

APPENDIX B – USDA Privacy Policy

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Privacy Policy

Thank you for visiting the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) website and reviewing our privacy statement. Our privacy policy is clear: We do not collect any personal identifiable information, (PII), without your explicit consent.

Here is how we handle your information when you visit our website:

Information Collected and Stored Automatically

When you browse through the USDA website, read pages, or download information, we may gather and store certain information about your visit automatically. We may use technologies to gauge your browsing habits or web surfing history to improve the information presented to you. For example, if you search for both USDA loans and rural communities during a website visit, on a subsequent visit you may also be provided with information about USDA rural loan programs.

The information we store does not identify you personally. We automatically collect and store only the following information about your visit:

1. The Internet domain and IP address from which you access our website. For example, if you access our website from school, we see "schoolname.edu" and the school's IP address;
2. The type of browser and operating system used to access our site;
3. The date and time you access our site;
4. The pages you visit; and
5. If you linked to the USDA website from another website, the address of that website.

We use this information to help us make our site more useful, to learn about the number of visitors to our site, the types of technology our visitors are using to visit our website, and to present relevant information to you based on your website browsing requests.

We do not track your web activities beyond your browsing the USDA website. We do not cross reference your browsing habits with other entities, and we do not sell or give away your information to other entities.

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)

COPPA applies to the online collection of personal information from children under age 13. USDA complies with COPPA and does not knowingly collect personal information about children.

Cookies

When you visit some websites, their web servers generate pieces of information known as cookies. Some cookies collect personal information to recognize your computer in the future.

Cookies are small files that web servers place on a user's hard drive that helps a website or service. There are two types of cookies:

- (1) Session cookies, also known as transient or per session cookies, serve technical purposes, like providing seamless navigation through USDA.gov. They are stored in temporary memory and are only available during an active browser session. Once you close your browser, the cookie disappears.
- (2) Persistent cookies, also known as permanent or stored cookies, are used to collect identifying information about the user, such as user name, web surfing behavior or user preference for a specific website. These cookies operate until they expire or a user deletes them.

USDA may use both types of cookies to improve our on-line services to you.

You can [disable cookies](#) by adjusting the setting on your web browser.

You Send Us Personal Information

If you choose to provide us with personal information, as in an e-mail to the Secretary or other USDA staff, or by filling out a form and submitting it to us through our website, we use that information to respond to your message. This also helps us to locate the information you have requested. We treat e-mails the same way that we handle paper-based correspondence sent to USDA. We are required to maintain many documents under the Federal Record Act for historical purposes, but we do not collect personal information for any purpose other than to respond to you. We only share the information you give us with another government agency if your inquiry relates to that agency or as otherwise required by law. Moreover, we do not create individual profiles with the information you provide, nor will the information you provide be shared with any private organizations. USDA does not collect information for commercial marketing.

When You Visit Websites

Please read the Privacy Statement of each website you visit. Our website has links to several other federal agencies. In a few cases, we link to private organizations with their permission. Once you access another site through a link that we provide, you are subject to the Privacy Statement of the other organization's site.

Website Security

Information presented on the USDA website is considered public information and may be distributed or copied. Use of appropriate byline/photo/image credits is requested.

1. For site security purposes and to ensure that this web site service remains available to all users, USDA employs monitoring technology to identify unauthorized attempts to upload, change, or otherwise cause damage to USDA information or systems.
2. Raw data logs are scheduled for regular destruction in accordance with the [Computer Fraud and Abuse Act of 1986](#) and with [National Archives and Records Administration \(NARA\) General Schedule 20](#).
3. Unauthorized attempts to upload information or change information on this website are strictly prohibited and may be punishable under the [National Information Infrastructure Protection Act](#).

Privacy Impact Assessment

A privacy impact assessment (PIA) is an analysis of how information is handled: (i) to ensure handling conforms to applicable legal, regulatory, and policy requirements regarding privacy, (ii) to determine the risks and effects of collecting, maintaining and disseminating information in identifiable form in an electronic information system, and (iii) to examine and evaluate protections and alternative processes for handling information to mitigate potential privacy risks.

The E-Government Act requires federal agencies to conduct PIAs for electronic information systems and collections and, in general, make the assessment results publicly available.

[Learn more about USDA Privacy Impact Assessments](#)

Machine-Readable Privacy Policies, Platform Privacy Preferences (P3P)

The privacy provisions of the E-Government Act of 2002 require agencies to have both a "human readable" privacy policy and machine readable technology that automatically alerts users about whether site privacy practices match their personal privacy preferences. P3P is the standard for machine-readable Privacy Policy.

Social Media

The USDA uses third-party services such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to communicate and interact with the public. You may encounter these services as separate websites (for example, the [USDA Facebook page](#)), or as applications embedded within the USDA's websites. These services are controlled and operated by third parties, and are not government websites or applications. By interacting with USDA through these third-party services, you may be providing non-government third parties access to your personal information which can be used to distinguish or trace your identity. Any information collected by a third-party service is subject to the privacy policies of the third-party service provider. These third-party services may, for example, use persistent (multi-session) cookies.

Generally, USDA does not collect, disseminate, or maintain any personally identifiable information about you maintained by third party sites. However, you should be aware that USDA may read, review, or rely upon information that you make publicly available or the USDA on these services (for example, comments made on the USDA's Facebook page), as authorized or required by law.

Please note that these third-party services supplement USDA's traditional communication and outreach efforts. Should you have concerns about communicating with USDA via these channels, please use traditional channels to contact us.

Comment Policies

The purpose of the USDA's new media communication forums, such as USDA blogs, collaborative tools, and other sites, is to share news and information regarding the activities, policies, and programs of USDA and its employees. We encourage discussion and comments on posts. Your insights are important to ensure Americans nationwide are informed and can be a part of the USDA's work, every day.

If you have any comments or questions about the information presented here, please forward your concerns to the USDA Privacy Officer, Ray Payton at ray.payton@ocio.usda.gov or Privacy@ocio.usda.gov.

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