

Frequently Asked Questions about Commercial Item Descriptions (CIDs)

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What are CIDs?

Commercial Item Descriptions (CIDs) are documents that describe the most important characteristics of a commercial product, such as the types, and styles of products available. The CID may also contain information on analytical tests and requirements for food safety and quality for the product. CIDs are used by a purchaser during the procurement process to specify the product they wish to purchase. For more information on the content and organization of CIDs please see the document on [Information Contained in Commercial Item Descriptions](#).

How and why are CIDs prepared?

CIDs are prepared by Food Technologists or Nutritionists typically in response to a request by a purchaser. Market research is performed to gather information on all options currently available on the commercial market. This information is then incorporated into the CID, which is then reviewed by manufacturers, interested government agencies, and food service professionals before being approved for use.

How and why are CIDs revised?

CIDs are revised when a request is received for a revision, when new options become available for a product, or on a five year basis. CIDs are reviewed by Food Technologists or Nutritionists and are updated to include new types and styles and any other pertinent information for that product.

How do I request a CID revision or development?

To request the development or revision of a CID, contact the Specialty Crops Inspection Division using the current contact information on the CIDs website at www.ams.usda.gov/CommercialItemDescription.

How do I find a current CID?

Visit the CIDs website at: www.ams.usda.gov/CommercialItemDescription to view the list of current CIDs.

Who uses CIDs?

CIDs may be used during the procurement process by anyone who does institutional feeding. This includes the school lunch program, the military, hospitals, day cares, and many other facilities. The CID is used by these institutions to specify exactly what they want in the commercial product that they are procuring.

Why should I comment on or review a CID?

It is important that both manufacturers and purchasers of a product are involved in the revision and writing process of CIDs. Input from the purchaser informs us of any problems with the current CID and helps us be aware of any changes that would assist in the procurement process. Input from manufacturers ensures that the language and information in the CID does not exclude any current products from the procurement process.

Are CIDs mandatory?

No. CIDs are procurement documents that may be used by purchasers. They are NOT regulations, and it is not mandatory for a manufacturer to follow a CID. Manufacturers must only comply with a CID when it is being used by a purchaser to specify a product that the manufacturer has agreed to supply.

Will a CID affect my current manufacturing processes?

No. CIDs are procurement documents and are intended to describe currently available commercial products. They are not meant to dictate how a product is produced and will not impact a manufacturer's current processes, unless the purchaser uses the CID to specify that they wish to purchase a product made using a specific process (i.e. aseptic packaging).

Who do I contact if I have questions about CIDs?

For questions on CIDs, email CIDS@ams.usda.gov, or contact the Specialty Crops Inspection Division using the current contact information on the CIDs website at www.ams.usda.gov/CommercialItemDescription.