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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
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TO: All NIFA Employees

SUBJECT: NIFA's Sexual Harassment Policy Statement

As Director of NIFA, I fully support the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Sexual Harassment policy. Sexual harassment is unacceptable in this Agency's workplace and cannot be condoned. I am firmly committed to ensuring that we treat each other and our customers with respect and dignity. All employees must be allowed to work in an environment free from unsolicited and unwelcome sexual overtures. Sexual harassment is a form of misconduct that may create an unproductive or an offensive working atmosphere which undermines the integrity of the employment relationship. Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who violates merit system principles. A manager or a supervisor using implicit or explicit coercive sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, or job of an employee is engaging in sexual harassment and is simply not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines list the following criteria for determining whether an action constitutes unlawful behavior: 1) If submission to the conduct is either an explicit or implicit term or condition of employment; 2) if submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as basis for an employment decision affecting the person rejecting or submitting to the conduct; or 3) if the conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an affected person's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

I am professionally and personally opposed to any violation of the rights of our employees. To reiterate, I am committed to ensuring that our workplace environment is free of sexual harassment and other unlawful discrimination practices that interfere with employee productivity and psychological well-being. I expect our senior executives, managers, and supervisors to lead by example and to translate this commitment into meaningful action. As NIFA's principal officers, you are charged with, and are expected to uphold, the highest level of trust in the mission and programs of this Agency.

As an agency, we must work together to develop a common set of workforce mores based on mutual professional respect. It is our affirmative duty to maintain a workplace free of gender-based coercion, intimidation, or exploitation.

Sonny Ramaswamy
Director
National Institute of Food and Agriculture