

Commodity Procurement Staff 1400 Independence Avenue, SW. Room 3522-S, STOP 0239 Washington, DC 20250-0239

# Synopsis:

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U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service Commodity Procurement Staff

1400 Independence Avenue, Stop 3522 Washington, DC, 20250

This Request for Information (RFI) will serve as market research to obtain information on the availability and specifications for frozen, fully cooked, non-seasoned, grilled chicken strips product for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). All information gathered in response to this RFI/Notice will be used solely for planning purposes. This is not a formal solicitation, but a request for interested parties to provide information. No solicitation published by this office for this product currently exists.

## **Description:**

This is a Request for Information (RFI) as defined in FAR 15.201(e). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), is interested in purchasing frozen, fully cooked chicken strips with grill markings, for domestic food assistance programs, especially the NSLP. Product shall be prepared from freshly slaughtered ready-to-cook broilers (AMS70.201(s)), without neck and giblets. Product shall be prepared from whole muscle, boneless and skinless chicken with excess fat removed, formulated either in naturally-occurring proportion of white and dark meat, or on a weight basis to contain a minimum of 50 percent white meat (maximum of 50 percent dark meat). No mechanically separated (comminuted), finely ground, flaked, or finely chopped chicken meat may be used.

Chicken strips are a versatile, popular menu item, and can be utilized in many meals. The objective is to purchase a product that is boneless, whole muscle white and dark meat, is not seasoned, is fully cooked, with grill markings, and frozen.

USDA is committed to purchasing products with reduced sodium levels to help schools meet the nutritional targets established in the NSLP pattern requirements for Fiscal Year 2015. The ideal product should be unflavored and contain no more than 100 mg of sodium per ounce; however, the ultimate goal of USDA is to provide a product that is as low in sodium as possible while maintaining product quality and user acceptability. Products with minimal added ingredients may be considered.

To help NSLP participants utilize the product to meet the weekly meal pattern requirements, USDA is seeking strips at least .375 inch (3/8 inch; 0.95 cm) in width and at least 1.0 inch (2.5 cm) in length and which would contribute a minimum of 0.5 oz. cooked meat equivalent per strip but do not exceed 2.0 oz. cooked meat equivalent per strip. Products with other dimensions, or a random piece size product, may be considered.

#### Additional reference:

"Nutrition Standards for Schools," USDA, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS): <a href="http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-01-26/pdf/2012-1010.pdf">http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-01-26/pdf/2012-1010.pdf</a>

"Master Solicitation for Commodity Procurements, dated April 2013," USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS): <a href="https://www.ams.usda.gov/commoditypurchasing">www.ams.usda.gov/commoditypurchasing</a>

"Vendor Qualifications Requirements, dated September 2012," USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS): www.ams.usda.gov/commoditypurchasing

#### **Information Requested:**

All information provided with regard to the commercial practices for these products should take into account USDA's 100 percent domestic origin requirement (see Master Solicitation for Commodity Procurements). Interested parties should answer the following questions and provide the requested information:

- 1) your interest in this procurement:
- 2) product specifications, including:
  - a. brand name/product code;
  - b. product formulation and fabrication;
  - c. piece/strip size (width, length, weight; uniform or random)
  - d. labeling information, including: lot coding, nutrition facts, ingredients label, and allergen statement;
  - e. shelf life, including recommendations for optimal storage conditions;
- 3) pack size(s) (net weight), and servings per container; commercial prevalence of each pack size;
- 4) truckload unitization/configuration and weights: packages per case, cases per pallet, and pallets per truckload; net case weight (in lbs.) and gross case weight (in lbs.)
- 5) child nutrition meal pattern crediting information (Product Formulation Statement or CN Labeling Statement, if applicable). (See "Additional References," above.)

- 6) historical price;
- 7) capabilities: volume constraints, distribution limitations, seasonal production capacity, etc., as applicable;
- 8) commercial warranty;
- 9) any other relevant information, recommendations, comments, issues and/or concerns that would be beneficial to the Government for our market research;
- 10) company/organization name and contact information: name, title, phone and e-mail address.

All applicable Federal and State mandatory requirements and regulations relating to the preparation, packaging, labeling, storage, distribution of the product within the commercial marketplace must be met. The delivered product shall comply with all applicable rules and regulations of USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

Should USDA move forward and publish an actual solicitation as a result of this market research, suppliers must become qualified vendors before being eligible to bid (see "Additional References," above).

Responses and questions shall be emailed to the attention of Samantha Rhoderick at Samantha.Rhoderick@ams.usda.gov. Responses are requested to be received no later than August 16, 2013.

### **Contracting Office Address:**

1400 Independence Ave, S.W. Mail Stop 3522 Washington, DC 20250

#### **Primary Point of Contact:**

Samantha Rhoderick, Contract Specialist Samantha.Rhoderick@ams.usda.gov Phone: (202) 690-0405

#### **Secondary Point of Contact:**

Greta Samuel, Lead Contract Specialist Greta.Samuel@ams.usda.gov Phone: (202) 720-6592