

Rural Business and Cooperative Services' Role in Supporting Small and Beginning Farmers

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Rural Business and Cooperative Services

USDA Rural Development's Rural Business and Cooperative Services was created during the 1994 reorganization of USDA. This reorganization consolidated the non-farm programs of Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) with the Rural Electrification Administration and the USDA Agriculture Cooperative Service. The Rural Business-Cooperative Service mission statement is to enhance the quality of life of for all rural Americans by providing leadership in building competitive businesses and cooperatives.

Cooperative Services accomplishes this mission by:

- Providing information, services, and educational materials relating to cooperatives
- Conducting research on activities pertaining to cooperatives
- Responding to requests for assistance from farmers who want to organize a cooperative, or from directors of existing farmer-owned cooperative seeking to improve operations
- Collecting and disseminating cooperative statistics that identify and support research and technical assistance

Rural Business Services accomplishes its mission by providing financial assistance in the forms of:

- Business and industrial loan guarantees

- Cooperative stock share loan guarantees
- Direct business and industry loans
- Rural economic development loan and grants
- Rural business enterprise grants
- Intermediary relending loans

In Iowa, Rural Business and Cooperative Assistance has allowed for the development and continued operations of the following cooperatives:

- Southwest Iowa Egg Cooperative, a 1 million hen layer operation
- Southwest Soy Cooperative, a small soybean processing plant
- Sunrise Energy Cooperative, a 5 million gallon per year ethanol plant
- Iowa Turkey Growers Cooperative, a turkey slaughter and processing plant
- Heartland Organic Marketing Cooperative, a marketing cooperative, exporting organic soybeans to Japan
- Green Meadows Hay and Forage Cooperative, a hay marketing cooperative

We feel that many opportunities exist in rural America, and we at USDA Rural Business and Cooperative Services are there to help.