Action Items from the Fall 2015 Industry Meeting	
QUESTION	**ANSWER**
Several warehouses are now charging a fee for rescheduling delivery appointments.	If rescheduling was due to a vendor change, the vendor is responsible for this charge. If it is the result of USDA or recipient change, the vendor is not responsible for this charge.
We have run into situations when our contracted carriers won't increase their volumes with us to cover USDA shipments. We are told it is because they do not want to deal with the extra steps required of Government loads.	This will be addressed through the Business Management Improvement (BMI) Initiative (i.e., purchasing more commercial-like).
We keep a list of our employees who are authorized to sign off the Domestic Origin Certificates. We send updates to USDA when there are personnel changes. Is this still needed?	This is no longer necessary.
ISSUE	**STATUS**
Warehouse Education	
Shipping/Deliveries – There have been situations where the warehouse diverts a truck to another location upon delivery. We know the warehouses are not supposed to be doing this and we contact USDA as soon as we are notified of the changes. This causes issues with invoicing as the BOL we have at the time of shipping does not match where the order is finally delivered. How are we supposed to handle this type of issue?	Vendors must schedule a delivery appointment and complete ASN's prior to delivery. Additionally, all diversions should be completed at least 30 days prior to delivery. In the event the warehouse diverts the truck upon delivery, notify the Contracting Officer immediately. If appropriate, USDA will issue an SF-30 to accommodate the change.
At times, the warehouse contact information is not correct on the PO. When the carrier tries to call with the provided information and schedule an appointment, they are not able to. The carrier then contacts our traffic department, who then contacts Sales to contact AMS to advise on the correct contact information. Once we have the corrected info, the order is updated, and the information is relayed back to the carrier.	USDA provided training at the American Commodities Distribution Association (ACDA) Annual Conference on shipping and receiving. It also included instructions on updating contact information. Additionally, the Food and Nutrition Service included guidance in its Newsletter to States.
It is difficult to schedule delivery appointments with several specific distributors. The carriers have to advise the warehouses that they are trying to schedule a USDA load. Then the carriers have to cross reference the PO's in the receiver's system and wait for a PO number so they can schedule an appointment. (We are seeing this happen more often at the cold storage warehouses vs. the dry warehouses.)	When this occurs, vendors should contact their Contract Specialist, identifying the specific information, including the 'ship to' address. FNS is committed to educating those destinations on a workaround process to eliminate issues.

Some warehouses are asking for the 'account name' (i.e., TX Dept. of Agriculture) before they will schedule an appointment. This information is located on the PO as the "sold to" contact. Does the warehouse not have a copy of the PO?	The PO does not have the 'sold to' information, and the warehouse does not have a copy of the PO, only the sales order.
Pallet Configurations	
On the commercial side of our business, a full pallet of 6/10 items is 49 cases per pallet; with layers of 7, we eliminate overhang and have greatly reduced damage claims. Food for thought . . . ?	As specifications/supplements are revised, AMS is providing DRAFTS for comment. This is an opportunity for industry to comment on case/pallets/truckload sizes.
Small Business Concerns	
Companies disagree with Co-ops qualifying as small businesses. The Co-ops in some cases are as large as multi-national companies and others think it is unfair that they are eligible for set-asides.	The U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (7 U.S.C. 2209f) states, "On and after October 28, 2000, none of the funds made available to the Department of Agriculture shall be used to carry out any commodity purchase program that would prohibit eligibility or participation by farmer-owned cooperatives." USDA's Office of General Counsel advised AMS to allow cooperatives to bid on set-asides; however, they are not eligible for any price preference programs.
Can a firm that secures awards when acting as a middle-man for several processors participate? The argument is that these types of firms are technically brokers and, therefore, shouldn't be allowed to participate.	Those types of firms are considered "non-manufacturers" and they are permitted to participate in the USDA Foods program. If bidding on a small business set-aside, all suppliers must be small businesses.
Grading	
Graders/Inspectors are not available/timely	Both the Livestock, Poultry, and Seed Program and the Specialty Crops Inspection Program have adjusted schedules to ensure this is no longer an issue.
Educating Inspectors – Differences of processes and interpretation of rules/standards across regional offices	Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Division's USDA Purchases Manual (inspectors' instructions) was revised and distributed to inspectors nationwide in August 2016. SCI Division instituted a new process and assigned a staff member to review at least 25% of all USDA Purchase Order (PO) contract folders annually. In April of 2016, a training module was developed on how to conduct and document Commodity Procurement PO reviews. The module is used for nationwide training.

	SCI Division Inspection Operations staff conducts weekly reviews (cuttings) of fruit and vegetable products produced and inspected nationwide and disseminates the review results to submitting offices. SCI Division holds weekly and monthly teleconferences that include all management for regions and area offices nationwide which includes discussion of USDA, AMS purchase inspection issues.
USDA and Commercial Alignment	
Reevaluate the chicken fajita specification. It is too strict. When raw material is trimmed, yield loss is high.	Prior to issuing the current (2016) chicken fajita specification, USDA posted the DRAFT specification for comment and no comments were received on this issue. Therefore, no changes were made concerning trimming requirements.
Extend the allowed production period of 30 days prior to contract to perhaps a 60 or 90 days for Chicken Fajitas.	The Federal Purchase Program Specification for Chicken Fajita Strips was revised to state that the commodity shall not be processed or packaged more than 60 days prior to the first day of the delivery period (April 2016).
Reevaluate the temperature differences for Poultry and Red Meats. Red Meat has a 0 degree requirement within 72 hours and must reach destination at 0 degrees vs. poultry, which must be 10 degrees within 72 hours.	The requirements are: Ready-to-Cook Meat and Poultry must be 0 degrees in 72 hours. Ready-to-Eat Meat and Poultry must be 10 degrees in 72 hours. Meat products must be shipped and delivered at 0 degrees. Poultry must be shipped at 0 degrees and delivered 10 degrees or below with no individual sample exceeding 15 degrees.
Checkloading – Yes or No – Why or Why Not? Minimize delayed shipments due to waiting on an inspector for checkloading.	Compiling data received for checkloading to review future requirement. The item referencing waiting on Grading for checkloading was resolved and AMS is not aware of any further instances.
Sodium testing for (1) frozen potatoes – new requirement, product is no salt added anyway, and (2) new protocol for all sodium testing	The frozen potato specification is updated to state the sodium can be verified by Nutrition Facts Panel; USDA is continuing to review testing protocol.

Reviewing and revising Federal Purchase Program Specifications for meat, poultry, eggs, and fish to ensure they are aligned, to the extent possible, with industry best practices.	Vendors have been contacted directly to discuss the various specifications, and updates have been made to make them more performance-based. The work is ongoing.
Solicitations/Timing	
Bid timing (consistent number of days before solicitation, bids due, and award)	This is driven by contracting methods, recipient last-minute needs, and production periods.
Orders should be more spread out over the year	USDA tries to schedule deliveries as evenly as possible; however, there are times due to the nature of the Program that is impossible.
IDIQ timing – Why buying July-September over a year in advance?	Vendors were habitually delivering late in the July/August periods because that's when harvest is going on and they are really busy. Plus, many times, the harvest was late. In order to make sure we had product for those delivery periods, AMS contracts for them early. The expectation is that, on the date we award the contract (June of 2016), suppliers use the coming harvest to pack the full contract quantity for us. That way, we can expect to have product on time for July – September 2017 deliveries.
Bills of Lading	
Bill of Lading requirements – Recipients want certain information and there are no requirements in contracts	AMS does not specify the information required on bills of lading because it is specified in the Code of Federal Regulations governing the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (CFR Part 373).
Website	
AMS Website –The table of purchases sometimes lists only the material number, and sometimes includes the material description. Description is needed.	AMS Purchase Summary lists both material number and description and reports procurement activity on a detailed fiscal year basis. Purchases by Commodity summarizes procurement activity on a year-to-date basis by commodity type.