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USDA orders removal of climate change mentions from public websites

The directive follows President Trump's orders reversing climate policies.

By [Will Steakin](#)

January 31, 2025, 2:18 PM

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In this April 18, 2024, file photo, the sign marking the headquarters building for the US Department of Agriculture is shown in Washington, D.C.
J. David Ake/Getty Images, FILE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has directed agency officials to review and remove content related to [climate change](#) from its public websites, according to internal emails obtained by ABC News.

The directive instructs web managers to identify, archive, or unpublish materials mentioning climate change by "no later than close of business this Friday," according to the emails.

In an email sent Thursday, USDA Director of Digital Communications Peter Rhee detailed the process, requiring staff to "identify and archive or unpublish any landing pages focused on climate change" and track related content in an attached Excel spreadsheet for review.

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"OC will review the submitted materials and make determinations on next steps," Rhee wrote, referring to the department's Office of Communications.

A separate email sent to website managers at the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) emphasized the urgency of the request.

"USDA and ARS OC are requesting you comply with the instructions below from USDA's Office of Communications," the email read, instructing ARS staff to submit their content audit by 3 p.m. ET Friday to meet the department's deadline.

USDA officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment from ABC News.



In this April 18, 2024, file photo, the sign marking the headquarters building for the US Department of Agriculture is shown in Washington, D.C.
J. David Ake/Getty Images, FILE

According to the spreadsheet provided to website managers and obtained by ABC News, content is being categorized into three levels of urgency. Pages dedicated entirely to climate change are marked as "Tier 1," while those where a significant portion of the content relates to climate change are labeled "Tier 2."

Pages where climate change is mentioned in passing but is not the main focus should be identified under "Tier 3," according to the spreadsheet.

"For each piece of content, include the title, link, and your recommendation on how the content should be handled," the email reads.

The USDA has long been involved in climate research and in studying how rising temperatures and shifting weather patterns impact agriculture. The department's website includes extensive resources on climate science, carbon sequestration, and adaptation strategies for farmers.

A USDA webpage published in 2022 provides information on "Climate Change Adaptation and USDA."

"Producers, ranchers, forest landowners, and communities across the country are facing challenges posed by the effects of climate change," the webpage states. "Some of these effects are familiar but occurring more frequently or intensely while others are new and unprecedented."

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The directive to remove mentions of climate change from websites follows President Donald Trump's [executive orders](#) reversing key climate policies, which include withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement, expanding fossil fuel production, weakening environmental protections, and revoking EV incentives.

Critics warn these actions will accelerate climate change and disproportionately harm vulnerable communities.

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