



THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D. C.
20250-0100

February 13, 2025

Dear State, Tribal, Territory, and Local Government Partners,

I write to express my gratitude for all you do for the communities across your states, particularly for rural communities. I am deeply honored President Trump has put his trust in me to lead the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and I will honor and uphold that trust each and every day by working closely with you and your teams to address the pressing challenges facing rural communities, and to open a new chapter of prosperity in rural America.

Paramount to this effort is close collaboration with you, the leaders that know your states and territories better than anyone in Washington—you know the difficulties farmers and ranchers face and the complexities around many of those issues. Our agricultural communities are experiencing a confluence of circumstances that make their already difficult profession even harder:

- The agricultural trade deficit is \$32 billion and is set to hit a record \$45.5 billion in 2025.
- Between 2017 and 2022, the number of farms in the U.S. declined by 141,733 or 7 percent.
- In 2024, the cost of production was up 30 percent over pre-pandemic levels.
- Since October 2024, more than 40 million layers and pullets have been depopulated due to the avian flu.
- The average age of an American farmer is 58.

As your Secretary of Agriculture, I am committed to addressing these challenges head on and to partnering with you to find innovative solutions. That is why I will be refocusing the entire Department on its core mission of serving farmers and ranchers and ensuring that we have the safest, most affordable, and abundant food supply in the world.

Furthermore, I am inviting every State, territory, and tribal leader in the nation to participate in our “Laboratories of Innovation” initiative to serve as policy incubators and bring greater efficiency to government programs. We encourage you propose bold ideas to address challenges that have long plagued our nation, particularly rural communities.

Just as many of you already are, we encourage you as leaders to be pioneers of creative solutions to better serve our citizens. This includes bold plans to combat avian flu and make food prices more affordable; new initiatives to bring more jobs and economic opportunities to rural communities and ensure that we equip and empower the next generation of American farmers;



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create partnerships to improve infrastructure and internet connectivity in remote areas; and much-needed reforms to nutrition assistance programs to promote the dignity of work and healthy eating habits to ensure our citizens live longer, more abundant lives. These are just a few of the many areas of possibility for innovation. I look forward to meeting with you in the coming months, and to partnering with you on bold solutions. I know that many of the best ideas will come from the states, and your leadership will serve as a model for the nation.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or my staff, and we will be as responsive as possible.

Together, we will create a future of unimagined promised for communities across this country and we will ensure that American Agriculture is the most competitive now and for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brooke L. Rollins", written over the word "Sincerely,".

Brooke L. Rollins

Secretary

U.S. Department of Agriculture