



Meat Grading & Certification Branch

Employee Progress, Performance, and Appraisal System

I. PURPOSE

This Instruction explains the policies and procedures of the Agricultural Marketing Service's Performance Management System which is designed to comply with subchapter 1 of chapter 43, Title 5, U.S. Code; Part 430 of the Code of Federal Regulations; chapter 430 of the Departmental Personnel Manual; and other provisions of laws or Executive Orders. All documents involved in administering the system are exhibited and their use is described. This Instruction also provides employees and supervisors with guidelines for the performance evaluation and rating process.

II. POLICY

It is Meat Grading and Certification (MGC) Branch policy to maintain a staff of competent technical employees capable of correctly and precisely applying Federal grade standards and specifications. Such employees also must possess knowledge of the administrative policies, procedures, and rules and regulations governing MGC Branch activities.

The Employee Progress, Performance, and Appraisal System is an impartial and uniform system designed to accurately reflect an employee's performance. This is accomplished by utilizing this system as a communication tool to generate positive interaction in a combined effort between employees and management. The performance standards will be communicated to all employees in writing within 30 days of the beginning of each appraisal period.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Performance**. The accomplishment of assigned duties and responsibilities.
- B. **Performance Standard**. The expressed measure of the level of achievement established for specific performance elements (duties) of a position.
 - 1. **Consistently**. Considering the degree of difficulty, performance tends to be reasonably close to the accuracy expected of a fully qualified incumbent.
- C. **Performance Element**. A duty or responsibility for which an employee is accountable or responsible (identified as a critical or noncritical element).
 - 1. **Critical Element**. A performance element of sufficient importance that performance below the fully successful level requires remedial action and

denial of within-grade increase and may be the basis for employee removal or reduction in grade level.

2. **Noncritical Element.** A performance element not identified as a critical element but of sufficient importance to warrant a performance appraisal.
- D. **Appraising Elements.** Each performance element is evaluated at the end of the appraisal period using the following levels:
1. **Exceeds.** Performance which is **above** the fully successful level.
 2. **Fully Successful.** Performance meets standards established for this level.
 3. **Does Not Meet.** Performance falls below standards established at the fully successful level.
- E. **Appraisal.** The comparison of the employee's performance of his/her duties and responsibilities with established performance standards.
- F. **Summary Rating.** The levels of achievement of performance elements, from unacceptable to outstanding. The five levels as listed on Exhibit A, Performance Appraisal (AD-435), are:
1. **Unacceptable.** Fails to meet established performance standards in one or more critical elements of the employee's position.
 2. **Marginal.** Performance which needs improvement to achieve the fully successful level.
 3. **Fully Successful.** Meets performance standards at the level expected.
 4. **Superior.** Exceeds performance standards established at the fully successful level.
 5. **Outstanding.** Exceeds performance standards at a level that is high enough to deserve special commendation. Performance for each element consistently exceeds the fully successful level.
- G. **Appraisal Period.** The period of time during which an employee's performance is appraised. The annual performance appraisal period is generally the 12-month period from October 1 to September 30. However, appraisals can be made for a period of at least 90 days.
- H. **Rating Supervisor.** The supervisor(s) who usually assigns work, reviews work, advises, and consults with the employee and is responsible for other work-related activities of the employee.
- I. **Reviewing Official.** The employee's second-level supervisor or manager who reviews the ratings given by the rating supervisor.

IV. HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

A. **Performance Standards.** The six elements and the standards encompassing the major responsibilities of a employee's job at the GS-5, GS-7, and GS-9 levels are identified in Exhibit B, Performance Standard for a Fully Successful Rating.

1. These performance standards will be communicated to employees within 30 days of the beginning of the appraisal period (October 1) in the following manner:
 - a. Employees will be provided copies of the standards.
 - b. The employee's immediate supervisor shall discuss the elements and standards with the employee and explain the level of performance required for the fully successful rating.
 - c. Upon completion of the discussion and after all questions have been answered, both the supervisor and employee shall sign the Performance Plan, Progress Review, and Appraisal Worksheet (AD-435A) (Exhibit C). The employee shall be provided a copy of the signed AD-435A and a copy of each Continuation Sheet Performance Plan, Progress Review, and Appraisal Worksheet (AD-435B), (Exhibit D).
2. A composite review of performance will be conducted at least semiannually. Supervisors shall not assign written element ratings or summary ratings during the semiannual review. They will **verbally** communicate to the employee their level of performance. The supervisor and the employee shall initial and date the AD-435A in the spaces provided for the reviews.
3. Supervisors shall assign written annual performance ratings **only** on applicable elements. Applicable elements are elements reviewed a sufficient number of times to accurately evaluate the employee.

B. **Evaluating Work Performance.**

1. **Complexity.** Supervisors shall review and evaluate employees' work in accordance with established supervisory review practices. They shall carefully review each employee's work and use good judgment in evaluating performance under the performance management system. An employee's performance should be evaluated in relation to the difficulty or complexity of the assignment. Factors to be considered include **but are not limited to:**
 - a. Wide variability of classing and grade factors, or specification requirements.
 - b. Volume of work (i.e., number of carcasses; number, complexity, and variety of documents; duration of assignment; etc.).

- c. Work experience in that position.
 - d. Chain speed; chain versus rail grading.
 - e. Variety of daily and/or relief assignments.
 - f. Carcasses or meat items not typical of what is generally offered for grading or certification.
2. General. Supervisors should also consider employees **positive** attributes in evaluating performance. Factors to be considered include **but are not limited to**:
- a. Employee suggestions and initiative.
 - b. Working independently.
 - c. Ingenuity and good judgment.
 - d. Adaptability.
 - e. Decorum/professionalism.

C. Recording Work Performance.

1. General.
- a. The Employee Progress Review Report (MGC-18), (Exhibit E), shall be completed monthly. Prepare one MGC-18 each month to reflect performance of **all** or **any** performance elements (I through VI). Identify additional MGC-18's as "Continuation" pages as needed.
2. Supervisors responsibilities.
- a. Supervisors shall ensure all documents are legible and correctly prepared. They shall:
 - 1. Complete Section A of the MGC-18 at the completion of each review.
 - 2. Ensure Section B of the MGC-18 has check-marks applied to each element the employee was observed performing during the review. (This list may also act as a reminder to supervisors as to the specific performance standards to be applied for each review.)
 - 3. Ensure Section C of the MGC-18 is complete, as applicable, and the results **verbally communicated** to the employee **immediately following each review**. No specific numbers identifying misgraded/miscertified product will be recorded.

Use of correlations and training quizzes will not be utilized to rate employees.

4. Complete Section D of the MGC-18, summary narrative, which shall include a **composite** evaluation of the employee's performance for the **entire month**.
5. Prepare an MGC-18 for each employee temporarily assigned in the supervisor's area of responsibility, if reviewed. Forward an electronic copy of the report to the relief grader's first-line supervisor.
6. Forward a copy of the completed MGC-18 to the responsible employee in a **timely** manner. It may be hand-delivered or sent electronically.
7. Ensure that the MGC-18 is electronically sent to the MGC Branch Office and retain the original.

D. Action by Employees

1. Employees may comment on the contents of the MGC-18's prepared on their work performance by submitting email to their Assistant Director. Employees shall reference the particular MGC-18 and provide sufficient explanations or comments. Employees' emails will be attached to corresponding office copies of the MGC-18's. The Assistant Director shall acknowledge and respond appropriately.

E. Performance Appraisal

1. The AD-435 will be prepared for all employees by utilizing a composite of the monthly progress review reports.
2. The rating supervisor shall:
 - a. Review the pre-printed portion of the AD-435. Make corrections as needed.
 - b. Enter the appraisal in the appropriate column; using "2" for critical elements and "1" for noncritical elements.
 - c. Compute and record on the AD-435 the summary rating by using the criteria in the decision table. If a summary rating of outstanding is granted, supervisors must provide additional justification in the "Accomplishments" section of the AD-435A and AD-435B, or on a separate sheet of paper, and attach it to the AD-435.
3. The rating supervisor and the reviewing official shall review, discuss, and concur on the appraisal.

4. Should the employee refuse to sign the AD-435, the employee should state applicable reasons. When the employee is on extended leave or otherwise unavailable, the rating official may respond as to why the form is not signed.
5. Supervisors shall distribute completed copies as identified on the form during the performance review.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**United States Department of Agriculture
Performance Appraisal**

1 Social Security No.	2 Position Number	3 Pay Plan	4 Occup. Series
-----------------------	-------------------	------------	-----------------

5 Name (Last, First, Middle Initial)		6 Grade/Step or Pay Level	7 Appraisal Period From _____ To _____	
8 Official Position Title		9 Organization Structure Code		
10 Duty Station	11 Funding Unit	12 Agency Use	13 NFC Use	

Instructions

Blocks 1 through 10, completed by NFC, should be reviewed and, if necessary, corrected.
 Block 11. Enter funding unit number.
 Block 14. Enter brief description of performance elements.
 Block 15A. Check performance elements identified as critical.

Blocks 15B, 15C., 15D. Rate actual performance by entering 2 for critical elements and 1 for non-critical elements in appropriate column.
 Blocks 15E, 15F, 15G. Enter total of each column.
 Block 15H. Enter total from 15E, 15F and 15G.
 Block 16A. Check off the correct summary rating described in decision table (16B).
 Blocks 17 through 22. Self-explanatory.

14 Performance Elements	15A Critical Element (✓)	15B Exceeds Fully Successful	15C Meets Fully Successful	15D Does Not Meet Fully Successful
1)				
2)				
3)				
4)				
5)				
6)				
7)				
8)				
9)				
10)				

<p>16B Decision Table (check off Summary Rating in block 16A)</p> <p>Rating of Outstanding if 15E equals 15H. Rating of Unacceptable ^{1/} if any critical element is rated in 15D. Rating of Superior if no element is rated in 15D; 15F is greater than zero; and 15E is greater than 15F. Rating of Marginal ^{2/} if 15G is greater than 15E, and no critical element is rated in 15D. Rating of Fully Successful if none of the above apply.</p> <p>^{1/} Unsatisfactory for SES ^{2/} Minimally Satisfactory for SES</p>	<table style="width:100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width:33%;">15E Exceeds</td> <td style="width:33%;">15F Meets</td> <td style="width:34%;">15G Does Not Meet</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">15H Enter total 15E + 15F + 15G = 15H</td> </tr> </table> <p>16A Summary Rating (See Decision Table in 16B)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding <input type="checkbox"/> Superior <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Successful <input type="checkbox"/> Marginal ^{2/} <input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable ^{1/}</p> <p>^{1/} Unsatisfactory for SES ^{2/} Minimally Satisfactory for SES</p>	15E Exceeds	15F Meets	15G Does Not Meet	15H Enter total 15E + 15F + 15G = 15H		
15E Exceeds	15F Meets	15G Does Not Meet					
15H Enter total 15E + 15F + 15G = 15H							

17 Employee (Check off appropriate box)		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
I have a copy of USDA and Agency regulations on employee responsibilities and conduct; I have discussed them with my supervisor and questions have been answered to my satisfaction.		<input type="checkbox"/> No
18 Employee's Signature	Date	If employee did not sign, state reason.

(Instructions for resolutions of disputes are on the reverse of employee copy.)

19 Supervisor's Signature	Date	20 Reviewer's Signature	Date
21 Approving Official's or Funding Unit Manager's Signature (optional)		22 FOR SES ONLY	
		PLA to ES _____	Bonus Amount _____

PERFORMANCE STANDARD FOR A FULLY SUCCESSFUL RATING

Element I - Grading/Knowledge/Communications (Critical).

1. Consistently performs grading and grade factor evaluations in accordance with the official grade standards, regulations, and applicable instructions.
2. Consistently demonstrates working knowledge of the grading standards using official, technical terminology to explain and justify official grade placements and related procedures to supervisors, industry members, and others.
3. Consistently maintains professional relationships in accordance with established policies and instructions. Resolves complaints with minimal assistance.

Element II - Certification/Knowledge/Communications (Critical).

1. Consistently performs certification procedures in accordance with the official regulations, applicable instructions, and approved specifications. Reviews applicable contractual documents, completes in-plant records, prepares work-related documents, etc.
2. Consistently demonstrates working knowledge using official technical terminology to explain and justify official certification determinations and related procedures to supervisors, industry members, and others.
3. Consistently maintains professional relationships in accordance with established policies and instructions. Resolves complaints with minimal assistance.

Element III - Equal Opportunity/Civil Rights (EO/CR) (Critical).

1. Performs all duties in a manner which consistently demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect toward coworkers, office visitors, and all others in the performance of official business. Demonstrates an awareness of EO/CR policies and responsibilities.

Element IV - Application of Official Marks (Noncritical).

1. Consistently performs/supervises application of official marks as prescribed in applicable specifications, regulations, instructions, and policies.

Element V - Administrative Duties (Noncritical).

1. Consistently performs administrative duties and prepares official documents and reports in accordance with applicable regulations and instructions.
2. Submits legible, accurately-prepared, official documents and reports in a timely manner.

Element VI - Training/Mentoring (Noncritical).

1. Effectively conducts technical and administrative training and instruction to employees assigned to them by teaching the correct interpretation and application of regulations, standards, specifications, instructions, and procedures.
2. Effectively provides technical and personal assistance, guidance, and leadership to employees.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
PERFORMANCE PLAN, PROGRESS REVIEW AND APPRAISAL WORKSHEET
 (Instructions on reverse)

1. Name (Last, First, M.I.)	Pay Plan, Series, Grade	Agency/Division	APPRAISAL PERIOD	
Position Title			From	To

2. PERFORMANCE ELEMENT			<input type="checkbox"/> CRITICAL	<input type="checkbox"/> NONCRITICAL
No. <input style="width: 30px;" type="text"/>	(Describe below the duty or responsibility for which the employee is accountable and responsible. Indicate if the element is critical or noncritical.)			

3. STANDARD (Describe the level expected for "Fully Successful" performance. Include appropriate indicators of quality, quantity, cost efficiency, or timeliness, where applicable.)

4. ELEMENT RATING (At the end of the rating period, compare the employee's performance with standard and assign an element rating. For instructions about documentation, see reverse.)		<input type="checkbox"/> EXCEEDS	<input type="checkbox"/> FULLY SUCCESSFUL
		<input type="checkbox"/> DOES NOT MEET	

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

5. CERTIFICATION OF DEVELOPMENT AND RECEIPT OF PLAN
 Signatures certify discussion with the employee and receipt of plan which reflects current position description.

Employee's Signature	Date
Supervisor's Signature	Date
Reviewer's Signature	Date

6. PROGRESS REVIEWS (at least one must be completed)

Employee's Initials and Date	Supervisor's Initials and Date

PERFORMANCE PLAN, PROGRESS REVIEW AND APPRAISAL WORKSHEET

1. Name (Last, First, M.I.) Position Title	Pay Plan, Series, Grade	Agency/Division	APPRAISAL PERIOD	
			From	To

2. PERFORMANCE ELEMENT			<input type="checkbox"/> CRITICAL <input type="checkbox"/> NONCRITICAL
No. <input type="text"/>	(Describe below the duty or responsibility for which the employee is accountable and responsible. Indicate if the element is critical or noncritical.)		

3. STANDARD (Describe the level expected for "Fully Successful" performance. Include appropriate indicators of quality, quantity, cost efficiency, or timeliness, where applicable.)

4. ELEMENT RATING (At the end of the rating period, compare the employee's performance with standard and assign an element rating. For instructions about documentation, see 435A.)		<input type="checkbox"/> EXCEEDS	<input type="checkbox"/> FULLY SUCCESSFUL
		<input type="checkbox"/> DOES NOT MEET	

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

EMPLOYEE PROGRESS REVIEW REPORT

EMPLOYEE

SUPERVISOR

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

MONTH/YEAR

SECTION A - REVIEW RECORD

DATE	LOCATION	TYPE OF WORK	CORRELATION

SECTION B - ELEMENTS REVIEWED

CRITICAL

I. GRADING KNOWLEDGE/COMMUNICATIONS

- CARCASS ELIGIBILITY
 KNOWLEDGE OF STANDARDS/INSTRUCTIONS
 QUALITY GRADE
 YIELD GRADE
 COMMUNICATIONS/TRADE RELATIONS

II. CERTIFICATION/KNOWLEDGE/COMMUNICATIONS

- PLANT RECORDS/CONTRACTUAL DOCUMENTS
 KNOWLEDGE OF SPECIFICATIONS/INSTRUCTIONS
 SAMPLING PROCEDURES
 COMMUNICATIONS/TRADE RELATIONS

III. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/CIVIL RIGHTS

- AWARENESS/DEMONSTRATION OF POLICIES/RESPONSIBILITIES

NON-CRITICAL

IV. APPLICATION OF OFFICIAL MARKS

- STAMPING/ROLLER BRANDING

V. ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES

- PREPARATION/ACCURACY/LEGIBILITY
 TIMELINESS

VI. TRAINING/MENTORING

- TECHNICAL/ADMINISTRATIVE
 PERSONAL ASSISTANCE/GUIDANCE

SECTION C - MONTHLY SUMMARY OF ELEMENTS REVIEWED

Element I	Element II	Element III
Element IV	Element V	Element VI

EMPLOYEE PROGRESS REVIEW REPORT -- PAGE 2

EMPLOYEE

SUPERVISOR

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

MONTH/YEAR

SECTION D - REMARKS (Applicable Comments)

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE

DATE
