

Action Items from Industry Meeting 2016		
1	Performance of WBSCM – takes too long and slows down work	<p>The WBSCM project team continues to monitor performance and make configuration or program code changes as solutions are identified to improve performance.</p> <p>It is helpful to report performance issues to the WBSCM help desk (WBSCM.servicedesk@CACI.com) so technical staff can review system logs to identify problems and possible trends.</p>
2	The 72-hour freezer check requirement (protein items) for every lot can be costly, particularly when using off-premise freezers. Are there considerations for less frequent checks while continuing to maintain the integrity of the program?	The Livestock, Poultry, and Seed Program has changed its policy for 72-hour freezer checks for protein items to allow use of skip lot checks (1 in 10) versus checking every lot. In addition, for products that require a technical proposal or production plan, the vendor is allowed the flexibility to develop a strategy to ensure this requirement is met. Some vendors complete a 72-hour check on the initial production lots then reduce the frequency of checks after a satisfactory freezer history is established.
3	Regarding the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)'s Sanitary transportation for food requirements--Can AMS ensure purchase requirements are in line with those of FSMA's?	Yes, we will work with our Food and Drug Administration (FDA) liaison to ensure procurements documents reference FDA and FSMA requirements, where appropriate.
4	For Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity contracts (fruits and vegetables), can vendors get more time for production and delivery? Vendors would like more than 45 days for allocation purchase orders.	Currently, orders are not provided in sufficient time for AMS to issue sooner than 45 days prior to the delivery period.

		<p>We will consider timing of orders under the Business Management Improvement (BMI) Initiative.</p> <p>Additionally, the estimated needs (sales orders, quantities, delivery dates, and destinations) are available on the FNS website at https://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/delivery-order-status-reports. This report is updated every month in the first week of the month.</p>
5	Will USDA be purchasing poultry produced without antibiotic use?	<p>USDA currently purchases conventionally raised poultry. We are closely monitoring the market and continuing to evaluate the feasibility of changes to purchasing requirements in the future. Throughout the past year, AMS has consulted closely with individual vendors and with groups, including the National Chicken Council and School Food Focus, to gather input on this issue.</p>
6	For specialty crops, there is an option for skip lot testing for sodium--where if vendors have a proven test record, USDA tests are conducted on only a percentage of cases in the truck instead of every single case or pallet. Are vendors taking advantage of skip lot inspections?	<p>A few vendors are following the skip lot policy.</p> <p>Additionally, CPS and Specialty Crops Inspection are reviewing sodium testing requirements and communicate any changes so vendors are aware of this option/policy based on analysis and needs. Additionally, we are conducting an analysis to determine why sodium levels are so variable.</p>
7	Canned carrots—Why does food from USDA require fresh pack? Why not use something from the shelf if a can is good for 3 years?	<p>USDA normally requires previous-year-pack until the current crop is available—this ensures</p>

		recipients have the maximum amount of time to distribute and use the product.
8	Recipient agencies are contacting vendors to help them learn how to read their date code. Is this something they should be expecting more (these are specifically on #10 cases)? Will this continue?	<p>Recipients are very interested in understanding what the date markings mean on the label for inventory management and warehouse tracking purposes. Because these markings vary from vendor to vendor, recipients may continue to contact vendors for more information.</p> <p>CP is considering standardizing dating information across product groups.</p>
9	The fruit and vegetable IDIQ is spread out over time with no notification when vendors will need the entire amount that was awarded. Is it possible to find out what the quantity will be over a given period of time in a more timely manner?	<p>Once it is determined that we will use the maximum quantities allowable under the contract, we will inform the vendor.</p> <p>Additionally, the estimated needs (sales orders, quantities, delivery dates, and destinations) are available on the FNS website at https://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/delivery-order-status-reports. This report is updated every month in the first week of the month.</p>
10	Fruits and vegetables - Can we have a shorter time period-- especially since it's over two growing periods?	We will review the purchase schedule for options. Additionally, vendors are encouraged to help us determine the best procurement timeframes and delivery periods, particularly when we ask for comments on specifications.
11	We have staff spending two-thirds of their day entering data into WBSCM or related spreadsheets. Why can't USDA engage in electronic data interchange (EDI) like other big players (i.e., Sysco, Gordon Foods, U.S. Foodservice)?	The Business Management Improvement (BMI) Initiative recommendations include adopting EDI information sharing with stakeholders who can accommodate the technology.

		USDA is reviewing the recommendation and determining feasibility and potential implementation timing.
12	What is USDA doing to address the unbalanced orders/delivery periods between first-half second-half of the month? As well as addressing large volumes of cheese being ordered during first 4 months of school's year in the fall, when loads could be rationed and delivered in the January-March periods.	FNS will continue to provide education to the States and emphasize the importance of spreading out orders, and AMS and FNS will work to stabilize the quantities of orders on Solicitations. This will be considered through the BMI effort.
13	When USDA issues a solicitation for barrel cheese, how is that cheese used?	Barrels are further processed into many products for delivery to school cafeterias (e.g., cheese sauce, whole grain macaroni and cheese).
14	Dairy – IDIQ contracts are a challenge. There are unknown variables (quantities) that make it difficult to bid.	The estimated needs (sales orders) are available on the FNS website at https://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/delivery-order-status-reports . This report is updated every month in the first week of the month.
15	Vendors would like to see a 12-month warranty on most commodities--this is already a requirement in the commercial market.	As we develop or revise product specifications, we will review warranty periods.
16	Master Solicitation – Do vendors need to add all the required information on the Bill of Lading?	Yes.
17	Truck configuration needs to be revisited (same configuration for years; product containers have gotten bigger (or smaller)).	BMI recommendations will require a large BMI data management effort to validate and enhance the WBSCM master data. The master data project will be a leading activity in order to support additional improvements.

		<p>Whole grain products in the pasta and cereal lines have changed case weights and truck configurations. Vendors are encouraged to contact your AMS contract specialist for possible adjustments to resolve related issues.</p> <p>Additionally, industry will continue to have the opportunity to comment on case/pallets/truckload sizes as part of the DRAFT specification review process.</p>
18	<p>Ready-to-Eat Cereal - New product specifications are making it hard to provide a tasty product. (USDA is no longer buying a commercial product; vendors are making products solely for USDA use).</p>	<p>In some cases, specifications are different from commercial to reduce variability or assist with nutrition program goals. It is important to recipients that products are consistent among manufacturers. Recipients rely on a similar taste, texture, and other attributes when they receive USDA Foods from different vendors. Companies can contact AMS with specific concerns about specification requirements.</p> <p>Additionally, when appropriate, we are considering alternate contracting methods to ensure consistent product (i.e., long-term contracts with only one supplier)</p>
19	<p>Concerned about the proposed change for maximum age of barrels at time of delivery.</p>	<p>Based on industry feedback on the draft, specification, AMS did not change the maximum age for barrel cheese and will revisit this matter at a later date.</p>
20	<p>Please re-evaluate requiring Advance Shipping Notifications (ASN's) to be entered into WBSCM on the actual day of shipment. Sometimes it is a day or two after shipment before</p>	<p>Contractors are encouraged to create the ASN as soon as a delivery appointment has been</p>

	<p>their office gets all of the info from their system needed to complete the ASN in WBSCM.</p>	<p>scheduled, but not less than 24 hours prior to delivery.</p> <p>ASN's serve as an important notification to States & School Food Authorities in WBSCM to inform them of pending deliveries.</p>
21	<p>Would like to see the PO items identify not only a primary ship-to location, but also include alternate acceptable overflow facilities in the event their driver arrives at their appointed times, only to be redirected to an overflow storage facility.</p>	<p>FNS provides regular training for Recipient Agencies that emphasizes the importance of ensuring that Ship-To addresses are up-to-date.</p> <p>WBSCM is not currently designed to accommodate this change, but we will document this request for future consideration.</p>
22	<p>Cheese – provide more clarity on testing frequency. There doesn't appear to be a testing consistency for the cheese that comes to a further processor from other cheese manufacturers. Maybe some test every vat, or every third vat, or some other interval. Their (further processor) company standards require stricter intervals. So, for cheese that does not come directly from themselves, they may have to perform additional tests before they can use it.</p>	<p>The cheese manufacturer will follow its particular production facility-line testing intervals to ensure proper quality controls processes, analysis outcomes, and requirements are met for product delivered under its contract with AMS.</p>
23	<p>Cracker suppliers do not like the USDA 9-month shelf-life requirement for crackers. They stated the industry standard is 7 months; they follow the industry standard which ensures quality and freshness of the product. The USDA 9-month requirement is a barrier to their participation.</p>	<p>AMS is considering reducing the shelf-life requirement for crackers. Currently, however, the majority of vendors are able to meet the 9-month requirement. The two extra months is necessary to allow for distribution from the National Warehouses to end recipients.</p>
24	<p>For fruit and vegetables – Can USDA eliminate regrading requirements?</p>	<p>For those instances where USDA accepts prior crop year, we are extending the period of time for Grading certification to allow for an 18-month certification period.</p>

25	Is there any way to separate the purchase of Kosher fruits and vegetables from the non-Kosher purchase schedule? Kosher products require strict adherence to Jewish law, and it is important to have a break in production if also producing non-Kosher product. This is very cumbersome and can be difficult to schedule.	USDA solicited Kosher fruit and vegetable products prior to the solicitation for non-Kosher products. This allows vendors to schedule production of both products with minimal disruption.
26	Can fruit and vegetable IDIQ contracts be awarded earlier in the year? That would help to plan production.	The purchase schedule for SY 17/18 was revised so that contracts will be awarded up to 3 weeks earlier than last year.
Day 2 Questions		
27	Can you clarify pictorial labeling requirements?	<p>If the product is not visible in the package, it's important to have a visual representation for recipients with literacy challenges—a label that's easy to see and depicts the commodity in an illustration. AMS is working on language that will ultimately be incorporated into the Master Solicitation. Vendors will have opportunity to comment as part of the draft specification process as well.</p> <p>Not all products will be required to have a picture; guidelines will be posted.</p>
28	Are new requirements for delivery appointments 7 days prior to deliver versus previous (24-48 hours)? These 7-day limitations will be difficult to follow.	Delivery appointments shall be made as far in advance of delivery as possible, but not less than 72 hours prior to delivery. ASN's must be created not less than 24 hours before delivery.
Solutions from 2015 to be Revisited		
29	Checkloading – Yes or No – Why or Why Not? Minimize delayed shipments due to waiting on an inspector for checkloading.	USDA will conduct a pilot program to remove the checkloading requirement for canned peaches, canned pears, canned apricots, and

		canned mixed fruit for SY 2017-18. Additionally, for meat and poultry items, USDA has conducted a study of the efficacy of checkloading. We will be evaluating results prior to expanding the effort to other products.
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