



PRESS RELEASE

USDA Announces Additional Farm Service Agency and Rural Development State Directors

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 4, 2021 – Following a press release from President Joe Biden announcing several regional appointments, the U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced the appointments of two Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Directors and two Rural Development (RD) State Directors.

“We are very fortunate these four individuals are choosing to dedicate their talents and expertise to USDA,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “Each will be an incredible asset to our Department and carry out our mission at the state and local level as we work to improve the lives of the American people.”

FSA State Executive Directors oversee Farm Service Agency operations and agricultural policy implementation in the state. Each State Executive Director works with the State Committee to administer FSA programs and County office operations, develops and maintains stakeholder relationships with customers and other agencies and governments.

RD State Directors serve as the chief executive officer of Rural Development in the states and territories and are tasked with carrying out the mission of rural development to the benefit of everyone in rural America. In conjunction with the guidance and support of the National Office, State Directors are responsible for promoting the mission and strategic goals of Rural Development and provide key leadership to develop and support a productive, diverse, and inclusive state workforce.

Farm Service Agency

Thaddeus Fairley, Sr. has been appointed FSA State Executive Director for Mississippi

Thaddeus Fairley, Sr. is a certified non-profit professional and native of Sunflower, Mississippi. Most recently, he served as a Field Representative for Congressman Bennie G. Thompson, current chair of the Committee on Homeland Security. During his time with the Congressman, Fairley has served as an expert on broadband initiatives and constituent services, including issues from farmers. Prior to joining the Congressman's office, Fairley worked in the banking industry for over seven years. Fairley is a graduate of Mississippi Valley State University and Louisiana State University at Shreveport.

Eugene Schriefer has been appointed FSA State Executive Director for Wisconsin

Most recently, Eugene "Gene" Schriefer served as a Senior Outreach Specialist with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension Division. He has worked as an Agriculture Educator in Iowa County since 2009 and engages with farmers on sustainability, soil health, regenerative agriculture, regional food systems, and climate change. Prior to his current role, Schriefer was a regional grazing specialist with Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and Development. He has also served as an Extension 4-H Youth Development Agent in Rusk and Columbia Counties. Schriefer earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Purdue University in Ag Education and Farm Management.



Rural Development

Charlene Fernandez has been appointed RD State Director for Arizona

Charlene Fernandez was elected to the Arizona House of Representatives in 2014. Her district in Southwestern Arizona contains many farmers and ranchers who contribute to the state's role as the United States' top producer of winter lettuce. Elected House Minority Leader in 2019, Fernandez was integral to the Drought Contingency Plan agreement in 2019, bringing states, tribal nations, farmers, and other stakeholders together to ensure a sustainable water supply for Arizona. Prior to entering elected office, she worked for Congressman Ed Pastor and Congressman Raúl M. Grijalva in constituent services in Yuma County office. Fernandez also served Governor Janet Napolitano as a liaison for the Arizona Department of Environment Quality. She is a former member of the Arizona Department of Agriculture's Food & Agriculture Policy Advisory Committee.

Julie Lassa has been appointed RD State Director for Wisconsin

Julie Lassa grew up on her parents' small dairy farm in northern Portage County and most recently worked for a Wisconsin-based property and casualty insurance company. She represented a district in central Wisconsin in the state legislature for 18 years, both in the Assembly and Senate. In addition, Lassa served on the Board of Directors for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation where she focused on enhancing private-sector job creation and promoting small business. Julie authored the Green to Gold Fund to assist small and mid-sized businesses improve their energy efficiency and create new green energy products and services. Before being elected, she served as a Supervisor for the town of Dewey and as Executive Director for the Plover Area Business Association.

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