



United States Department of Agriculture

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Marketing and  
Regulatory  
Programs

Agricultural  
Marketing  
Service

Fruit and  
Vegetable  
Program

Specialty  
Crops  
Inspection  
Division

# Commodity Specification Fresh Vegetables

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## **I. GENERAL**

### **A. U.S. Standards**

Fresh vegetables (product/commodity) produced under this Commodity Specification must meet the requirements specified in the applicable United States Standards for Grades of Fresh Vegetables (U.S. Standards) or Commercial Item Description (CID) effective on the date of the Solicitation/Invitation for Bid (IFB). The U.S. Standards and CIDs are published separately and are incorporated herein and made a part of this Commodity Specification.

### **B. Exceptions to U.S. Standards**

Additional exceptions may be specified in the applicable Solicitation/IFB. Any exceptions contained in the applicable Solicitation/IFB shall have precedence over the requirements contained herein, for that Solicitation/IFB only.

### **C. Product Origin**

1. Commodities delivered pursuant to this Commodity Specification shall have originated from crops that have been 100 percent grown, processed, and packed in the United States, its territories or possessions, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, (hereinafter referred to as the United States). See Section I.F. of the Master Solicitation.
2. If the contractor handles any commodity originating from sources other than the United States, the contractor must have a written plan to segregate the commodity. This segregation plan will include an identification and record system for all commodities to ensure they are completely segregated and cannot be used to fulfill purchase orders awarded by USDA. Such segregation plan must be made available, within 10 days of purchase order award, to representatives of the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).
3. The contractor must maintain positive written documentation records evidencing 100 percent domestic origin to the grower level. Contractors must also ensure that the documentation provided by any subcontractors demonstrates the same level of traceability. The burden of proof of compliance is on the contractor.

Documentation may include load or warehouse storage receipts for raw product (i.e., bin tags), product blend (formulation) records, product coding explanations, finished product warehousing records, shipping or payment records, or other documentation or evidence that clearly establishes the product's domestic origin.

4. Contractors must provide the domestic origin certification and supporting documentation records to representatives of the AMS Fruit and Vegetable Program,

Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Division (USDA Inspector) when requesting inspection service.

USDA Inspectors will select and review at least one code for each purchase order to determine compliance with the Agency's domestic origin requirements.

5. Such records must be available for review by the Government in accordance with FAR 52.214-26. In the event of an audit, AMS auditors will examine as many codes as is necessary to verify compliance.
6. Self-certifications by contractors and subcontractors will not be accepted.
7. Failure to observe this requirement may lead to suspension or debarment, purchase order termination, and penalties at Title 18, Section 1001 of the U.S. Code concerning falsification of information.

#### **D. Kosher Products**

Occasionally, purchase units will be identified on Solicitation/IFBs as “Kosher Only” and will be so identified in the Solicitation/IFB. Offerors must not bid on these purchase units unless they are properly certified to produce Kosher products. Vendors must comply with the applicable dietary (KOSHER) laws as established by the “613 COUNCIL OF KASHRUTH.”

Vendors receiving purchase order items identified as “KOSHER” must contact the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York (BJENY) at telephone 646-472-5365 **prior to submitting a bid** to certify compliance with the applicable dietary (kosher) laws.

A rabbinic supervisor will be sent by the BJENY to certify compliance with the applicable dietary (KOSHER) laws.

#### **E. Packing Season**

All fresh vegetables must be from the current packing season/crop year, unless otherwise specified in the applicable Solicitation/IFB.

#### **F. Containers and Packing**

1. Primary Containers (Cartons, Crates, RPCs, Bags, Sacks):
  - a. All products shall be packed in new, good, clean primary containers so constructed as to ensure acceptance by common carrier or other carrier for safe transportation for domestic shipment.
  - b. When secondary containers are present, vendors have the option to use commercial labeling on the primary containers. If the primary container is labeled, it must meet all applicable FDA requirements and contain a code which allows traceability of the product in the event of a recall. If a specific variety, size, and/or color are required per the solicitation, that variety, size, and/or color shall also be listed on the primary container.

2. Secondary Containers (Bags)
  - a. Vendors shall use commercially acceptable secondary containers which meet all applicable FDA requirements and contain a code which allows traceability of the product in the event of a recall.
  - b. In addition to any commercial markings, each secondary container shall show the grower or shipper name(s) and address. If a specific variety, size, and/or color are required per the solicitation, that variety, size, and/or color shall also be listed on the secondary container.

### G. Palletization Requirements

1. Pallets  
Products must be on 48 X 40 inch, non-reversible, flush stringer, and partial four-way entry. New pallets must be good quality wood. Used pallets must be No.1 hardwood or its equivalent in new softwood. **Broken or damaged pallets are unacceptable.** If pallet exchange is desired, the contractor shall arrange for pallet exchange with consignees. USDA is in no way responsible for arrangement of pallet exchange.
2. Unitization  
Each delivery unit of canned fruit must be unitized. Shipping cases must be stacked and secured from top to bottom, so that each container and layer of containers becomes an integral part of the pallet. Either stretch wrapping with plastic film or "lock 'n pop" is acceptable. The palletized product must be loaded in the conveyance in such a way that will prevent shifting and damage to the containers of product.

### H. Shipment and Delivery

1. Quantity Tolerance  
Contractor will be allowed a tolerance on the final delivery of plus or minus 50 cases of each product, from each shipping point in the purchase order.

### I. Prerequisites

1. All vendors and/or suppliers providing fresh vegetables shall undergo a good agricultural practices and good handling practices audit of their operations. The audit must be conducted by the USDA, AMS, Fruit and Vegetable Program, SCI Division or licensed Federal-State auditors providing services under a cooperative agreement with USDA oversight. The audit conducted may be either the USDA Good Agricultural Practices & Good Handling Practices (GAP&GHP) audit, the Produce GAPs Harmonized Food Safety Audit, or the Tomato Audit Protocol audit, whichever is applicable to the commodity being purchased.
2. The audit must cover all parts of the operation which are applicable to the commodity being purchased. For example, a tomato purchase would require an audit of the fields, packing house, and storage facilities.

3. A copy of the three acceptable audit standards is available on the USDA website at [www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp), or from your local USDA or Federal-State inspection office. A listing of USDA and Federal-State inspection offices are also available on the website listed above.

#### **J. Vendors Supplying Fresh Cut Products**

1. Vendors are required to undergo an annual Plant Survey and Food Defense System Survey, or Plant Systems Audit (PSA) which shall be performed by the USDA, AMS, FV, SCI Division. Audit and survey checklists are available upon request.
2. Vendors must have a written Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)-based food safety plan in place. The HACCP plan shall include a microbiological testing program for the following: *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, Coagulase positive *Staph. aureus* and *Listeria monocytogenes*.  
\*\* The Fruit and Vegetable Program, SCI Division must verify the vendors HACCP plan by performing a HACCP Verification Survey. \*\*

## **II. INDIVIDUAL COMMODITY SPECIFICATIONS**

### **A. Carrots (Baby-Cut, Peeled)**

The baby-cut and peeled carrots shall comply with Commercial Item Description (CID) A-A-20191 – Effective on the date of the solicitation (published separately).

1. Type I – Peeled.
2. Style D – Baby-cut – 2 inches (5.08 cm) in length.
3. Size 2 – 9/16 inches to 13/16 inch in diameter.
4. Packing, Labels and Packaging:
  - i. The shipping cases must contain 100/2 ounce bags.
  - ii. Labels may be the vendors own commercially acceptable “brand” unless prohibited by the Invitation. Distributor’s “brand” labels are not acceptable.
  - iii. Primary Containers shall be new commercially acceptable bags which meet all applicable FDA requirements, that are heat-sealed, that afford adequate protection of the product, and are the size and type specified in the applicable Solicitation. The bags shall be suitably code marked so that the product can be identified and allows traceability of the product in the event of a recall. The bags shall be marked with the shelf life by using the “**date**”, “**Use by**”, “**Best by**”, “**Best Before**”, or “**Sell by**”. Other commercial markings are acceptable.
  - iv. Secondary Containers shall be new commercially acceptable good quality domestic corrugated fiberboard cases. Cases shall be suitably code marked so

that the product can be identified and shall be marked with the shelf life by using the “**date**”, “**Use by**”, “**Best Before**”, “**Best by**”, or “**Sell by**”. “**Keep Refrigerated**” shall be clearly printed on each case. Other commercial markings are acceptable.

5. All processing and supporting documents verifying adherence to the product specification and product origin must be made available to a USDA, AMS, FV representative and shall be audited on a monthly basis. Packaged baby-cut carrots will be evaluated for compliance with the product specification at the time of the monthly audit.
6. Microbiological testing must be performed on each lot or code produced.

#### **B. Corn (Husked)**

1. Grade - U.S. No. 1, Husked.
2. Cartons – packing shall be at least fairly tight or fairly well filled.
3. Size – 4 inch minimum unless otherwise specified; Per Pallet – 80
4. Net weight – 24 pounds: Gross weight – 26 pounds.
5. Top ice is required on all shipments.
6. Refrigerated shipment at 34° to 36° F.

#### **C. Onions**

1. Grade – U.S. No. 1 or better (en route or at destination tolerances apply).
2. Size - **Repacker/Prepacker (minimum diameter 1 ¾ inches and maximum diameter 3 inches) with at least 60 percent 2 inches or larger in diameter.**
3. Onions in each offer unit ordered delivered by USDA shall contain product of not more than three (3) adjacent sizes. Each size shall be segregated in the shipment with a minimum of intermingling of the sizes. If shipment is by truck, the contractor shall note the location and count of each size in the truck (front, center and tail) on the shipping manifest.
4. Types of Pack - bags – **10/5lb.** Mesh sacks to a shipping container.
5. Must be yellow or white color only.

**D. Potatoes**

1. Grade - U.S. No. 1.
2. Washed.
3. Pack and Size Requirement - 50 pounds cartons, size 100 or 110; 50 pounds bags, size A, 2 inch minimum or 4 ounce minimum.
4. Packing shall be at least fairly tight or fairly well filled.
5. Types of Varieties – 50 pounds cartons – Russet, Baking  
10/5 pounds bags – Irish, Round, White, or Russet
6. The grade requirements referred herein are defined in the United States Standards for Grades of Potatoes, effective on the date of the Solicitation/IFB.

**E. Sweet Potatoes**

1. Grade – U.S. No.1
2. Washed
3. Pack Requirement – 40 lb. Carton
4. Destination Inspection Required

**F. Tomatoes**

1. Grade – U.S. Combination Grade, with at least 85% U.S. No. 1 Quality.
2. The tomatoes shall be 5x6 (Florida size). In instances where the tomatoes were not packed to an “official” size, a minimum diameter of 2 25/32 inches will be required.
3. A minimum of 80% of the tomatoes in the lot must be either Turning or Pink.
4. Inspection will be at destination. It is the contractor’s responsibility to arrange for the inspection.

**III. INSPECTION AND CHECK-LOADING****A. Requirements**

1. Representatives of the AMS, Fruit and Vegetable Program, SCI Division (USDA Inspector) must perform the inspection and check-loading (see section IX. A of the



- Master Solicitation). The cost of inspection, samples taken for inspection, mailing of review samples submitted for evaluation, and any chemical analysis required for testing shall be for the account of the Contractor.
2. USDA inspection of fresh vegetables must be performed at destination. The count (number) of packages shall be certified by Federal or Federal-State Inspection Service (see section IX. A of the Master Solicitation). The acceptability of the quality and packing of the product must be evidenced by certificates issued by the USDA Inspector.
  3. Representative sample units will be graded according to the Regulations Governing Inspection and Certification of Fresh Vegetables and Related Products (7 C.F.R. part 51), and United States Standards for Condition of Food Containers (7 C.F.R. part 42.140), effective on the date of the Solicitation/IFB.

#### **B. Procedures**

The Contractor must give the USDA Inspector at least 72 hours advance notice when scheduling inspection service. Contractors are encouraged to submit requests for inspection in writing with verifiable receipt notice, such as fax log, to alleviate possible miscommunication.

#### **IV. FAILURE TO MEET SPECIFICATIONS**

Any lot which fails applicable specifications prescribed herein will be rejected as not acceptable for delivery. If any lot of fresh vegetables fails to meet the product or packaging requirement, the Contractor may request in writing that USDA accept delivery of the lot. USDA may at its option, accept delivery, provided that the purchase price is the purchase order price less a discount, to be determined by the Contracting Officer.