural economic and community development; food, nutrition, and consumer services; natural resources and the environment; marketing and inspection services; and research, education, and economics. This proposal sparked a debate in Congress that echoed the debate within USDA when Espy first convened department leaders to discuss reorganization. For instance, there was a prolonged debate about whether food safety functions could appropriately be included in a mission charged with marketing U.S. food and fiber. This apparent conflict of interest was resolved when USDA added a seventh mission area—a separate, independent food safety agency staffed with public health experts.

The most strident debate over the mission structure had to do with the decentralized nature of the Department which for decades had ensured a very high level of local control over the delivery of programs—from farm loans to disaster payments. There was a great deal of concern that a mission-based structure would consolidate power in Washington, reduce program flexibility, and spark conflict between the new mission

areas. The Department worked hard to convince all parties that its intentions were to organize programs in a more rational manner that made more efficient use of resources, rather than to impose a new layer of bureaucracy. In the end, these arguments prevailed due to the growing consensus that the status quo could not continue.

Field Delivery System

One key purpose of the reorganization was to give the Secretary authority to manage all USDA employees as a single workforce. This would accomplish a host of key advances from paving the way for more uniform civil rights accountability to clearing a path to close about 1,100 county-based field offices and consolidating their work into a series of "service centers" to be established throughout the country.

The debate concerning the field delivery system was quite specific. Issues included the procedures for choosing the supervisors of the new service centers, the geographic and program jurisdiction of those centers, union successorship, and the composition of the local committees which held great power in doling out funds for many USDA programs. The Department responded with detailed information, but also continued to press its basic argument: that the impact of budget reductions on a divided workforce was likely to be more severe than the impact of reductions on a unified workforce where there would be some flexibility to adjust resources to maintain services.

Ultimately, the legislation prevailed. In addition to establishing the seven mission areas, the Act also created two new offices: (1) the National Appeals Division, an independent organization to review adverse program decisions related to rural development, farm and conservation programs, and (2) the Office of Risk Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis, to analyze the risks, costs, and benefits of major regulations affecting human health, safety, or the environment.

The Real Challenge: Implementation

With the legislation signed into law, the Department now faced an even more daunting task—actually carrying out the reorganization. Once again, Deputy Secretary Rominger was tapped to lead the effort. The same day the President signed the reorganization legislation into law, Rominger established a group to coordinate its implementation. In one week, the new subcabinet—the leaders of each of the seven new mission areas—was in place.

In accordance with Espy's original strategy, the reorganization would occur on the same 5-year timeframe as the Department's streamlining, culminating in 1999 with a leaner USDA, a Department better organized to face modern challenges, and \$4 billion in savings for taxpayers.

Rominger and his team took every opportunity to go beyond the legislation to achieve greater efficiencies and cost-savings, primarily under the Clinton-Gore banner of

"reinventing Government." Administrative and financial units within Mission Areas were consolidated. In accordance with the Administration-wide effort, USDA targeted middle-management and administrative staff for reductions. With these efforts in the mix, USDA was now looking at a full-scale restructuring of its operations in Washington, DC, and across the country. In accordance with the National Performance Review, guiding principles included delegation of authority, decentralization, empowerment of employees, holding managers accountable for performance, and promoting workforce diversity.

Carrying out the reorganization required a significant sustained effort by the Department, in close coordination with Congress, employees, and USDA constituents. There were some adjustments along the way. Two additional offices were created by the Congress: the Risk Management Agency--to help farmers better manage risks under the new U.S. farm policy enacted in 1996--and the Office of the Chief Information Officer--to focus the Department's efforts to harness the power of information technology to improve its services.

By the end of 1999, staff reductions were far higher than required by the Congress. Overall staffing was down 17.4 percent from 1993, as opposed to the planned 11.4 percent. Savings were greater than expected--\$6 billion. About 290 other offices were closed and consolidated into just over 2,600 Service Centers. About 3,700 county-based office locations of the Rural Development Mission Area, and the Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources and Conservation Service were colocated.

Unfortunately, plans to support the streamlined organization with infrastructure improvements have proceeded slowly, primarily due to lack of support from Congress. At Secretary Glickman's direction, the Service Center agencies developed plans to consolidate their administrative operations which involve activities such as personnel matters and payroll actions to further reduce overhead costs and direct more resources to program work. Yet for 2 years, Congress tucked language into its agriculture appropriations bills that barred the plan from moving forward. This battle was largely

A Brief History of Field Office Colocations.

Before the reorganization, farmers frequently made multiple trips to various USDA offices to complete one transaction. For example, a farmer might visit USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to get certification of compliance with all conservation requirements. Then, he or she might have to get in his car again to take that certification to the local USDA Farm Services Agency office. If that farmer phoned one of the agencies to ask a question, that agency might not even be able to transfer the call to the other agency.

So when President Clinton sought ways to create a Government that "works better and costs less," USDA's field offices presented a fat target. As a result, legislation authorizing USDA's reorganization, included two common-sense provisions:

"Where practicable and to the extent consistent with efficient, effective, and improved service, the Secretary shall combine field offices of agencies within the Department to reduce personnel and duplicative overhead expenses."

"When two or more agencies of the Department share a common field office, the Secretary shall require the agencies to jointly use office space, equipment, office supplies, administrative personnel, and clerical personnel associated with that field office."

As a result, USDA merged nearly 3,700 local offices of the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Rural Development mission area into "one-stop-shops," officially called USDA Service Centers. Under the new system, farmers walk down the hall rather than drive across the county to finish their USDA business. By September 2000, USDA's field structure was successfully consolidated into 2,625 Service Centers.

lost due to agency "turf" wars. Considering the magnitude of the resistance to simply merging administrative functions gives a proper sense of just how big an accomplishment it was for the Administration to deliver the first major reorganization of the Department in 70 years.

Innovation

With the reorganization in place, President Clinton's USDA still recognized that much more could be done to improve the Department's services, particularly by harnessing the power of information technology, and forging stronger communications between employees and managers. What follows are just a few of the many illustrations of the concrete efforts that helped carry on the Department's work to deliver more efficient and effective service.

Bringing Greater Financial Accountability

When you run one of the largest departments in the Federal Government and you work for a President who has called for a Government "that works better and costs less," you have your work cut out for you. Essential to the Clinton Administration efforts to produce a leaner, more effective Government was the ability to generate timely, accurate information on where and how Federal resources are spent. Yet when the Administration came into office in 1993, USDA and other Federal agencies lacked the ability to deliver this accountability, due largely to a lack of integrated accounting and financial management systems.

Toward this end (and in compliance with the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990), President Clinton's USDA established the Office of the Chief Financial Officer. By 2000, the Office made significant strides in resolving financial management weaknesses that had precluded USDA in the past from receiving a clean audit of its financial statements. The Office also enhanced financial accountability through strong strategic planning, including a timeline and budget to establish reliable corporate administrative systems throughout the Department. The Office also established a Foundation Financial Information System and a Financial Data Warehouse to allow for timely reports and monitoring of USDA expenditures of taxpayer dollars.

These efforts will help deliver far more financial accountability throughout USDA. These systems will also provide USDA leadership with timely information that helps them better manage the vast resources of a diverse Department. As USDA's reorganization produced a leaner Department, it will be increasingly critical for USDA to have strong systems to ensure that resources are responsibly and efficiently used to support key Department priorities.

Online Ethics Reporting: E-Government in Action

President Clinton and Vice President Gore's reinvention efforts often involved reduced paperwork. Typically, the beneficiaries of the innovation were USDA customers and partners, but one key paperwork reduction breakthrough benefited Government employees themselves.

The Ethics in Government Act requires more than 250,000 ranking Federal employees to annually divulge their financial assets, transactions, liabilities, and outside interests, in order to provide oversight against conflicts of interest. This reporting requirement was often considered the most onerous condition of being employed in a high Government position. Filers used pre-printed forms, and completed them by hand. Past efforts at computerizing the process required high levels of computer literacy, generally did not store the data to encourage easy updates, and produced only hardcopy paper reports. As a result, distributing, reviewing, processing, and monitoring compliance was a costly, paper-intensive activity for every Federal department.

In 2000, the USDA Office of Ethics and the USDA National Finance Center (NFC) pooled their talents to reinvent this bureaucratic process. They developed a web-based financial disclosure system that is secure and simple to use. By using existing hardware, and exploiting the power of the Internet, the effort required very little expenditure and created a very responsive system.

The new system is hardware independent; it functions with all common browsers; and it is accessible from the office, home, or anywhere in the world via the Internet. The information also is highly secure. Information is stored on the NFC's tightly secured computer facility, is dependent on employee passwords, and is encrypted during transmission. Best of all, the U.S. Office of Government Ethics authorized other Federal departments to adopt this innovation.

Bridging the Labor-Management Divide

President Clinton's Administration understood that completing a true revolution in governance would require the cooperation of Federal employees and managers. President Clinton's USDA was a leader in forging labor-management cooperation. While previous labor-management relations had sometimes been contentious, a USDA Partnership Council was formed in December 1993. Comprised of seven union and seven management representatives, the Council met quarterly, using consensus decisionmaking to address issues of departmentwide significance. Local issues were handled by the more than 120 partnerships at the agency level.

The Council was involved in a myriad of diverse issues, ranging from day care to USDA's reorganization. A prime responsibility of the Council was encouraging labor-management cooperation and partnership in the nearly 100 bargaining units in USDA.

Prior to the establishment of the USDA Partnership Council, there was little, if any, contact between unions and management at the Department level. Even though two unions had national consultation rights with USDA, there was little dialogue between top management and unions. This drastically changed with the USDA Partnership Council. Top management and unions that represent USDA employees now regularly

meet as members of the Council and tackle the tough issues facing the Department. Unions now have the opportunity to have input into Department decisions that will impact the work lives of employees.

Conclusion

From reorganizing one of the most complex and large departments in the Federal Government to using technology and other innovative partnerships to ensure a more efficient and effective Government, the Clinton Administration's commitment to reinventing Government is deeply evident in the new Department of Agriculture that it leaves behind. This legacy will be a lasting one. In an era of declining budgets, the Clinton Administration's dogged determination to streamline USDA will ensure that maximum resources are available to carry on the Department's important work—from food safety, to fighting hunger, to protecting the environment, to expanding the opportunities of farmers, ranchers, and all rural Americans.

8. Emerging Issues

Facing New Challenges, Seizing New Opportunities

Many of the challenges facing American agriculture during the Clinton-Gore years are the same ones farmers and ranchers have always known—droughts, floods, freezes, and weak prices. But as U.S. agriculture entered the 21st century, new challenges and new opportunities presented themselves as well. While these emerging issues existed for quite some time, they took on a new level of importance during the 1990s—importance to America's farmers and ranchers, importance to the Nation's health and environment, importance to global stability and the world war on hunger. While the list of emerging issues could go on for many pages, two issues stood out—both for their importance to the Nation and for the aggressive response of the Clinton Administration. These issues were the mass proliferation of biotechnology in agriculture and the escalating war to protect the country, its people and its resources from invasive species.

Realizing Biotechnology's Potential¹

In November of 1996, Secretary Glickman led the U.S. delegation to the World Food Summit in Rome. He gave a speech to the delegates outlining, among other things, the tremendous potential of agricultural biotechnology to help feed hundreds of millions of undernourished people around the world.

Later at a press conference, however, he found himself ducking flying objects, as a group of anti-biotechnology protesters began pelting him with genetically modified soybeans. They then stripped naked to flash messages painted on their bodies that said things like "No Gene Bean" and "The Naked Truth."

It was a most vivid example of the strong feelings people have—and the lengths to which they will go to express those feelings—when it comes to the issue of biotechnology and genetically modified foods.

Biotechnology has existed for many years, most notably fueling the 1970s "Green Revolution" that enabled the dramatic expansion of global food production while minimizing damage to the environment. But the sophistication and proliferation of biotechnology exploded on the Clinton-Gore watch. By 2000, genetically engineered crops accounted for roughly *two-fifths* of major crop acreage. USDA had worked for many years on biotechnology—conducting research, working with farmers, developing regulations and working on the trade front. But rapid advances in laboratories, mass adoption in farmers' fields and the increasing attention of consumers around the world brought the issue front and center during the 1990s. President Clinton's USDA worked hard to strike a responsible balance between harnessing the potential of biotechnology to feed the world in a sustainable way, while ensuring that rapid advances in biotechnology were governed by rigorous scientific oversight.

Scientists have tinkered with the genetic composition of plants since Gregor Mendel cross-pollinated his garden peas in the 19th century. But genetic engineering takes the process one step further, allowing for the transfer of a gene between species, thus introducing a desirable trait such as pest resistance or enhanced nutritional value.

¹ A more detailed, scientific account of this issue is included in a paper prepared by USDA's Biotechnology Coordinating Committee, "History of Biotechnology at USDA during the Clinton Administration," which is included in the appendix to this chapter.

Agricultural biotechnology creates a complex web of challenges and opportunities. The potential benefits are many: higher crop yields, lower input costs for farmers, less strain on the environment and better quality foods for consumers, to name just a few. Perhaps most important, biotechnology can be an important tool in reducing world hunger. In 2000, 800 million people were chronically malnourished, and world population is expected to reach 9 billion by the middle of the 21st century. Biotechnology can help world agricultural producers meet this exploding global food and fiber demand by growing more food from a limited and fragile natural resource base.

Biotechnology can improve not only the quantity of food but also the quality. For example, in 1999 Swiss scientists developed a new rice variety containing beta-carotene, the biochemical that turns into Vitamin A. This has major implications for the developing world, where Vitamin A deficiency is one of the leading causes of blindness, illness, and death and where rice happens to be a dietary staple.

During the Clinton Administration, USDA's Agricultural Research Service did its own extensive biotechnology research--with studies on everything from a biotechnology-derived vaccine that combats avian influenza in chickens to a tomato that is genetically modified to prevent over-ripening. Other USDA agencies and mission areas made their own biotechnology contributions. In 1996, the Economic Research Service began gathering and analyzing data on the extent and impact of agricultural biotechnology. The Forest Service used biotechnology to develop disease-resistant trees. In 2000, USDA also invested \$32 million in biotechnology projects as part of a new Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems, designed to help farmers--especially small farmers--adapt to changes in agriculture.

Establishing a Rigorous Review Process

But USDA's most important biotechnology function has been a regulatory one. The Department issued the first regulations directly addressing genetically engineered organisms in 1997 and careful research and testing of new biotechnology products has flourished during the Clinton Administration. USDA plays an important role in ensuring, as best it possibly can, that no biotechnology product makes it to market that is hazardous to public health or to natural resources. This approval process is tight, comprehensive, and grounded in the most up-to-date demanding science. It is anything but a routine rubber stamp. There are many strict checkpoints through which a genetically modified product must pass on the road from petri dish to grocery store shelf.

Those checkpoints are patrolled by USDA and two other Federal agencies. USDA, through the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, evaluates products for potential plant pest risks. The Food and Drug Administration is the watchdog for a product's impact on food safety. The Environmental Protection Agency examines products that can be classified as pesticides. Regulators at all three agencies are scientists who work full-time on review of new products. They maintain an arm's-length distance from any entity with an interest in biotechnology commercialization, sales, or profit. In addition to being scientifically rigorous, the process is open and inclusive. Americans can believe in its integrity because they have the opportunity to watch it happen and participate. Public meetings with scientific advisory panels are held. For each product, information is regularly posted on the Internet.

USDA and the Clinton Administration worked diligently to continually improve the U.S. approval process. In 1999, Secretary Glickman asked the National Academy of Sciences to review USDA's regulatory procedures for biotechnology. (A final report was expected in late 2001). He also appointed an Advisory Committee on Agricultural Biotechnology, to provide policy guidance on the larger issues

around the impact of this technology. The 38-person panel, which met three times during 2000, reflects a broad range of perspectives on biotechnology. The members' expertise is varied. In addition to industry executives and farmers, the committee also includes environmental and consumer advocates, as well as an economist, a sociologist, and a physician.

Unfortunately by 2000, many of the United States' trading partners still had not built a similar working regulatory infrastructure. The European Union in particular has had difficulties that have led to transatlantic trade tensions over biotechnology. Instead of coming to science-based conclusions about how to address safety issues for biotechnology products, they simply closed their market to these products. This decision created a rift in the transatlantic relationship between these otherwise close allies and cost the United States hundreds of millions of dollars in lost exports.

The European position was, in some measure, a response to the food safety anxiety of consumers there, who were victimized by a series of public health scares in the 1990s, such as the outbreak of BSE (commonly known as "mad cow" disease) in Great Britain. But USDA and the Clinton Administration maintained that Governments must base their approach to biotechnology not on general mistrust of scientific progress, but on independent, empirical analysis.

That is the message the Administration carried to all of its trading partners. As the Administration prepared for the next round of World Trade Organization agriculture negotiations, one of the top agenda items was to move nations toward a modern, transparent, science-based biotechnology approval process.

Biotechnology has received a better reception outside Europe, especially in many developing countries, where genetic engineering is embraced as one of the keys to addressing hunger and malnutrition. While not all of these nations have the appropriate regulatory structures in place, they have been enthusiastic partners of the United States in promoting further advances in biotechnology. Throughout his travels, especially in Africa, Secretary Glickman has emphasized the potential benefits of biotechnology and worked with his counterparts on strategies to bring those benefits to developing nations.

The White House Biotechnology Initiative

USDA's vigilance on biotechnology also helped lead to a White House Biotechnology Initiative, designed to increase consumer confidence in the regulatory system. The Initiative, announced in May 2000, included several steps. It called on the Food and Drug Administration to develop guidelines for clear and straightforward voluntary food labeling relating to the use of biotechnology. USDA was charged with, among other things, working with farmers and industry to develop reliable testing procedures that effectively differentiate bio-engineered commodities from those that have not been bio-engineered. The idea was to better serve the needs of a marketplace that values consumer choice.

In late 2000, USDA was preparing to open a laboratory in Kansas City, Missouri, that would evaluate testing procedures and accredit independent testing labs that meet high performance standards. In November 2000, USDA also took the step of soliciting public comment from all interested parties on what, if any, additional steps USDA should take to facilitate the marketing of genetically modified crops. This was another example of the Administration's commitment to an open and transparent approach to biotechnology because USDA went beyond its statutory obligation to solicit public comment on its proposals. Instead, it offered the public the chance to weigh in before these proposed regulations were even drafted.

A Voice of Reason in the Heated Debate

This move reflected the Administration's commitment to bring the public into the process. This, largely, was Secretary Glickman's influence. He did a great deal to introduce a more moderate tone into the debate. While a believer in biotechnology's potential, Glickman was willing to point out the excesses on both sides. He demonstrated that one can be pro-biotechnology and still believe in proceeding with caution and appropriate safeguards.

Glickman criticized knee-jerk opposition to biotechnology, but he did it without the barbed insults often leveled by others. He emphatically pointed out the flaws of the European approach, but he also was critical of biotech supporters who blithely dismissed consumer fears of genetically modified foods. Glickman argued that all parties should respect people's skepticism, whether or not it is justified by the science. Preaching and berating, Glickman suggested, was not the way to persuade people of biotechnology's benefits. Rather, he argued, what was needed was a reasoned public information effort and a greater commitment to generating biotechnology products which, in addition to helping farmers and seed companies, would offer immediate consumer benefits such as better taste, higher nutritional value, and increased shelf life.

Secretary Glickman believed that a more constructive dialogue on biotechnology could eventually create an atmosphere where common ground could be identified. Only then could the world truly harness the power of biotechnology to do the most possible good for the most possible people.

Conclusion

The end of the Clinton Administration marks just the beginning of the challenges associated with agricultural biotechnology. As this technology matures and expands, the U.S. regulatory process must continue to stay ahead of the curve, so it can respond effectively to new innovations. As people's food tastes evolve, Government must continue to work with industry to monitor movement and trends in demand for biotech crops. In an agricultural economy that is becoming more consolidated, the Government also must continue to explore ways to ensure that small farmers--not just multinational corporations--reap the benefits of biotechnology. It must also address how biotech and nonbiotech crops and products can thrive together on farms and in the marketplace. Perhaps most important, it must carry on the Clinton Administration's efforts to guide responsible progress in biotechnology, so this scientific advance--like so many before it--can be a force for humanitarian progress and a lifeline for the world's hungry and malnourished.

Invasive Species: Guarding Against a True Alien Invasion

In 1993, Congress' Office of Technology Assessment released a study indicating that 79 invasive species caused approximately \$97 billion in agricultural production losses from 1906 to 1991. A 2000 study estimated the economic impact of invasive species--including lost export markets, damage to natural areas; destroyed trees, crops, and livestock; and other potential losses--at as high as \$138 billion per year in the United States. Over the course of the Clinton Administration, USDA waged war on these invasive species in order to protect the Nation's environment, health, and agricultural resources, as well as to defend the U.S. farm economy from these tiny invaders that posed a giant economic threat.

Particularly in the later years of the Clinton Administration, invasive species presented an unprecedented threat to agriculture. In 1999-2000 Secretary Glickman declared no less than 9 invasive species emergencies and used his emergency authority to release well over \$200 million in emergency funding.

Dramatic increases in international trade and travel raised the risk of introductions of foreign pests and diseases substantially. In 1996, for example, USDA officials inspected 66 million international airline passengers and crew members—five times more people than live in the State of Florida. That same year, USDA inspectors intercepted almost 2 million potentially damaging plant and animal products, preventing 58,000 pests of concern from entering the country. But some pests and diseases continued to elude our defenses. As a result, the Clinton Administration embarked on a strong national strategy to enhance the Nation's defense against invasive species, and improve America's ability to respond quickly and effectively to invasive species introductions when they do occur.

America's Most Wanted

Dramatic increases in passenger travel and the movement of goods around the world have raised the stakes exponentially in the battle against non-native, invasive species. The global economy now means that we must be concerned with a global universe of pests and diseases. Invasions include these:

- Asian long-horned beetles forced the destruction of 5,600 trees in beloved urban parks and neighborhoods in New York City and Chicago at a cost of about \$15 million and rising.
- The exotic West Nile virus—carried by mosquitoes and birds—caused the deaths of seven people, several horses, and thousands of wild birds in 1999, and the virus reappeared in 2000.
- An exotic disease called plum pox destroyed peach and plum groves in Pennsylvania and threatened the Nation's stonefruit industry.
- An outbreak of citrus canker in Florida devastated lime production in the State and continues to spread toward other citrus-growing areas.
- Pierce's disease—spread by an insect vector called the glassy-winged sharpshooter—caused serious damage to grape production in California.
- A Mexican fruit fly in California seriously damaged many fruit and vegetable crops.
- Exotic weeds invaded rangelands, forests, and waterways and threatened precious natural resources such as the Everglades.

Invasive Species: The U.S. Tour

To highlight the risks posed by invasive pests and diseases, Secretary Glickman embarked on a national invasive species tour in March of 2000. This trip illustrated the magnitude of the problem and highlighted the range of people affected by the destruction that just one pest introduction can bring.

In New York City, Secretary Glickman visited Rupper Park, where just four short blocks from Central Park, Asian long-horned beetles felled two dozen trees, changing the character of the park for years. Glickman also announced the allocation of additional Federal funds to aid efforts to battle the dreaded West Nile virus, which killed seven people in New York in 1999.

Glickman then moved on to Florida, where he stood with a lime farmer as he burned his lime trees to kill the devastating scourge of citrus canker, which threatens the State's \$8-billion citrus industry. Hundreds of thousands of citrus trees were destroyed in commercial groves and backyards across Florida. The price tag for these efforts? More than \$170 million a year.

To get a sense of the enormous volume of travelers and cargo that enter this country each day, Secretary Glickman traveled to Miami International Airport, the country's busiest airport of entry for agricultural products. In 1999, more than 3 million tons of air cargo passed through Miami, not to mention 9 million air passengers. USDA officials in Miami—working with the Department's famous beagle brigade—routinely seize or deny entry to thousands of products and animals that threaten U.S. agriculture.

The Secretary's next stop was Southern California. There he visited three of the Nation's busiest ports, where import tonnage doubled since 1992. At the Port of Long Beach, more than 4,000 ships enter the United States each year. Many carry solid wood packing material from China—the preferred mode of transportation for the Asian long-horned beetle. Glickman also visited an area under quarantine because of a Mexican fruit fly outbreak, where USDA helped release sterile fruit flies to breed the infestation out of existence.

Further north, in California wine country, Glickman met with grape growers whose vineyards were afflicted by Pierce's disease, which is transmitted by a pest called the glassy-winged sharpshooter and is lethal to grapevines, almonds, alfalfa, oleander, and other plants.

The trip highlighted the fact that invasive species are not just a "farming problem." When these costly invaders slip across U.S. borders, they impact everyone who wants high-quality, affordable food; values the natural beauty of sprawling national forests, urban parks, and lush backyards; and craves the security that animals and insects will not spread exotic diseases.

Executive Order on Invasive Species

In 1997, the White House requested that USDA and the Department of the Interior outline a Federal strategy on invasive species. On January 3, 1999, a Presidential Executive Order on Invasive Species was signed. The directive created the National Council on Invasive Species, and USDA plays a lead role

in fulfilling many of the order's main goals, including improved early detection and rapid response systems, control and management, monitoring, public outreach and international efforts.

USDA began to organize its invasive species programs in 1995 by reconvening the USDA Weed Coordinating Team. In 1998, the team was expanded to become the USDA Invasive Species Coordinator's Group, to address the full range of economic, agricultural, environmental, and public health threats posed by the introduction of non-native plants and animals.

Legislative Work

President Clinton's USDA also helped draft legislation to modernize, enhance, and streamline its plant protection authorities. The Secretary of Agriculture was first authorized to address diseases and pests affecting plants under the Plant Quarantine Act of 1912. By 1982, nearly a dozen Federal plant protection laws existed, along with much duplication, authority gaps, and contradictions among these statutes. A consolidation of these duties and authorities was finally passed by Congress as part of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000. The Plant Protection Act consolidated 11 existing pest exclusion statutes. It also gave USDA the authority to establish more effective deterrents against smuggling by putting real teeth into the Department's enforcement efforts, enabling USDA to assess civil penalties and secure subpoenas to help prosecute serious offenders.

Regulatory Efforts

In 1999, USDA published an interim rule adding general prohibitions and restrictions on the interstate movement of noxious weeds. The interstate movement of Federal noxious weeds is now prohibited except under permit. In response to the rising levels of imported goods and international tourism, more invasive species have entered the United States in recent years. USDA has primary responsibility for surveying private and State lands to uncover these invasions.² USDA is also responsible for developing risk assessments related to the addition of new species to the Federal Noxious Weed list. New species added during the Clinton-Gore years include: wetland nightshade, mud mat, small bell morning glory, tropical soda apple, and *Caulerpa taxifolia* (the first seaweed listed).

Eradication and Control

The Mediterranean fruit fly, commonly known as the Medfly, is one of the world's most destructive agricultural pests, attacking more than 250 kinds of fruits, nuts, and vegetables. Since 1929, periodic outbreaks of Medfly have threatened producers in California, Florida, and Texas. Thanks to the Clinton Administration's strong efforts, the U.S. mainland is currently free of this destructive pest. If Medfly were to become established in this country, it is estimated that annual losses would be about \$1.5 billion. In response to sporadic outbreaks of this pest, USDA and State officials conducted emergency response efforts consisting of chemical treatments, sterile fly releases, and intensive surveillance. These efforts were very successful in preventing these pests from getting a foothold in key agricultural economies throughout the country.

² During the 1993-2000 period, USDA conducted surveys on the following species: catclaw mimosa in Florida; *Orobancha minor* in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina; *Orobancha ramosa* in Texas; Itchgrass in North Carolina; Turkeyberry in Alabama and Florida; Chinese water spinach in Florida; Cogongrass in Florida and Georgia; Hydrilla in California; Tropical soda apple in Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Puerto Rico; branched broomrape in Texas; and small broomrape in Oregon.

The Medfly is just one of many nonindigenous insects, plants, diseases, and aquatic organisms that increasingly threaten American farms, forests, and cities. As of September 30, 2000, President Clinton's USDA had spent \$122 million battling an outbreak of citrus canker in Florida, which was first detected in 1995 and subsequently devastated domestic lime production. In Pennsylvania, USDA and State officials removed 875 acres of orchards to prevent the spread of plum pox virus, a serious exotic disease of stone fruit. USDA also worked with State Governments to provide bio-control of weeds such as leafy spurge, which had spread over millions of acres of rangeland in the Northwest. In addition, USDA devoted significant resources to fighting other devastating invaders such as the Asian long-horned beetle, which forced the destruction of beloved trees in Chicago and New York homes and parks; the glassy winged sharpshooter, which posed a major threat to California vineyards; and West Nile virus, which caused the deaths of several New Yorkers when mosquito bites inflicted the deadly illness.

To prevent further introductions of pests such as the Asian long-horned beetle, USDA imposed an interim ban on the import of untreated wood products from China in 1999. In 2000 it worked toward a permanent rule for regulating the import of untreated wood from around the world. These actions are essential for stopping and slowing the entry of invasive pests, including the Asian long-horned beetle, which could devastate U.S. agricultural and environmental resources. USDA is leading an aggressive survey effort to ensure existing beetle populations are detected and eradicated.

Research

USDA has been the lead Department for research on agricultural invasive species as well as invasive species of forests and rangelands. USDA researchers, along with other Federal and State partners, began developing a comprehensive national program for detecting and monitoring invasive species in forest and rangelands. Changes include coordinating of monitoring efforts, adding and evaluating indicators for detection of invasive species in field surveys, and establishing a program to detect the movement of invasive species out of urban areas surrounding ports and into area wildlands.

USDA also has been instrumental in developing information systems, such as the web-based exotic forest pest information system, developed in partnership with Canada and Mexico. USDA also completed key risk assessments on the importation of exotic pests on unprocessed logs from South America and solid wood packing materials from China and elsewhere.

USDA was awarded a new patent for a strain of gypsy moth virus with enhanced potency for control of gypsy moth, promoting an improved, environmentally sensitive control option.

In 1999, USDA started Team Leafy Spurge, a 5-year pest management project in the Little Missouri River drainage, aimed at combating this formidable terrestrial weed that infests more than 5 million acres in 29 States. Partners include other Federal Departments, such as the Department of Interior, State agencies, land-grant universities, county seed managers, and landowners. The team's integrated pest management strategy relies on biological control agents and techniques such as combined sheep and cattle grazing. The effectiveness of one biological control agent, the leafy spurge flea beetle, has demonstrated progress at numerous sites. Tours of the demonstration sites are part of a comprehensive public education program, and response by farmers and ranchers has been overwhelming. Research funded by the team in the United States and abroad seeks to improve understanding of how biological controls work.

Partnerships

The National Plant Board. President Clinton's USDA also has worked to enhance the activities that make up the Nation's agricultural safeguarding system: pest exclusion, detection, and eradication efforts. In October of 1998, USDA requested a thorough review of its safeguarding efforts and recommendations for improvements. This review incorporated the opinions of stakeholders from States, industry, academia, and environmental groups. After the review was issued in July 1999, USDA began working to carry out recommended enhancements to its pest exclusion, international information, and pest detection and response. USDA also worked to expand its focus on identifying pathways for and seizing smuggled agricultural items.

Interagency Cooperation. Six USDA agencies were founding members of the Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds, which was developed formally in 1994 and including 17 Federal agencies. USDA was instrumental in developing "Pulling Together: National Invasive Plant Management Strategy." USDA also was instrumental in the publication of the highly acclaimed "Invasive Plants: Changing the Landscape of America," which communicates the complex issue of invasive species to the general public.

Assisting Local Efforts. In 1996, USDA, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation began a program to kick-start local noxious weed control efforts. By 2000, this program had funded more than 130 projects across the country, bringing local communities together to set priorities for managing their noxious weeds on tight budgets.

Fighting Aquatic Invasions. The USDA also held a lead position on the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. In fact, one of the most widely used risk analysis processes for evaluating invasive species is the "Generic Non-indigenous Aquatic Organisms Risk Analysis Review Process," which was developed by a task force committee that is chaired by a USDA scientist.

Conclusion

By the end of the Clinton Administration, USDA was better poised to address the growing threat of intrusive species--many so small that they can all too easily slip past our borders. These tiny invaders have enormous impact. They can devastate crops and livestock, shut down export markets, cause farmers significant losses, and increase the cost of the Nation's food supply. They also can destroy parks and forests, damage streams and aquatic life, alter America's natural landscapes, and even threaten the public health. Under Secretary Glickman's leadership, USDA took significant steps to enhance its ability to exclude harmful invasive species, and to increase public awareness of this threat. The Nation's farm economy, environmental resources, and public health are far more secure thanks to the unprecedented efforts of the Clinton Administration.

9. Biographies

Dan Glickman, Secretary U.S. Department of Agriculture

Upon nominating Daniel Robert Glickman to be the nation's 26th Secretary of Agriculture, President Clinton noted that "he has always been more interested in solving problems for people than scoring political points. I chose him for his common sense and his good humor."

Throughout a quarter century of public service, Dan Glickman was more consensus-builder than fierce partisan. He combined intellectual command of the issues with a genial manner that allowed him to bridge ideological differences and work well with people across the political spectrum.

That approach was a product both of personality and common sense, as Glickman's political base was in a relatively conservative congressional district in one of the nation's most Republican states, Kansas, where Glickman was born on November 24, 1944.

Glickman is the second of three children born to Milton and Gladys Glickman, who raised their family in Wichita while running the family scrap metal business. Dan Glickman attended the Wichita public schools before leaving home for the University of Michigan in 1962. It was there that he met Rhoda Yura of Detroit, whom he married shortly after graduation. The Glickmans headed first to Washington, DC, where Dan attended George Washington University Law School and then became a trial attorney for the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

In 1970, it was back to Kansas, where Dan became an associate and then a partner in the Wichita law firm of Sargent, Klenda and Glickman. While practicing law, Glickman was elected to the Wichita school board and later became its president, a position that gave him a platform to speak out on local issues. In the meantime, the Glickmans had started a family, with Jonathan born in 1969, followed by Amy in 1972.

Still only 31 years old, Glickman decided to challenge eight-term incumbent Congressman Garner Shriver in 1976. It was during this campaign that Glickman had his first lessons in agriculture, which would eventually become the defining issue of his career in public service. Although he was from a farm state, Glickman was city-bred. So he met with local farmers to try to learn more about their business. He admitted to them that he did not know much about farming, that he had never, as he put it, pushed a tractor in his life. One farmer spoke up and said: "Well, young man, the first thing you need to understand is: you don't *push* a tractor, you *ride* one."

But Glickman was a quick study. Political analysts gave him little chance, as no Democrat had held the Fourth District seat in 40 years. But he defeated Shriver on Election Night with 51

percent of the vote, despite the fact that Kansas political giant Senator Robert Dole was on the top of the Republican slate as the Vice Presidential nominee.

In Congress, Glickman became one of the nation's most influential voices on farm policy. As a member of the House Agriculture Committee, he helped write four different farm bills. For six years, he served as the Chair of the Subcommittee on Wheat, Soybeans, and Feed Grains, which had jurisdiction over nearly three-quarters of the Department of Agriculture's farm program budget.

As a Congressman, however, Glickman was anything but a Johnny One-Note. He was a strong advocate of consumer rights, recognized by the group Public Voice with its "Golden Carrot Award" for consumer protection. He was one of Congress' foremost experts on aviation policy, bucking his party's leadership and winning a grueling battle to grant product liability protection for small airplane manufacturers. He also wrote the legislation authorizing the U.S. Institute of Peace and a law increasing criminal penalties for the destruction of religious property.

In 1993, Glickman was named to the highly sensitive position of Chair of the House Intelligence Committee. In that job, he pushed strongly for a more open Central Intelligence Agency that would be more suited to a post-Cold War world. He led the effort to "demystify" the activities of the intelligence community, and he presided over the committee's investigation of the Aldrich Ames case.

Glickman was attentive to his district and very much in touch with his constituents' concerns. He would often head into the office on weekends to open the mail himself, allowing him an unfiltered look into what people back home were thinking. At the same time, Glickman also was willing to break with local sentiment and act on conscience, even if it worked to his political detriment. His support in the early 1990s for the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Brady Bill and the assault weapon ban were principled stands that may have contributed to the end of Glickman's congressional career.

One of the keys to Glickman's success in Congress was the strength of his relationships with his colleagues. In a commencement speech to the Georgetown Public Policy Institute, he called friendship "the oil that knocks the kinks out of the policymaking process."

Glickman came to Congress in the same class as Vice President Al Gore and House Democratic Leader Richard Gephardt--"At least one of the three of us made good," Glickman was fond of pointing out to them--and built close friendships with both. Other close House colleagues included Leon Panetta of California, who went on to serve as Budget Director and White House Chief of Staff, and Tom Daschle of South Dakota, eventual leader of the Senate Democrats.

But Glickman's personal relationships extended beyond the Democratic caucus. He worked well with Senator Bob Dole, whose enthusiastic support would be critical to Glickman's smooth confirmation as Secretary of Agriculture. Republican Pat Roberts, a fellow Kansan, was a

frequent sparring partner of Glickman's on the House Agriculture Committee. But for all their disagreements -- and there were many -- the two were friendly and always treated each other with mutual respect.

Bidding for a tenth term in Congress, Glickman was upset by Republican state senator Todd Tiahrt in 1994. At the very same time, Rhoda Glickman also found herself out of work, since the Congressional Arts Caucus, where she had served as Executive Director, was being eliminated by the new Congressional majority. "The only one working in the family now is our son, and he won't take our calls," Dan Glickman joked at the time.

But Glickman would quickly bounce back from the defeat. Less than two months after Election Day, President Clinton tapped him to be Secretary of Agriculture, a job Glickman had been considered for two years earlier. Glickman assumed his new job on March 30, 1995 and would eventually become the sixth longest-serving Agriculture Secretary in history.

At the Agriculture Department (USDA), Glickman did everything in his power to help farmers and ranchers -- especially smaller, family-sized operations -- make a decent living and share in the American Dream. During the second half of his tenure, as commodity prices plunged and the global financial crisis shrunk American export demand, that became an increasingly difficult task. But under Glickman's leadership, USDA was there with every conceivable means of support, including direct cash assistance, weather-related disaster declarations, increased purchases for federal food programs, crop insurance discounts, export credits and more.

Glickman played an important role in the crafting of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, helping ensure that it was the most environmentally progressive farm bill in the nation's history. At the same time, Glickman was sharply critical of the bill's shortcomings, especially its failure to provide an adequate safety net to protect farmers from sharp economic downturns like the one that hit in the late 1990s.

Glickman's principle focus as Secretary has been to make USDA's work relevant to all of the American people. In 1862, when Abraham Lincoln signed the legislation creating USDA, he called this new government entity "the People's Department." Almost a century and a half later, Glickman strongly maintained that that moniker still applies, even during an era when only a small percentage of Americans make their living off the land. Although production agriculture remains the heart of the Department's work, Glickman embraced the breadth of USDA's mandate, emphasizing farming's link to food safety, food marketing, environmental stewardship, international trade, nutrition, scientific research and rural economic development.

To him, this was the right thing to do. But it was also a shrewd political strategy, an effort to build a broader coalition of support for USDA and its programs in the future.

In addition to traditional farm programs, Glickman has been a champion of farmers markets and cooperatives to help farmers capture a greater share of the consumer dollar. Under his

leadership, USDA implemented a revolutionary new meat and poultry inspection system, which has been credited with lowering contamination rates and reducing the number of foodborne illnesses. Glickman also led the long and arduous process, begun when he was in Congress, of issuing rules and standards for the organic food industry. And he helped direct President Clinton's effort to prohibit new road-building on several million acres of pristine national forest land.

Glickman has taken a strong personal interest in fighting hunger, both at home and abroad. In addition to administering USDA's anti-hunger programs, Glickman began a food recovery and gleaning effort that has USDA working with farmers, restaurants, caterers and others to save excess food and get it to food banks and soup kitchens. Glickman also launched a new Community Food Security Initiative, to strengthen USDA's partnerships with grass-roots anti-hunger organizations.

Perhaps the most vexing challenge Glickman faced during six years at USDA had to do with civil rights. Historically, the Department had been less than a bastion of racial inclusion and equal opportunity. But Glickman refused to tolerate anything less from the "People's Department" than fair treatment of *all* people, both employees and customers.

He commissioned a special task force to examine civil rights at USDA. The team came back with 92 recommendations, almost all of which were implemented. Glickman also settled a class-action suit brought against the Department by a group of African-American farmers that paid about 12,000 farmers a total of nearly \$600 million. On Glickman's watch, USDA lending to African-American farmers increased; minority groups and women were better represented in the USDA workforce; procurement outreach to minority-owned businesses improved; and accountability was introduced, as civil rights violators were strongly disciplined and, in some cases, dismissed.

There was no bigger priority than this for Secretary Glickman, who believes that, ultimately, how you treat people is a more important part of your legacy than the laws you passed or the programs you administered.

Although Dan Glickman took his career seriously, he never took himself too seriously. In fact, humor has been an enduring theme throughout his public life. Glickman's own sense of humor was sometimes corny, often self-deprecating, occasionally irreverent, at times even randy. He frequently poked fun at his own receding hairline (which eventually receded altogether). As Secretary, he traded good-natured barbs with host Craig Kilborn on the Late Late Show. During his confirmation hearing in 1995, he noted that the only thing he knew about food and agriculture growing up was that he had a Jewish mother who was constantly badgering him to "eat, eat!"

He was even able to turn embarrassing episodes into humor. After Glickman was found to be one of several members of Congress to have overdrafts on his House bank account, he

apologized to his constituents and then performed a rendition of "Hey, Big Spender" at the Wichita Gridiron Club Dinner.

More recently, he got up to address a nutrition conference, when an animal rights activist charged the stage, threw a pie at Glickman, screaming at him that he was a "meat pimp." After the woman was escorted from the room, Glickman noted wryly that it was not a very balanced meal she threw at him. He then turned to Bob Dole, who was seated on the stage and said: "Bob, I don't think we're in Kansas any longer."

Glickman came by his sense of humor honestly. Both Milton and Gladys Glickman were known for their wit. Milton had a weakness for puns ("I had a nightmare that I swallowed a muffler...the next day I woke up exhausted"). When Dan Glickman took his mother to the White House to meet President Bush, Bush greeted her warmly and noted that he liked her son very much, so much that he wishes he would convert, meaning from the Democratic to the Republican party. Without missing a beat, Mrs. Glickman replied: "Oh no, we're very happy being Jewish."

In honor of his parents and their wit, Glickman and his siblings made a gift to Wichita State University to establish a lecture series, and eventually a public policy institute, which will explore the role of humor in public life.

Glickman used humor for more than just humor's sake. He considered it a strategic tool of his trade, a tension-breaker, a means of relaxing people and helping them move toward compromise and consensus. His sense of humor are a part of his general approachability and lack of pretense, which drew colleagues to him and allowed him to influence them, thus making him an effective coalition-builder.

Leadership comes in many forms. Dan Glickman's brand of leadership combined intelligence and policy acumen with energy, accessibility, informality and levity, all adding up to a distinguished lawmaker and accomplished Cabinet Secretary.

Mike Espy, Secretary U.S. Department of Agriculture

When Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy hosted his first all-employee meeting in the Patio of USDA's Jamie Whitten Building, he ended by issuing a surprise invitation to the employees who had turned out in droves to find out what their new Secretary was all about. Espy invited the employees to "come on upstairs and walk through the office." Employees were delighted, USDA's security team was sent scrambling, and Espy's own staff was confounded. For the next few hours, hundreds of employees, many of whom had worked at USDA for years without ever once seeing inside the Office of the Secretary, finally got a chance to stroll through "the Cage," shaking hands with the new Secretary and meeting his staff.

As that incident demonstrated, Mike Espy differed from previous Secretaries of Agriculture in more ways than the obvious. When President Clinton tapped the Mississippi Congressman as Secretary in 1992, it was, to say the least, a most unconventional choice. Espy, then 39, was the youngest person ever to be named Secretary at USDA. He also happened to be an African-American. Some wondered if a Mississippian could really understand the intricacies of policies that affected Midwestern producers. But Mike Espy possesses a quiet faith in God and an unshakeable belief in his own ability to accomplish what others might view as impossible. His faith and self-confidence gave Espy the courage to run for Congress when few thought he could win; emboldened him to seek a cabinet post after only three terms in Congress; made him arguably one of the most successful Secretary's in USDA's history; and -- when he faced a possible prison sentence -- his faith and confidence helped him walk out of court standing tall.

A Foundation of Faith and Discipline

Alphonso Michael Espy was born in Yazoo City Mississippi on November 30, 1953, the youngest (along with his twin sister Michelle) of seven children of Willie Jean and Henry Espy. The close-knit Espy family was among the few blacks to succeed in spite of Jim Crow segregation in Mississippi. Both of Espy's parents were college graduates and the family operated a chain of funeral homes across the state. His grandfather, T. J. Huddleston, Sr., had founded the first Black Hospital in Mississippi. In the Espy family, discipline and church were mandatory. Mike's father wanted him to be a mortician. But Mike eventually chose a course that would allow him to serve people while they are still alive - leaving the funeral business to others.

Always challenged by his parents to achieve academically, Espy was one of the first African-Americans to attend a formerly all-white high school in Mississippi. He attended Howard University, the "capstone" of Black colleges in the nation's capital, and received his B.A. degree in 1975. Known for producing African-American leaders in law, politics, and the arts, in the early 1970s Howard was a hotbed of student activism, with energy focused on everything from apartheid in South Africa to tuition increases on campus. Perhaps a harbinger his future, a young Mike Espy headed the School's Political Science Association. He received his J.D. from the University of Santa Clara School of Law in 1978.

Espy's father died during his second year in law school - a painful loss for the Espy family. So after graduation he returned to Mississippi, he says, for one reason because his mother was there. Espy married his girlfriend Sheila from law school and started a family. Daughter Jamilla was born in 1979, son Michael in 1982. Espy worked first as managing attorney for Central Mississippi Legal Services, burning himself out handling hundreds of cases for poor Mississippians who have no other recourse to resolve their legal problems. In 1980, newly elected Secretary of State Ed Pittman named Espy assistant secretary of state of the Public Lands Division. In 1984, Pittman, now the Attorney General, chose Espy as assistant state attorney general of the Consumer Protection Division.

Espy was the first African-American in Mississippi to serve in either post, and he demonstrated how public service could change peoples' lives for the better. As director of the Public Lands Division, Espy instituted a system to give landowners, many of them uneducated, poor, and black, an opportunity to retain their land after it had been taken for non-payment of taxes. While assistant attorney general, Espy returned more than \$2.4 million to Mississippi consumers who were victims of fraud and other illegal practices. For his next political move, however, the returns to his native Mississippians would be priceless.

A New Era in Mississippi Politics

Nestled along the Mississippi River, which divides the Magnolia State from Arkansas and Louisiana, Mississippi's second congressional district has long been one of the poorest regions in one of the poorest states in the country. The infant mortality rate here rivals that in many Third World countries. In the mid-1980s, the per capita income was \$9,000 per year; one-fifth of the housing was classified as dilapidated. Mostly flat, cotton land, the Delta was once the cradle of slavery. Two decades after civil rights and voting rights legislation passed in Washington, the region's majority black population remained locked in an often heated struggle for political enfranchisement and economic opportunity. The second district was created by court order in 1982 to give African-Americans, 35 percent of Mississippi's population, an opportunity to elect a congressman of their choice. In 1982, and again in 1984, respected black state Representative Robert Clark narrowly lost racially polarized elections in the second district, which had a 53 percent Black Voting Age population, to former Circuit Judge Webb Franklin.

By 1986, most black leaders in Mississippi had concluded that the district could not be won - at least not without yet another effort at redrawing its boundaries. But not Mike Espy. Espy figured that Franklin was vulnerable for several reasons: there would be no Presidential coattails in 1986; the incumbent had apparently turned his back on a key constituency by voting against much needed assistance for economically hurting farmers; he supported raising the retirement age for Social Security; and he had negligible support among the majority black population in the district. Espy concluded that a strong grassroots organization to turn out black voters could secure victory.

Still, in what must have been a leap of faith, the 32-year-old Espy, who had never run for political office before, quietly quit his job as assistant attorney general to focus full time on

winning the prize that had eluded the much better known Robert Clark. Intelligent and articulate, with a reserved style that masked his intensity, Espy proved to be quite persuasive. Whether meeting behind closed doors with white farmers and business leaders or speaking passionately to increasingly excited African-Americans in churches across the Delta, he pressed his case that electing him to Congress was the best way to bring federal attention to the economic problems facing all of the people. Armed with his knowledge of Robert Clark's defeats and confident that his campaign organization was state of the art, Espy predicted victory.

Espy first had to win a bitter Democratic primary against Clarksdale banker Pete Johnson, the grandson and nephew of former Mississippi governors, and Hiram Eastland, second cousin of former Senator James O. Eastland. Espy won with 50.15 percent of the vote, a scant 80 votes kept him out of a "second" primary race with Johnson, who finished a distant second. Johnson challenged the results in several counties, even leveling charges of fraud. However, the charges were investigated and turned back by Democratic Party committees in many counties that were dominated by committee members seated as a result of Rev. Jesse Jackson's 1984 campaign for the Presidency.

On November 4, 1986, Mike Espy's predictions came true when he beat two-term incumbent Webb Franklin in the general election. Even though the election took place in a driving rainstorm, Espy won with 51.7 percent of the vote, receiving 95 percent of the African-American vote and 12.5 percent of the votes from whites. He also benefited from a relatively lower turn out of white voters, especially many farmers who sent Franklin a message by staying at home. Early returns led some to call the race for Franklin, but by 11 p.m. election night the prayers of Espy's supporters throughout Mississippi were answered when the Associated Press declared that he had pulled the upset.

Espy's election ushered in a new era in Mississippi politics. No black had represented Mississippi in Congress since 1883, when John Roy Lynch, first elected during reconstruction, was forced out of office. For African-Americans, especially those who shed rivers of blood and suffered untold hardship for the right to vote just a few years before, Espy's election was literally a dream come true. He became an instant celebrity in the state, an inspiration to young and old alike. For many white Mississippians, especially state Democratic Party leaders, Espy's ascension was a chance to show the nation that the old Mississippi, a state synonymous with black oppression and disenfranchisement, was past. Now victorious, he faced the daunting challenge of effectively representing a district that was divided by race, but also by class.

The "Best Congressman Mississippi Has Ever Had"

Promising to be the "best Congressman that Mississippi has ever had," Espy decided he would best succeed by working as hard as humanly possible for his constituents - including those who voted against him, and, in the beginning, refused to even shake his hand. In Washington, Espy developed a national reputation as an effective spokesperson for rural America and as a hard working Congressman who would cut through mounds of bureaucratic red tape for his

constituents. He installed a 1-800 number so his constituents would not have to make long distance phone calls to reach him.

Espy secured seats on the Budget and Agriculture committees - working to protect programs important to the second district, such as farm and nutrition programs. He was one of the few freshmen members of the 100th Congress to pass a major piece of legislation, the Lower Mississippi River Valley Delta Development Act, which set out a blue print for economic development in poverty stricken counties in a seven-state area, including Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana and Tennessee. Espy also introduced and passed "National Catfish Day," which garnered chuckles from the un-initiated, but brought international attention to a growing industry responsible for some 17,000 jobs in his district.

Espy won praise from almost all quarters for his job performance in Congress. The Jackson Clarion Ledger's editorial echoed others across the state: "If there is a rising star of the 100th Congress, a rookie of the year so to speak, it was Mississippi's Mike Espy ... He wanted to be more than a symbol and he has been. He has represented the state well, bringing needed attention and aid to his Mississippi Delta district."

By 1988, Espy was reelected easily with 66 percent of the vote, maintaining his 95 percent vote among blacks, while receiving some 40 percent of the votes cast by whites. Espy's success was nothing short of remarkable in the racial tempest that historically characterized politics in Mississippi. As the Memphis Commercial Appeal put it, Espy "has started to create a bi-racial coalition based on the common concerns of whites and blacks in the Second District." Espy noted that the key difference between his first and second elections was that he was able to overcome the apprehension of white voters based on his performance. "You have to get in to serve so they recognize that with a black congressman the sun will still come up tomorrow, just like it did yesterday," he told the Washington Post. Ever mindful of the historic barriers he was overcoming, he added, "for any politician to be considered not as a black politician, but as a politician ... as Mike Espy, the Congressman from District 2, that is an important step."

In his second term, Espy picked up where he left off - focusing on the every day problems of people in the district. A critical issue was the plight of African-American farmers. Citing outright discrimination and neglect by USDA, and other factors, Espy decried the disappearance of minority farming in Mississippi and across the Nation. Working with Senator Wyche Fowler, of Georgia, he successfully passed the Minority Farmers Rights Act that authorized \$10 million annually in outreach and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged and minority farmers.

Another of Espy's proud moments occurred when he helped secure \$156,000 in funding for a water system for residents of Blue Hill, Mississippi - after local officials had worked for some 14 years without success to bring running water to the rural community in Jefferson County. Residents in Blue Hill had to dip water from a creek to bathe, cook and clean. "This week marks 20 years since the United States landed a man on the moon," Espy said. "It will also mark the first time ever for many Blue Hill residents to have running water ... It's time for Congress to

concentrate on moving rural America into modern times along with the rest of the country." A picture of a little black girl holding her hands under water coming from a faucet for the first time, hung in Espy's office, served as a constant reminder to Espy and his staff that, despite the difficulties, they were making a difference. Espy continued to bring housing relief as well: in one highly-publicized case, he got Federal officials to provide rental assistance for a mobile home for an 87-year-old African-American woman whom he found living in a wet, rodent-infested utility shed in rural Flora, Mississippi, with only a broken window to climb in and out.

At the 1988 Democratic Convention in Atlanta, Espy received a plum assignment when he was chosen to introduce keynote speaker Ann Richards, then the treasurer of Texas. In his address, Espy paid tribute to Fannie Lou Hamer, the late Mississippi civil rights leader, who gained national attention in the 1960s fighting against the state's segregated delegations to the Democratic convention. Espy said of Hamer, "her words at this convention 24 years ago, her struggle for poor blacks and poor whites, and her vision of a freer, braver, more prosperous America, gave birth to the reforms which have made it possible for everyone to play a meaningful role in this party and for me to stand before you tonight." The speech solidified Espy's growing reputation beyond Mississippi - as Roll Call reported - prompting one pundit to describe him as "the best of the New South." By the time he sought a third term in Congress in 1990, Mike Espy faced no serious political opposition in the district.

"Focus on What Unites, Rather Than What Divides"

That was not exactly the case on Capitol Hill. By building a bi-racial coalition where racial politics was the norm, Mike Espy had demonstrated his willingness to go against the tide. In Congress, he brought the same approach and often steered a more pragmatic, non-ideological course - based on promoting new ideas and new solutions that some found downright troubling. Espy first incurred the wrath of some members of the Congressional Black Caucus when, mindful of the strong support for gun ownership among the rural residents of his district, he endorsed the National Rifle Association. But his support was not just politically expedient, as a student at Howard University, Espy had been president of a rifle and pistol club.

But the biggest difference between Espy and some other Democrats, as well as Republicans, was on his approach to reforming the social welfare system. Espy argued that welfare recipients, poor and working class Americans, and even many in the uncertain middle class must accumulate assets to improve their lives, rather than rely solely on income. As chair of the Hunger Committee's Domestic Task Force, Espy worked with conviction for new strategies to promote asset accumulation including micro-enterprise development to help welfare recipients start small businesses and employee stock ownership plans to help workers gain shares of their companies' stock. He was an early advocate of Individual Development Accounts to provide citizens matching funds to promote personal savings for retirement, education, or to start small businesses. And, he provoked the ire of some Democrats by working closely with then Republican Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Jack Kemp to promote homeownership for residents of public housing.

Espy firmly believed that finding new approaches to old, recalcitrant problems was right for citizens, but also the right politics for the Democratic Party. He joined then-Chairman Bill Clinton on the board of the Democratic Leadership Council, and in December 1990 headed the Council's chapter in Mississippi. Espy rejected criticisms that the Council, by moving the Democrats to the political center, was abandoning minorities, labor, and other traditional constituencies. As always, he used his persuasiveness to bring people together. "Some believe that reaching out to claim one group causes the other to fall from historical embrace," Espy argued. "I don't believe this is true. The two are not mutually exclusive. This is not a zero sum game. By focusing on the goals that unite us - rather than those that divide us - we can forge a renewed effort that draws support from the economic bottom and middle and adherence from the political left and center."

Mike Espy planned to continue working in Congress for the issues he cared about. Reelected to his fourth term with 78 percent of the vote in 1992, he had become an effective advocate for American agriculture, rural development and nutrition programs. But he had a major problem. His term on the House Budget Committee was ending. He wanted to move over to Appropriations, but was not successful. So he began to think seriously about joining the Administration of his friend, incoming President Bill Clinton. Espy had been one of the first black legislators to endorse Clinton. In fact, to many, it was Espy's early endorsement and passionate advocacy for the Arkansas Governor that helped him gain traction when other black leaders were still wary of Clinton. Espy, ever the path breaker, decided to seek the job of Agriculture Secretary, by offering to the President a now famous note scribbled on the back of a napkin: "10 reasons why Mike Espy should be Secretary of Agriculture." Clinton read Espy's note and gave him a thumbs up. David Letterman would have been proud.

The Secretary

On January 26, 1993, Mike Espy was sworn in as Secretary of Agriculture. His tenure was brief, yet very successful. Mike Espy had barely found the way to his office at USDA when a fatal outbreak of E. coli poisoning occurred in the Pacific Northwest. Espy flew to the region and met with parents of the dead children; met with whistleblowers to get firsthand information about the problems -becoming the first Secretary of Agriculture to do so. He also faced challenges from the meat industry in his efforts to promulgate new regulations to improve meat inspection. His efforts were the precursor to the modernized meat and poultry inspection system that Secretary Glickman later implemented.

From the beginning of his tenure, Espy was deeply involved in the negotiations that led up to the signing of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Opening trade markets for American farmers had been an Espy objective while he was in Congress; at USDA he zeroed in on trade talks, bringing specialized staff into the Secretary's office to ensure the issue was a priority and to establish a direct conduit between the Secretary's office and the negotiations. Espy traveled to Brussels and Geneva numerous times to participate in bilateral trade negotiations, and he traveled to Marakesh for the signing of the GATT. He did similar legwork for the North American Free Trade Agreement, which President Clinton signed in 1994.

Secretary Espy was the first Clinton cabinet member to go to China, where he obtained greater access for U.S. wheat, and the first access for U.S. apples to the lucrative Chinese market. His efforts paved the way for the increased cooperation in agriculture that the U.S. and China enjoy today.

Secretary Espy deserves a share of the credit for the Clinton Administration's well-earned reputation for fixing the government's previously broken system of responding to natural disasters. During Espy's tenure, USDA was the lead agency in coordinating disaster response among the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Small Business Administration, and other agencies. Under President Clinton's and Secretary Espy's early leadership, states quickly noticed a difference in the amount of time it took the Executive Branch to respond to natural disasters; the federal government was focused on getting immediate assistance to people, from temporary housing and low-interest farm loans, to nutrition assistance.

Having represented a poor, rural district while in Congress, Secretary Espy also continued his work to improve the infrastructure and bring rural America into the 20th Century. Espy viewed his appointment as Secretary as a great and rare opportunity to affect the lives of many more poor, rural citizens who, in the age of computers, wide-area networks, and satellites, still didn't have access to basic infrastructures that most Americans take for granted. His "Water 2000" Initiative was designed to provide millions in funding to make sure that all Americans had access to running water.

One of Espy's most lasting accomplishments at USDA is the long sought comprehensive reorganization of the massive agency that finally occurred as a result of his leadership. Largely because of his personal efforts, Congress passed the Department of Agriculture Reorganization and Crop Insurance Reform Act of 1994. As a result, USDA agencies were streamlined and hundreds of field offices were co-located. Secretary Espy believed that serving farmers where they were, so they didn't have to leave the farm to get service, made sense for farmers, and he felt that technology could be used to make service delivery more cost-effective. He started the efforts to achieve centralized servicing, both in terms of establishing co-located USDA service centers and allowing people to apply for USDA programs via computer - saving taxpayers' money and creating a more efficient, effective Departmental organization and program delivery structure. He stressed that the Department, though made up of different agencies, was still "one USDA."

Changing the Culture at USDA

As lasting as his impact on USDA's programs and organization are, Espy's most profound impact may have been on USDA's culture. Espy arrived at USDA fully aware of the Department's history with respect to civil rights. The very presence of an African-American as the Secretary of Agriculture raised hopes in many, but also engendered fear and resentment in others, that massive change would occur, perhaps overnight.

Seeking justice for minority farmers was a top Espy priority. When he arrived at USDA, the Department's official position was that USDA did not have "legal authority" to pay damages to minority farmers even in cases of proven discrimination. Only program relief was deemed legal. Espy sought an opinion from the Justice Department and on April 18, 1994, USDA's position was overturned. Assistant Attorney General Walter Dellinger concluded that under the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, USDA could in fact pay damages. The decision opened the door for USDA to negotiate individual settlements with minority farmers as well the eventual mass settlement of black farmers lawsuits under Secretary Glickman. The Minority Farmers Bill of Rights, which Secretary Espy co-authored while on Capitol Hill, was also funded for the first time only after he became Secretary of Agriculture. Espy worked closely with the Administration and Congress to secure funding for the measure.

Secretary Espy worked for greater diversification in the powerful county committees that control USDA programs at the local level - asking Congress for authority to appoint committee members where necessary to ensure access to Department programs for minority producers. However, the House Agriculture Committee rejected Espy's plan, which would have allowed the Secretary of Agriculture to appoint one representative to each of the county committees where necessary to ensure that minority producers had representation. Espy implemented a moratorium on farm loan foreclosures so USDA could review the loan records and ensure that only those foreclosures that had been carried out properly were allowed to proceed.

Espy also addressed discrimination concerns expressed by USDA's employees. Under his leadership, USDA for the first time used alternative dispute resolution to resolve Equal Employment Opportunity complaints. Espy's civil rights policy also for the first time banned discrimination at USDA on the basis of sexual orientation. Under Espy's leadership, in April 1994, USDA held its first ever Department-wide conference on workforce diversity. The Secretary's own staff and employment decisions reflected the Clinton Administration's belief that the government should "look like America." During Espy's tenure, USDA had more minorities and women in senior leadership positions than at any time in the Department's history.

To enhance civil rights accountability, Secretary Espy for the first time gave the Office of Civil Rights the authority to monitor senior Department officials civil rights record during the performance evaluation process. In an unprecedented move, he withheld or reduced several bonuses for senior executives who did not have adequate documented justification of civil rights accomplishments. And, for a time, Espy postponed the Secretary's Honor Awards program - which angered many employees - to drive home the point that the process of selecting honorees must be fair and open to all. Espy's actions with respect to civil rights, though controversial to some, were welcomed by minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and other employees who had long felt that they were not being treated equally at USDA.

Gone Too Soon

Knowledge that Secretary Espy was under investigation in 1994 for allegedly taking illegal gifts from companies USDA regulated confirmed the fears of some employees that an African-

American Secretary would automatically be attacked. Among the questionable items were tickets and airfare to sporting events and a \$1,200 scholarship to Espy's then-girlfriend, a total of \$30,000 in alleged gratuities for which Espy would potentially face more than 100 years in prison. Espy professed his innocence, contending that a longtime friend paid for the tickets. He had no knowledge that they were paid for by a major agribusiness. Espy also disavowed knowledge of the scholarship, and pleaded with his girlfriend to return it. She refused.

Espy admits that he used poor judgment with respect to some of the alleged gifts; and that he should have taken the allegations more seriously when they surfaced. Yet, he contended that he broke no laws, and that the Independent Counsel was overreaching by trying to enforce a 100-year-old statute aimed at meat inspectors. The statute had never before been applied to a Cabinet official. But the allegations stuck during a time in when official Washington was embroiled in a series of investigations. In a fateful conversation with White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta, Espy was told that at any other time, in any other administration, he would simply be reprimanded. Espy contended that there were valid explanations for all of the allegations. Yet in October 1994 he resigned from USDA effective December 31, vowing to "clear my good name."

For the next four years, Espy, his family, friends, and many associates endured a sweeping and anguishing \$20-million investigation by Independent Counsel Donald Smaltz. Espy's brother Henry was among those indicted, put on trial, and found innocent; but not before he had lost his seat as Mayor of Clarksdale, Mississippi. Espy's former Chief of Staff, Ronald Blackley, was found guilty of misstatements on a federal financial disclosure form and sentenced to 27 months in federal prison. Prosecutors interviewed Espy's former teachers, his neighbors, his co-workers, even his ex-wife.

During Espy's seven-week trial, the prosecution called more than 70 witnesses; Espy's attorneys called none. Through cross-examining the prosecution's witnesses, they were able to show that Espy had not broken any laws, that he had not knowingly done anything wrong. On November 30, 1998, on his 45th birthday, Mike Espy was found not guilty on every single count. The jury, which hugged him afterwards, said that the verdict would have been delivered sooner - except that several jurors wanted to be foreman so they could announce the decision. Mike Espy's faith in God, and his confidence in himself, had pulled him through the gravest challenge of his life. He emerged vowing to fight against the independent prosecutor statute and his testimony helped Congress eventually decide to let the statute expire.

A Portrait is Finally Unveiled

Through his ordeal, Mike Espy said he learned some valuable lessons, including that he can withstand pressure, and he learned "who my real friends are." His already strong faith was strengthened, he says, as was his devotion to Tae Kwon Do, the martial arts form in which he holds a second-degree black belt. In 1996, Mike also met a beautiful and charming woman while at the Jazz Festival in New Orleans, Portia Ballard. He asked her to marry him three months before his trial. She accepted, and today they live in a stately tree-lined neighborhood in Jackson, Mississippi. Espy is prospering as an attorney in one of Mississippi's most prominent

law firms. He also cherishes the time he has to spend with now with his children. In the summer of 2000, he and wife Portia found out that a new baby was on the way, expected in February 2001.

Shortly after his acquittal, on December 10, 1998, Mike Espy returned to the Department of Agriculture where his official portrait was unveiled and hung in its place of honor alongside those of other Secretaries. Just as they had done at that first all-employee meeting, hundreds of USDA employees jammed the Patio to see the Secretary who was a little grayer, a lot wiser, and still wildly popular in the halls of USDA. President Clinton and other dignitaries were there to sing Espy's praises. Espy had decided to wait on the portrait hanging ceremony until he was exonerated. He just had not expected it to take four years. Typically, Espy's portrait is different from that of the other Agriculture Secretaries. They all posed sitting. A confident Mike Espy is standing tall.

**Richard Rominger, Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
March 1993 - January 2001**

Rich Rominger's tenure as Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture is a literal timeline of the Clinton Administration's record in food and agriculture. As USDA's highest-level appointment spanning the Administration's entire two terms, Rich Rominger has not only been an eyewitness to the history of USDA; he has largely made that history. Accomplishments from March 1993 to January 2001 reflect strong Rominger influence, notably in areas of research and education, and stewardship of the land - farmland protection, conservation of private lands, and advancing sustainable agriculture and small farmer issues.

When President Clinton tapped Rich Rominger for the post, more than food and ag issues weighed in the decision. The Deputy Secretary is USDA's chief operating officer, and he began his term with a Department of 130,000 employees in 1993, and a budget of about \$65 billion.

Rominger's local Congressman (and friend) Vic Fazio decided that Rominger should come to Washington. Rich began getting encouragement from people all over the U.S. whom he had known through years of work on agricultural issues. A few days before Bill Clinton's Inauguration, Rominger was interviewed over breakfast at a Washington hotel by Mike Espy, nominated by Clinton to be Secretary of Agriculture.

With the Rominger selection, President Clinton sought the best of several worlds. On a practical level, a farmer and westerner were a good balance to Secretary Mike Espy's southern, non-farm, Congressional credentials.

And on an administrative level, Rominger's years of involvement in agricultural organizations, notably six years as Director of California's Department of Food and Agriculture, offered leadership credentials in the nation's number one agricultural state. It was during his time as Director that California adopted the strictest and most comprehensive pesticide regulations in the U.S. -- regulations not weakened by succeeding Republican administrations. Rominger also emerged as a strong coalition-builder in California agriculture, establishing working relationships among farm groups, environmental organizations, and the administration.

But to really understand the Rich Rominger who came to Washington in 1993, one needs to reach back much further than California government and his life on the Yolo County family farm. Rominger spoke from time to time about his great-grandparents, the Blickle's and Rominger's, who came from Germany's Black Forest in the 1860s to settle farms in California.

A fourth generation farmer with three sons working the family farm, growing alfalfa, beans, corn, wheat, rice, tomatoes, sunflowers, and other crops, Rominger had more than agriculture know-how. He had a personal farming history and, because of it, a deep respect for the land, and for agriculture's culture and legacy. He said that his father, A. H. Rominger, who once leveled

land in Yolo County with a team of mules and a Fresno scraper, lived to climb up in a 4-wheel-drive tractor with a computer and a laser to watch a grandson make a level field. Rominger lauded that kind of vast progress in one lifetime. But more often he worried aloud, in speeches and conversation, about farmland loss and the paving over of California's great Central Valley, symptomatic of urbanization across the U.S. A student of the history of agriculture, he frequently cited the fall of great world civilizations because they failed to take care of their soil and their agricultures. This was a long-term perspective that figured strongly in Rominger's influence in the Clinton Administration's conservation initiatives

Rich and Evelyne Rominger came to Washington in March 1993. Secretary Mike Espy and Deputy Secretary Rominger weren't afforded the luxury of a "First 100 Days" honeymoon period before tragedy struck. In just 10 days, four Pacific Northwest youngsters had died from hamburgers tainted with *E. coli* poisoning. From that moment on, food safety was defined as a pivotal Administration issue. Rominger said that reducing microbial pathogens in foods of both plant and animal origins is the most pressing food safety problem today.

In the succeeding seven years, working first with Secretary Espy, then with Secretary Glickman, Rominger was a constant in establishing a science-based inspection system – Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points. By 2000, HACCP had resulted in a sharp drop in the prevalence of *Salmonella* in raw meat and poultry, and a sharp rise in public health protection. Goals were also set to tackle other food safety threats like *Salmonella* and *Listeria*, and Rominger was involved in development of a comprehensive farm-to-table strategy to attack foodborne disease at every link in the food chain.

With a leading role in the debate involving the enactment of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (the 1996 Act), Deputy Secretary Rominger helped guide the historic conservation programs that brought together all the "parts" of a healthy landscape – environmental benefits that include not just soil conservation but protection of wildlife habitat and the health of rivers and streams.

A reader of the great conservationist and writer of the 1940s, Aldo Leopold, Rominger envisioned the 1996 Act as a chance to get things right, to remind folks that they're connected to the land every time they buy a loaf of bread, or watch a flock of geese heading south.

The 1996 Act raised conservation programs to a new prominence. The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program became the first of its kind specifically dedicated to the protection and restoration of habitat on America's agricultural lands. Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, USDA for the first time targeted conservation funds to assistance needed by farmers and ranchers to prevent pollution and protect their natural resources. The new Farmland Protection Program addressed the urgency of keeping working land in agriculture, and reflected Rominger's personal concern about the nation's increasing urbanization.

Most important, in the four years following passage of the 1996 Act, the conservation of private lands agenda was raised to the highest discussion levels in USDA. Working closely with successive Chiefs of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Paul Johnson and Pearl S. Reed, Rominger was an articulate champion of conservation on private lands. USDA through this time built on the progress of the Conservation Reserve Program by creating the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, a chance for states to hone in on their own specific problems.

Rominger talked about connections, investing in the health of the entire landscape – public, private and urban lands – and stressing the links between landscape health and the nation's economic health. The Administration's commitment to conservation was also a commitment to a common sense, on-the-ground approach to private lands stewardship. Farmers were viewed as the nation's foremost environmentalists, and the emphasis was on locally-led conservation, supported by the partnership of USDA's technical assistance to private landowners and delivery system in the field.

By the fall of 1999, with private land stewardship established among USDA's top-ranking priorities, Secretary Dan Glickman held five regional conservation forums across the country to start guiding a national conservation strategy for the 21st century. The Deputy headed several of the sessions, which culminated in a National Conservation Summit hosted by the Secretary, in Ames, Iowa in December.

As one result of the Summit and the elevation of private land conservation in the national awareness, by the year 2000 the concept of stewardship payments was being commonly discussed. Public policy discussions centered on whether farmers should reap some reward for excellent conservation, and this was regarded as an idea worthy of consideration for the next Farm Bill.

The Administration made clear that the next Farm Bill should recognize the land as a valuable commodity in its own right. With Deputy Secretary Rominger's backing, it proposed a major, two-year Conservation Initiative. This was largely unfunded in the 2001 spending bill, but nevertheless laid the groundwork for making conservation a centerpiece of farm policy in 2001 and subsequent years.

In the summer of 2000, Deputy Secretary Rominger also headed up several listening sessions across the country geared to tapping community perspective on the range of pressures affecting the nation's ability to hold onto farm and forest lands. These sessions were a direct result of Vice President Gore's Livable Communities Initiative, and the conviction that communities can "grow smartly" – preserve green space, boost economic competitiveness and improve quality of life.

While the Deputy Secretary guided the evolution of the department's conservation agenda, he was also a constant spokesman for the role of research, technology, and education in a successful agriculture. With a deep personal interest in education, Rominger and his wife Evelyne were frequent visitors to the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Maryland.

Together, they were the impetus for the Abraham Lincoln Council, a new group formed to support the NAL's programs.

Rominger was clearly proud to work with a President who said " We need more agricultural research, not less ..." He was instrumental in making certain that the debate on the 1996 Act went beyond traditional commodity programs and payments to argue for investment in infrastructure-research, conservation, and rural development. What's increasingly important, Rominger stressed, is what the government does outside the traditional commodity programs.

Rominger linked the Administration's commitment to research to broad future questions of feeding a growing world, and achieving world food security without destroying natural resources.

He explored new themes, like carbon sequestration and global climate change, and regarded research and technology as a constant, the foundation of all else. Traveling the world in eight years - to the World Trade Organization Ministerial in Singapore, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome, negotiations in Brussels and Geneva, to Russia, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Egypt, Jordan, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Great Britain, Ireland, Mexico, and other countries - Rominger spoke with top officials about their unique trade problems and gained insight into world food needs.

He met several times with Jacques Diouf, Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, exchanging views on free and fair trade, and using technology to the benefit of all countries. They agreed on the promise of biotechnology to achieve world food security. They agreed on its safety, on the importance of advancing knowledge in this complex field.

Speaking in Brussels in March 1999, he explained the U.S. regulatory position on biotechnology to European leaders dealing with unfounded and uninformed fear of the new technology in their own countries.

As times grew increasingly tough on America's farms, Rominger talked about science as a key aspect of the new definition of "safety net" for growers and ranchers. The Administration feared that Freedom to Farm had pulled an adequate safety net out from under producers. This proved true as the record farm economy of 1995 soured by 1997. Prices dropped precipitously and world markets dried up, presaging one of the worst farm economy slumps in decades. Weather disasters kept U.S. producers in bad economic straits and by the year 2000 the Administration was providing a record \$28 billion in direct payments.

These tough times on the farm highlighted agriculture's dependence on exports, its huge stake in global competition and economic stability around the world. Deputy Secretary Rominger was a constant player as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Uruguay Round agreements establishing the World Trade Organization were signed in 1994. He attended the

disappointing World Trade Organization Ministerial in Seattle in December 1999, and was a constant spokesman for Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China. This was a top Administration priority, the most important U.S. trade legislation since the Uruguay Round, and was signed by President Clinton in the fall of 2000.

Tough times on the farm also highlighted the plight of many parts of rural America. Rominger had helped lead Secretary Glickman's series of five Regional Rural Forums across the country in April 1995. Asked by the Secretary to head up USDA's vast effort on behalf of small farmers, by 1998 he was coordinating the work of the National Commission on Small Farms for USDA. This was the first time since Secretary Bob Bergland held a landmark examination of the structure of American agriculture 20 years before, that an Administration waged a challenge to the "bigger-is-better" credo.

Hard economic times also signaled the need to rethink the concept of safety net and Rominger was involved in discussions with Secretary Glickman and others about how the next Farm Bill could do a better job of providing adequate income assistance.

But Deputy Secretary Rominger had been brought into the Administration by President Bill Clinton as much for his administrative skills as his knowledge and expertise on the Department's pressing issues.

The first order of business in 1993 was to take this "huge, sprawling, and old-line federal agency," in the words of Budget Director Steve Dewhurst, and bring it in line with the new Administration's National Performance Review.

Secretary Espy came to office committed to streamlining and reorganizing USDA. Outgoing Secretary Madigan had already developed a plan for reorganization that he passed on to the new Secretary, who incorporated the priorities of the new Administration. The Department's massive reorganization was linked through a legislative proposal to its plans for downsizing and budget targets.

Overseeing the entire effort was Deputy Secretary Rich Rominger.

Following passage of the legislation in October 1994, implementation got underway, and USDA reinvention kicked into full gear. Seven mission areas were established. The culture of USDA slowly began to change, as managing by results and operating more like a business became the norm. Aggressive regulatory reform got underway, with the Department committed to eliminating or reinventing over 80 percent of its regulations. One of the more controversial acts was streamlining a scattered, hybrid field delivery system into "service centers" prepared to help customers as one, unified Department. By the year 2000, under Rominger's leadership, USDA was trimmer by about 22,000 people. USDA was spending about \$1 billion less per year on these operations, a savings that made its way back to the taxpayer or back into programs to better serve USDA constituencies. Rominger has made it clear that these accomplishments will well serve

USDA's 21st century customers, but future Administrations must continue to build on this progress.

While managing this landmark effort, Rominger for the full two terms ran the Department's internal operations. He directed the annual budget process, reconciling agency needs and conveying them to the Office of Management and Budget in a timely, concise way. He was involved in securing funding for the modernization of the South Building, and was active in the President's Management Council and other government-wide bodies.

In the troublesome period between the resignation of Secretary Mike Espy in December 1994 and Dan Glickman's swearing-in, in April 1995, Rich Rominger was Acting Secretary, providing leadership to employees and continuity in programs and management.

For the full two terms, he sought to build understanding and unity within employee ranks by meeting with employees of Native American, Asian-Pacific, and Black heritage. And in the winter months of 1997, Deputy Secretary Rominger traveled the country with Secretary Glickman, urging customers and employees at 12 sessions to talk honestly and frankly about civil rights at USDA. This was the first time a Secretary had come to hear farmers throughout the South, and some called it a "historic occasion."

As a result, most of the 92 recommendations of the Civil Rights Action Team were implemented by the end of 2000. Outreach was improved, USDA's Office of Civil Rights was reorganized, a landmark settlement of a class action suit was achieved, and progress made on many fronts. Most important, largely under Deputy Secretary Rominger's leadership, USDA set its sights on doing great things in its third century of service to the nation, through a culture of fairness and inclusion, dignity and respect to employees and customers alike.