# POSITION DESCRIPTION

# UnderSecretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, Department of agriculture

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| **OVERVIEW** |
| Senate Committee | Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry |
| Agency Mission | To provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition and related issues, based on public policy, the best available science and effective management; to provide economic opportunity through innovation, helping rural America to thrive; to promote agriculture production that better nourishes Americans while also helping feed others throughout the world; and to preserve our nation's natural resources through conservation, restored forests, improved watersheds and healthy private working lands. |
| Position Overview | The undersecretary for farm and foreign agricultural services assists the secretary in providing policy direction and leadership to help to keep America's farmers and ranchers in business as they face the uncertainties of weather and markets. |
| Compensation | Level III $165,300 (5 U.S.C. § 5314)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| Management Scope | The undersecretary oversees about 12,000 employees in the Farm Service Administration, about 800 in the Foreign Agricultural Service and about 650 in the Risk Management Agency. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Assists the secretary in providing policy direction and leadership, to help to keep America's farmers and ranchers in business as they face the uncertainties of weather and markets
* Oversees agencies that deliver commodity, credit, conservation, disaster and emergency assistance programs that help improve the stability and strength of the agricultural economy
* Oversees the Farm Service Agency, which implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster and farm marketing programs through a national network of offices
* Oversees the Foreign Agricultural Service, which works to improve foreign market access for U.S. products and operates programs designed to build new markets and improve the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in the global marketplace
* Oversees the Risk Management Agency, which helps to ensure that farmers have the financial tools necessary to manage their agricultural risks, and provides coverage through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, which promotes national welfare by improving the economic stability of agriculture
* Serves as the president of the Commodity Credit Corporation, a government-owned and operated entity that was created to stabilize, support and protect farm income and prices[[2]](#endnote-2)
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| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** |
| Requirements | * Experience with farm programs
* Relationships with the commodity groups or the ability to form them
* Production experience
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| Competencies | * Excellent leadership and management skills
* Strong communication and interpersonal skills
* Ability to work under high pressure
* Energy for frequent travel
* Excellent negotiation skills
* Ability to work in a matrixed agency
* Ability to work across partisan lines
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| **PAST APPOINTEES** |
| Michael. T. Scuse (2012 to 2017): President, Officers of Corporation, Commodity Credit Corporation, Department of Agriculture; Director, Commodity Credit Corporation, Department of Agriculture; Deputy Undersecretary, Office of the Undersecretary, Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, Department of Agriculture[[3]](#endnote-3) |
| James W. Miller (2009 to 2011): Undersecretary, Office of the Undersecretary, Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, Department of Agriculture; Chief Economist and Chief of Staff, National Farmers Union, Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America; Senior Analyst for Agriculture and Trade, Committee on the Budget, U.S. Senate[[4]](#endnote-4) |
| Mark Everett Keenum (2006 to 2008): Chief of Staff, Office of Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS), U.S. Senate; Legislative Assistant, Office of Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS), U.S. Senate; Assistant Economist, Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, Mississippi State University[[5]](#endnote-5) |

1. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. OPM [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Leadership Directories: https://lo.bvdep.com/PeopleDocument.asp?PersonId=-1&LDIPeopleId=392100&Save=1 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Leadership Directories: https://lo.bvdep.com/PeopleDocument.asp?PersonId=-1&LDIPeopleId=573596&Save=1 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Leadership Directories: https://lo.bvdep.com/PeopleDocument.asp?PersonId=-1&LDIPeopleId=365574&Save=1 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)