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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Research,
Education, and
Economics

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

1400 Independence
Avenue SW
Washington, DC
20250

TO: All NIFA Employees

SUBJECT: NIFA's Harassment Policy Statement

The Secretary of Agriculture is strongly committed to a workplace that is free of harassment, hostile environment, and discrimination. As Director of NIFA, I fully support the Secretary's position on harassment; I take responsibility for leading the way to see to it that harassment of employees occurring in the workplace or in other settings connected with work activities will not be tolerated in NIFA. Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, inappropriate or offensive actions whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based upon a person's protected status, such as sex, color, race, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, or other protected group status.

NIFA will not tolerate harassing conduct that affects tangible job benefits, that interferes unreasonably with an individual's work performance, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. Harassment is a form of discrimination and is expressly rejected by this Agency. I expect our senior executives, managers, and supervisors to promptly stop inappropriate behavior in our workplace, to model appropriate behavior themselves, and to take every issue seriously from the moment it is raised. When incidents are severe enough or pervasive enough they are considered harassment and must not be tolerated. I expect all of our employees to do their part in ensuring that harassing behavior stay out of their workplace.

If you experience or witness any conduct that you feel may be unlawful harassment, I encourage and expect you to notify immediately your supervisor, and/or this office, or our Civil Rights Director, or the Agency human resources representative, or an EEO counselor. NIFA managers and supervisors will be held responsible for ensuring that the workplace is free from harassment, and that appropriate action is taken when allegations or evidence of harassment is brought to their attention. Any NIFA employee found to have engaged in harassment in violation of civil rights laws and regulations may be subject to disciplinary action.

I am committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of unlawful discrimination or prohibited personnel practices. I will not tolerate discrimination in any form, and I expect all employees to make non-discrimination an integral part of decisions and processes affecting your workplace.

As an Agency, we must treat people as our most important asset. We must work together to develop a common set of workforce mores based on mutual professional respect, and cultivate an inclusive workplace environment where cultural differences and individual differences in our workforce is appreciated and valued.

Sonny Ramaswamy
Director
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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