United States Department of Agriculture

IMPLEMENTING THE STRIKEFORCE INITIATIVE IN ALABAMA

In 2010, after meeting with and hearing the stories of a number of individuals living and working in rural, persistent-poverty communities, the Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack created the StrikeForce Initiative. This initiative addresses critical needs in persistent poverty areas.

StrikeForce is now active in thirteen States - Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota and Virginia - with concurrent regional activities in Tribal Communities in Arizona, Texas, and Utah.

Without hesitation, our local partners made the commitment to help carry this unprecedented effort forward. As a result of this collaboration, many families, farmers/ranchers, small businesses, and communities are experiencing great success.

StrikeForce in Alabama is entering its first year. The National and State leadership will rotate with the Chair of the USDA National Food and Agriculture Council and State Food and Agriculture Council. For 2013, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, under the leadership of Dr. William Puckett, will lead Alabama's StrikeForce effort.

The key to success is the collaboration between USDA and the local stakeholders. These stakeholders must get involved with community issues and commit to working with USDA to produce positive long-term changes in our Nation's rural communities.

For more information about StrikeForce, visit: www.al.nrcs.usda.gov.

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Alabama small farmer harvests collard greens from her hoop house for market.

Alabama StrikeForce Counties

USDA StrikeForce Initiative

Background
Today, one in six Americans live in poverty, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recognized that 90 percent of all persistent poverty counties are in rural America. A cross-agency "StrikeForce" was deployed to better serve persistent poverty communities and socially disadvantaged groups through the coordination of activities among all USDA agencies and the local expertise of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Using existing authorities and programs, USDA will strategically use community-based partners to educate and implement service plans while establishing mechanisms to help gauge results, measure efforts, and improve success. These partnerships will increase effectiveness at the local level while ensuring that USDA is a more comprehensive and inclusive service provider.

On November 7, 2012, USDA Secretary Vilsack signed a Decision Memo making the USDA National Food and Agriculture Committee (NFAC) responsible for managing and coordinating the StrikeForce Initiative. Further, in January 2013, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assumed the lead of NFAC through the 2013 calendar year. NRCS will therefore coordinate StrikeForce activities at the departmental and field level in conjunction with USDA mission area and agency leadership.

Goals
StrikeForce has two primary goals - farming and community development. USDA is committed to improving access to USDA programs and enhancing the viability and profitability of small farms and ranches, beginning farmers and ranchers, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Similarly, USDA seeks to promote and assist in developing and sustaining rural communities.

StrikeForce Team
The StrikeForce Team will consist of national and state team members from the Farm Service Agency, Food and Nutrition Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Risk Management Agency, and Rural Development. USDA is committed to partnering with a wide array of stakeholders including USDA county, state, and regional offices, CBOs, land grant universities, and other public, private, and non-governmental organizations.

Mission
The StrikeForce Team will target identified persistent poverty counties to provide training, education, and technical assistance to stakeholder groups, community action groups, and local elected leadership to support them in planning and accessing USDA programs for community and economic development.

The StrikeForce Team will provide technical expertise about USDA's programs, regulations, and criteria. In addition, the team will notify communities of new and updated information to ensure quality applications are being awarded.

Alabama Goals and Objectives for StrikeForce

Goal 1 Support Economic Viability	
Objective 1	Increase Visability of USDA and Partners
Objective 2	Increase Program Participation
Objective 3	Provide Access to Capitol
Objective 4	Increase Awareness of Risk Management Programs
Objective 5	Leverage Partnership Resources
Goal 2 Promote Food Security	
Objective 1	Develop and Support Regional Food Systems
Objective 2	Increase Access to Nutritious Food
Goal 3 Expand Program Education For USDA Employees, Partners And Others	
Objective 1	Enhancing Collaboration
Objective 2	Improve Customer Service
Objective 3	Improve Effectiveness of Outreach Efforts
Objective 4	Increase Diversity and Reach of USDA Workforce
Goal 4 Remove Barriers That Limit Goals 1,2,3	
Objective 1	Identify Barriers that Limit Program Participation
Objective 2	Evaluate and Prioritize the Identified Barriers and Determine what Changes are Needed
Objective 3	Work with Agencies and Partnerships to Make Effective Changes to Barriers