



Agricultural Marketing Service

# Federal Grain Inspection Service

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## **2020** ANNUAL REPORT



# About this Report

Each year, pursuant to section 17B (7 U.S.C. § 87f-2) of the U.S. Grain Standards Act (USGSA), the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) respectfully submits an annual report to the U.S. Congress. Activities described in this report cover Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 (October 1, 2019, through September 30, 2020).

This report is divided into four sections. After the Overview, Section I, Sections II through IV represent program updates. Any mention of firm names or trade products does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended directly or indirectly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

For inspection and weighing program data and financial information go to: [www.ams.usda.gov/reports/fgis-annual-reports](http://www.ams.usda.gov/reports/fgis-annual-reports)

This document is available in an electronic 508 PDF version on our website at: [www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/accessibility](http://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/accessibility)

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# Section I Overview

## THE FEDERAL GRAIN INSPECTION SERVICE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA), FGIS establishes quality standards for grains, oilseeds, pulses, and rice; provides impartial inspection and weighing services through a network of Federal, State, and private entities; and monitors marketing practices to enforce compliance with the USGSA, as amended. Through these activities, FGIS facilitates the marketing of grains, oilseeds, and related products. FGIS administers uniform national grain inspection and weighing programs established by the USGSA. Services under the USGSA are performed on a fee basis for both export and domestic grain shipments. The USGSA requires that export grain be inspected and weighed, prohibits deceptive practices with respect to the inspection and weighing of grain, and provides penalties for violations. The USGSA also requires that all corn exported from the United States be tested for aflatoxin, prior to shipment, unless the contract stipulates that the testing is not required.



### PROGRAM MISSION

**FGIS's primary mission is twofold:**

- (1)** Promote the marketing of high-quality grain to domestic and international buyers and;
- (2)** Maintain objective standards for grain to certify its quality as accurately as practicable. These standards define uniform and descriptive terms to facilitate the grain trade, help determine grain storability, offer users the best possible information to determine end-product yield and quality, provide market incentive frameworks, reflect the economic value-based characteristics to end-users, and accommodate scientific advances in testing.





## KEY ACTIVITIES

### In administering and enforcing the USGSA, FGIS:

- Establishes and maintains official U.S. grain standards for barley, canola, corn, flaxseed, oats, rye, sorghum, soybeans, sunflower seed, triticale, wheat, and mixed grain.
- Promotes the uniform application of official U.S. grain standards by official inspection personnel.
- Establishes methods and procedures and approves equipment for the official inspection and weighing of grain.
- Provides official inspection and weighing services at certain U.S. export port locations as well as official inspection of U.S. grain at certain export port locations along the St. Lawrence Seaway in eastern Canada.
- Delegates qualified State agencies to inspect and weigh grain at certain U.S. export port locations
- Designates and licenses qualified State and private agencies to inspect and weigh grain, as well as perform other official services, at interior locations.
- Provides Federal oversight of the official inspection and weighing of grain by delegated States and designated agencies.
- Monitors the quality and weight of U.S. grain as received at destination ports and investigates complaints or discrepancies reported by international buyers.
- Investigates, in cooperation with the USDA's Office of the Inspector General, alleged violations of the USGSA and initiates appropriate corrective action.
- Helps U.S. trading partners develop and improve their grain inspection and weighing programs through education and outreach to international buyers.

# EMPLOYEES AND LOCATIONS

FGIS is Composed of



Headquartered in Washington, DC, with the bulk of employees located at the National Grain Center in Kansas City, Missouri.

There are seven field offices; and one Federal/State office. Field offices are located in Grand Forks, North Dakota; Domestic Inspection Operations Office (DIOO), Kansas City, Missouri; League City, Texas; New Orleans, Louisiana; Portland, Oregon; Stuttgart, Arkansas; and Toledo, Ohio. FGIS has one Federal/State office in Olympia, Washington.



# FGIS OVERSIGHT OF OFFICIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

FGIS oversees 43 State and private agencies that provide official services under the USGSA. Of the 43, 33 are private agencies and 6 are State agencies designated to provide official inspection and/or weighing services in domestic markets; 3 are State agencies delegated to provide mandatory official export inspection and weighing services, as well as designated to provide official domestic inspection and weighing services within the State; and 1 is a State agency delegated to provide mandatory official export inspection and weighing services within the State.

These private and State agencies represent a unique network of approximately 2,500 staff members who conduct official inspection and weighing services for grain producers, handlers, processors, and exporters across the country.

**NOTE: The *Official Agency Geographic Areas and FGIS Field Office Map* located on Pages 8-9.**

<sup>1</sup> Designated States	Designated States and Delegated States	<sup>2</sup> Delegated States
LA Louisiana MD Maryland MO Missouri MT Montana NC North Carolina UT Utah	AL Alabama VA Virginia WA Washington	WI Wisconsin

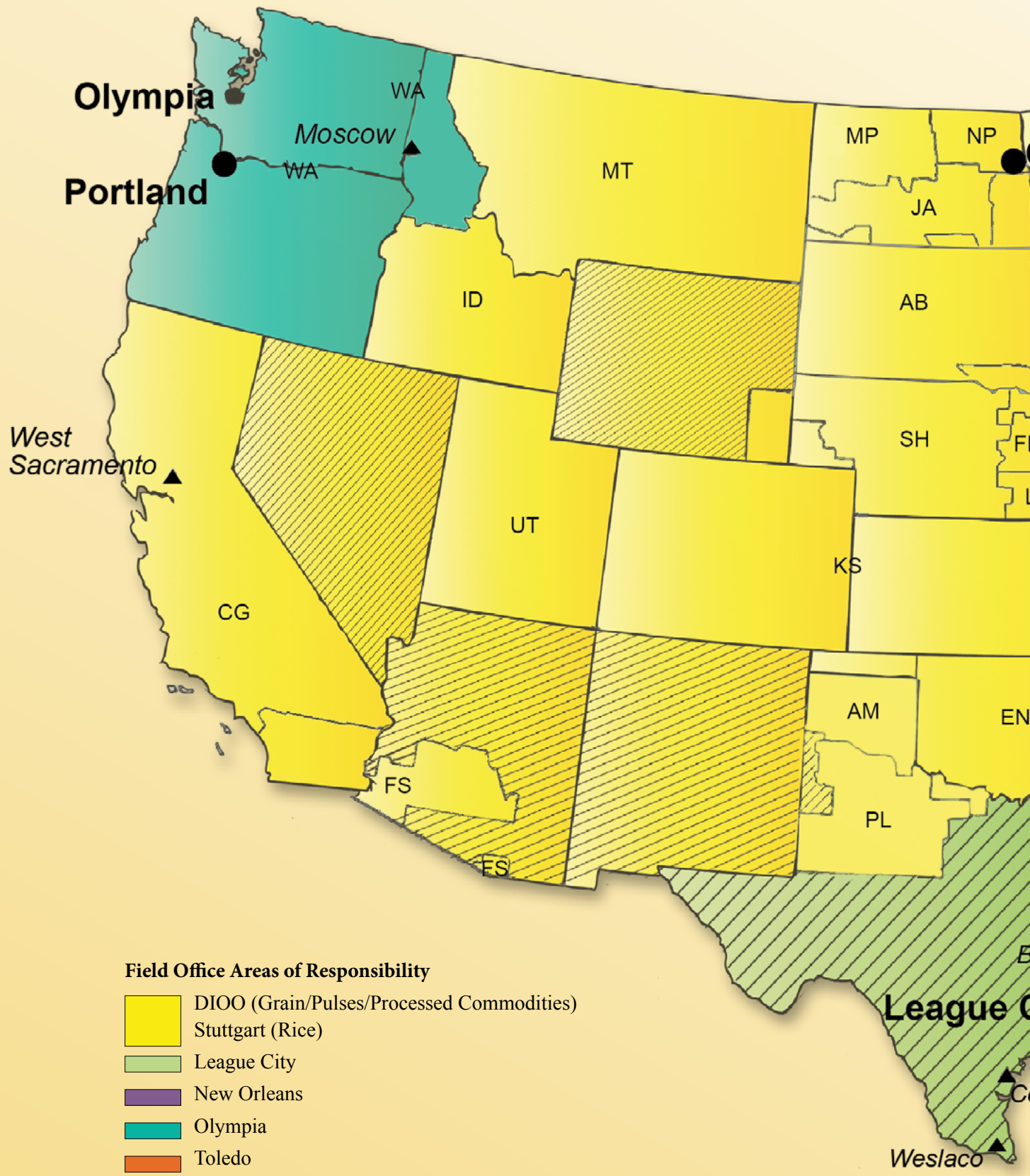
Designated Private Agencies			
<b>AB</b> Aberdeen	<b>FS</b> Farwell Southwest	<b>MH</b> Michigan	<b>PL</b> Plainview
<b>AM</b> Amarillo	<b>FE</b> Fremont	<b>CR</b> Mid-Iowa	<b>SH</b> Schaal
<b>JB</b> Barton	<b>HA</b> Hastings	<b>MM</b> Midsouth	<b>SI</b> Sioux City
<b>CI</b> Cairo	<b>ID</b> Idaho	<b>MP</b> Minot	<b>SG</b> State Grain
<b>CG</b> California Agri	<b>JA</b> Jamestown	<b>NR</b> North Dakota	<b>TT</b> Titus
<b>CD</b> Champaign	<b>KA</b> Kankakee	<b>NE</b> Northeast Indiana	<b>TS</b> Tri-State
<b>DB</b> Detroit	<b>KS</b> Kansas	<b>NP</b> Northern Plains	
<b>EI</b> Eastern Iowa	<b>KE</b> Keokuk	<b>EV</b> Ohio Valley	
<b>EN</b> Enid	<b>LN</b> Lincoln	<b>OM</b> Omaha	

<sup>1</sup> Designated State agencies and designated private agencies (i.e., official agencies) may perform permissive official grain inspection and/or weighing services at domestic locations under designations awarded up to a 5-year period.

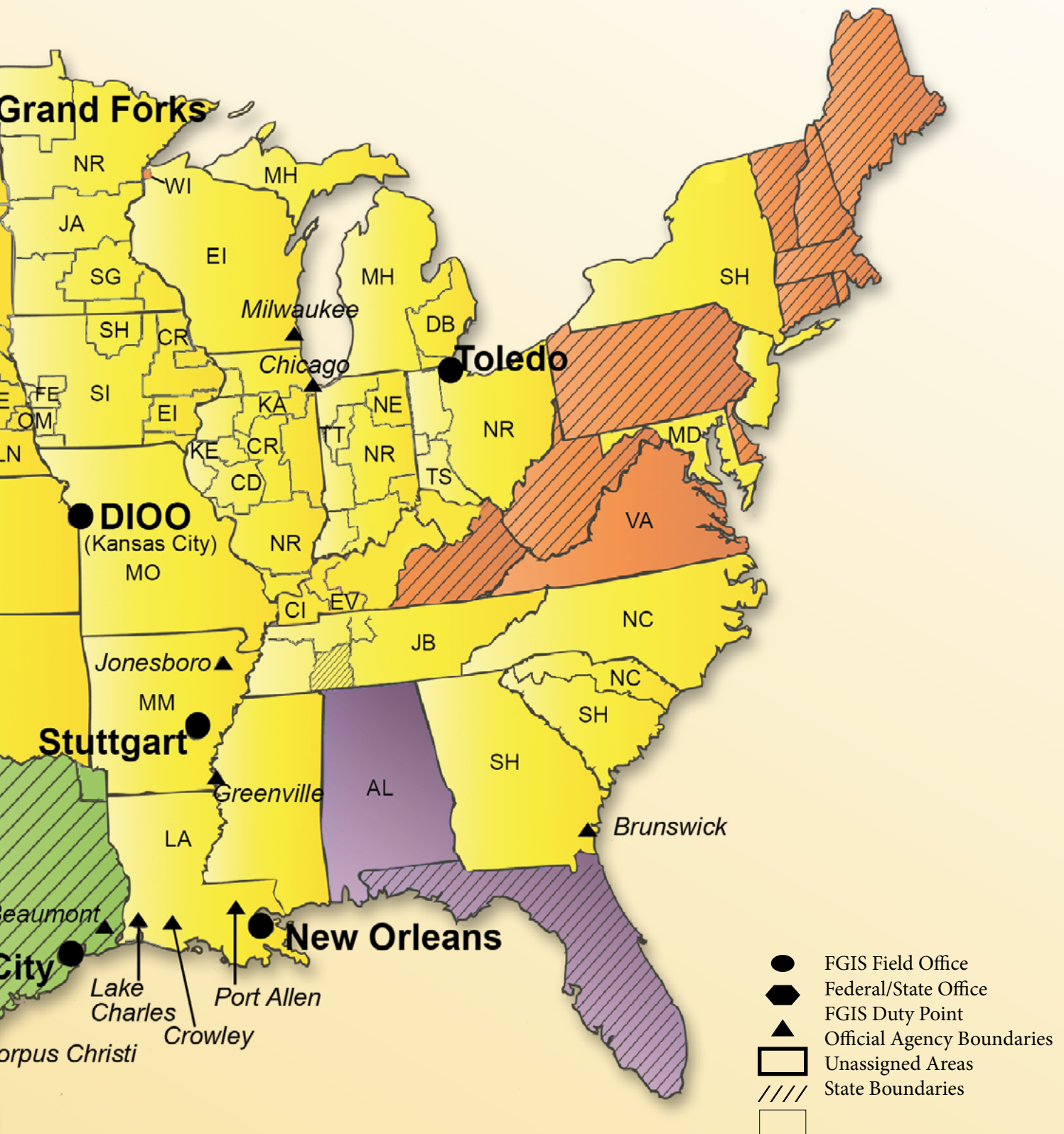
<sup>2</sup> Delegated States may provide mandatory official grain inspection, weighing, and scale testing services at export port locations within their respective State. Delegated States are reevaluated and recertified every 5 years in accordance with the Act.



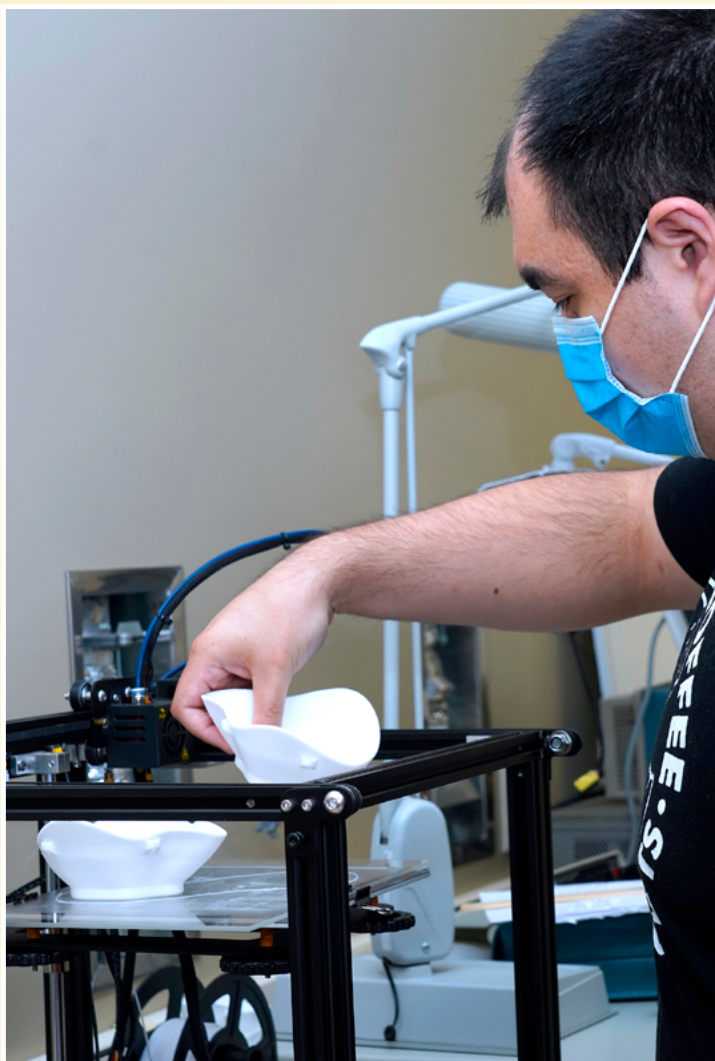
# Official Agency Geographic



## Areas and FGIS Field Office Map







Faced with an unprecedented global pandemic, FGIS and Official Agencies rose to the challenge and provided service safely without fail in 2020. FGIS and Official Agencies perform official grain inspection and weighing, much of which is required by law. With a value over \$30 billion annually, grain exports cannot stop moving, as customers in the US and around the world rely on FGIS certificates to make these transactions.

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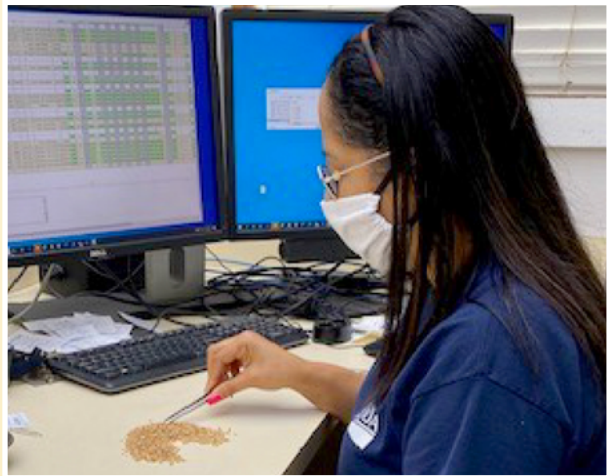
## FGIS's RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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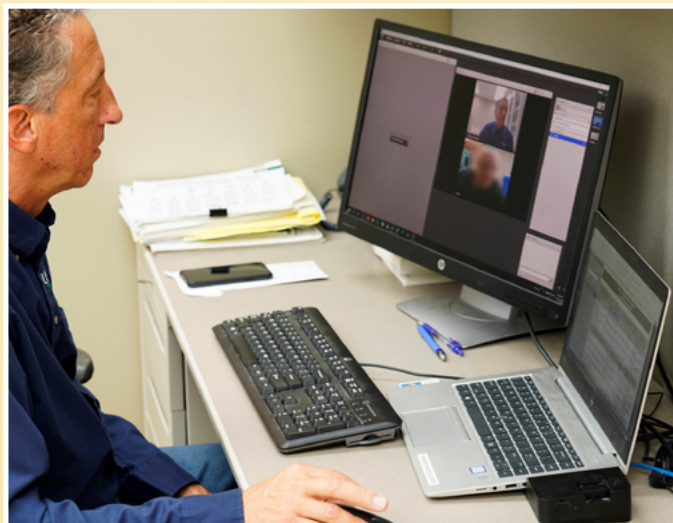




Preparations began early, since FGIS conducts exams on foreign vessels and interacts with crews from around the world. FGIS was proactive in January and February, before the virus appeared on U.S. shores, to procure personal protective equipment (PPE) and ensure staff did not board vessels under quarantine. Once the national emergency was declared in March, FGIS and Official Agencies changed work procedures to maintain operations. FGIS reduced crew sizes where possible, implemented distancing measures, telework flexibilities, and extra cleaning. All staff was provided PPE and labs have been modified to allow for appropriate distancing.

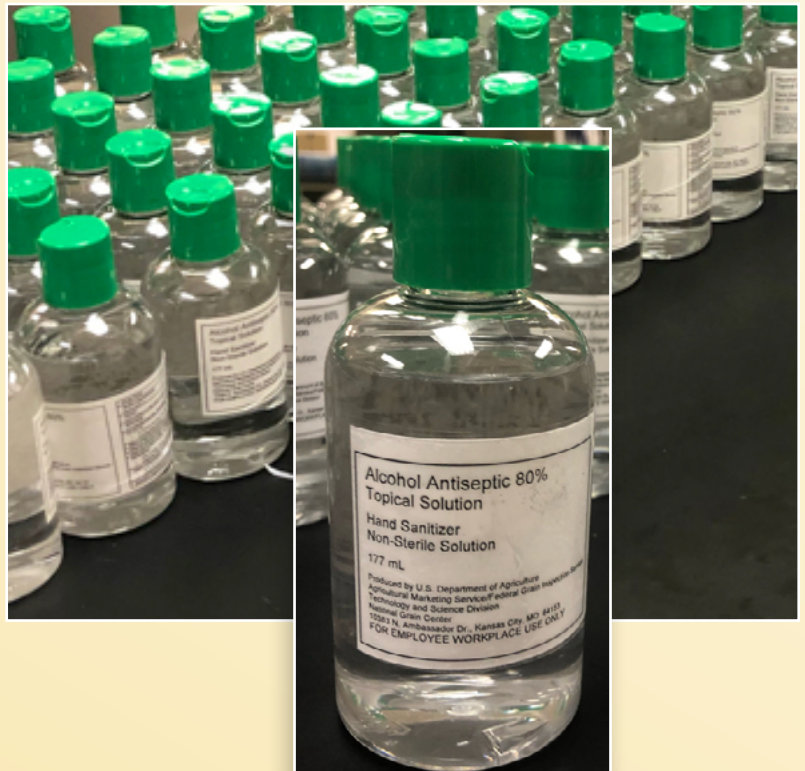


At interior offices, FGIS staggered work schedules to ensure fewer people in tight spaces. FGIS's also expanded a video proctoring program, whereby all licensing activities could still be conducted without the necessity to travel to a field office to take exams in person.





Amidst the nationwide shortages of hand sanitizer and face masks due to COVID-19, FGIS Technology and Science Division (TSD) produced hand sanitizer and 3D-printed face masks for distribution to support the health and safety of its employees. Using U.S. Food and Drug Administration guidelines, TSD produced 388 liters (equivalent to 3,280 four ounce bottles) of hand sanitizer from April 3 until June 12. The hand sanitizer was produced and shipped or distributed to eight FGIS field offices, the National Grain Center, five other Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) programs including Livestock and Poultry, Specialty Crops, Dairy, Cotton and Tobacco, Science and Technology, and the Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service's Veterinary Services. TSD produced 320 masks and shipped or distributed them to ten FGIS field offices. FGIS was assisted by the AMS Livestock and Poultry program in setting up its 3D printer to efficiently print the masks.



To protect the integrity of the official system, the USGSA requires FGIS to confirm Official Service Providers (OSP) are meeting established criteria. Typically, FGIS conducts onsite audits to check compliance. In a proactive effort to protect the best interest of the grain inspection program and our stakeholders during the Covid-19 pandemic, FGIS designed a new process by which it can accomplish this requirement remotely, via desk audit. This enables the OSPs and FGIS to gather the information and associated documents without the risk of exposure to the virus. Most of the OSPs are small companies and their ability to provide grain inspection is essential to the grain industry. Due to the time frame between requesting and receiving documentation, the lifecycle of individual audits is expanded and multiple audits may overlap. At a minimum, these desk audits will continue through the end of the calendar year.



To date, no grain inspection or weighing services have been interrupted by the pandemic. FGIS sends thanks to our fantastic employees and Official Agencies for working safely, and for our industry partners for resolving issues as they arose locally.





# Section II

## Standards Development

FGIS regularly reviews the official standards and inspection instructions for grain and commodities to ensure the standards remain relevant to the marketplace. In FY 2020, FGIS: published six updated handbooks of instructions for inspection of commodities, namely Grain Inspection Handbook 1, Grain Inspection Handbook 2, Grain Inspection Handbook 3, Fumigation Handbook, Sanitation and Food Defense Handbook, completed drafting a new Certification Handbook, and completed draft language updating Regulations at 7 C.F.R. 800, 801, 802, and 868.

In FY 2021 FGIS will publish Requests for Comments, opening the U.S. Standards for Sorghum and the U.S. Standards for Wheat for review; prepare draft Notices of Proposed Rulemaking pertaining to the Regulations at 7 C.F.R. 800, 801, 802, and 868.



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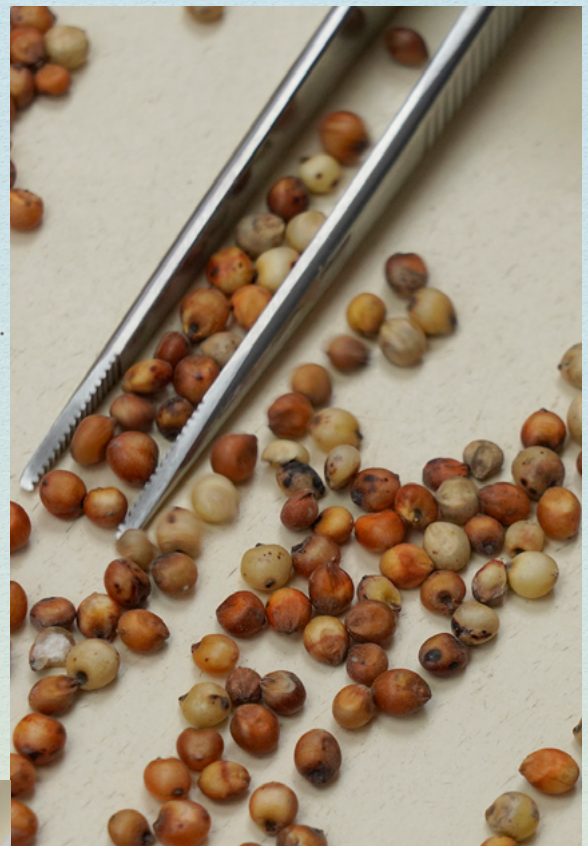
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Inspection  
Service

Washington, D.C.

October 2020

### Grain Inspection Handbook



# Section III

## The National Grain Center



### **PROVIDING THE MARKET WITH TERMS AND METHODS FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT**

The National Grain Center (NGC), located in Kansas City, Missouri, hosts numerous events/tours each year to educate various stakeholder groups and customers about various aspects of the official inspection and weighing system.

In FY 2020, NGC hosted 11 events, of which 3 engaged international trade teams. USDA cooperators, such as the U.S. Grains Council and the U.S. Wheat Associates sponsor many of the groups that participate in these events. NGC staff provided technical training and delivered in-depth presentations on quality control methods for visual inspections, as well as mycotoxin, pesticide residue, and biotechnology testing services. These sessions provide stakeholders the opportunity to interact with subject matter experts and develop better understanding/confidence in the U.S. grain inspection system.



## BOARD OF APPEALS AND REVIEW

The Board of Appeals and Review (BAR) is a team of six senior-level grain inspectors, led by a Chairman and an Assistant Chairman. The BAR is the final adjudication body for all disputes involving subjective grain quality issues raised by any interested party in a grain transaction. The BAR performs appeal inspections after the issue has been reviewed and addressed by other FGIS field offices. In FY 2020, the BAR rendered 230 appeal decisions, which was a decline of 54 percent, as compared to FY 2019 (the BAR rendered 484 grain appeals decisions). This difference could be attributed to improved grain quality and the results of grain inspections coincidentally aligning more closely to expectations of customers.



The BAR is also responsible for ensuring alignment of sensory inspections throughout the entire official inspection system. This is accomplished through a network of Quality Assurance Specialists (QAS) at both Federal and official agency inspection points. To maintain inspection alignment, the BAR holds annual QAS seminars for Federal and official agency QAS. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the BAR was unable to hold annual QAS seminars. In lieu of this the BAR created training material that was sent to agency QASs that allowed them to train their inspection staff.

**2020 Sorghum Odor Alignment Project.** In FY 2020, FGIS continued work on the sorghum odor alignment project, which is a collaboration with FGIS, official agencies and the sorghum industry. Because sorghum odor determination is inherently difficult, FGIS developed a program to strengthen alignment between origin and destination odor results. The sorghum alignment project is a three-way calibration procedure used to confirm alignment between origin inspectors in the interior and inspectors at FGIS export facilities with the BAR. The project helped build cohesion between all three groups, which led to consistent and reliable results for U.S. exporters. In FY 2020, inspectors at domestic and export service points have been able to achieve an alignment accuracy rate of 87 percent with the BAR.

87%  
**ALIGNMENT**





In addition to sensory oversight the BAR manages a national equipment checktesting program. FGIS's equipment checktesting program is mandated by the USGSA to ensure that equipment such as dockage machines, rice millers, hand sieves, and barley pearlers are within specified tolerances. The BAR accomplishes this requirement by creating and distributing checktest samples to FGIS and official agencies with the purpose of detecting if any differences exist between field equipment and the “Standard” equipment maintained by the BAR.

In FY 2020, the BAR checktested over 1400 unique pieces of equipment.





## PESTICIDE RESIDUE TESTING AND METHOD DEVELOPMENT

In FY 2020, FGIS received, analyzed, and issued certificates for 56 applicant-submitted samples, as compared to 25 applicant-submitted samples in FY 2019, resulting in a 124 percent increase in samples submitted for analysis. These samples consisted of 22 applicant-submitted corn samples for 56 pesticide residues, 3 applicant-submitted soybean samples for 62 pesticide residues, and 31 applicant-submitted wheat samples for 75 pesticide residues, yielding a total of 3,743 pesticides results. Combining the grain surveys and applicant submissions, FGIS provided over 65,873 pesticide results, validating the quality of U.S. grain and providing data that helps convey value, compliance with food safety requirements, and adherence to the U.S. and international regulatory limits for facilitating trade.

In addition to the survey work, FGIS will have analyzed 22 applicant-submitted corn samples for 56 pesticide residues, 3 applicant-submitted soybean samples for 62 pesticide residues, and analyzed 31 applicant-submitted wheat samples for 75 pesticide residues for a total of 3,743 pesticides results. A FGIS certificate was issued to the customer for each of the submitted samples. In FY 2020 FGIS received 56 applicant-submitted samples as compared to 25 applicant-submitted samples in FY 2019 equating to a 124 percent increase in FGIS applicant-submitted certificates. Combining the surveys and applicant submissions, FGIS provided over 65,873 pesticide results, validating the quality of U.S. grain as it relates to food safety, value, and adherence to the U.S. and international regulatory limits for facilitating trade.

To bolster its efforts, in FY 2020, FGIS expanded its capability by modifying an existing method to test for glyphosate, glufosinate-ammonium, and aminomethylphosphonic acid (which is a degradation product of glyphosate). FGIS also revalidated two existing methods for 56 pesticide residues in corn and 72 pesticides residues in soybeans.





## MYCOTOXIN AND BIOTECHNOLOGY RAPID TEST KIT EVALUATIONS

The grain industry needs fast reliable tests to detect and quantify the incidence of fungal-produced mycotoxins in grain, as well as to accurately identify genetically engineered (GE) traits in grains. To ensure that commercially available tests provide reliable results, FGIS offers a performance evaluation and certification program. In FY 2020, 17 rapid test kits were evaluated for the analysis of mycotoxins (aflatoxins, deoxynivalenol, fumonisins, ochratoxin A, and zearalenone). Of the 17 test kits, 13 met the FGIS performance criteria and were certified.

Technology has been developed using water, instead of more hazardous organic solvents, for the extraction of aflatoxins, deoxynivalenol, fumonisins, and zearalenone. The use of water eliminates the need for special handling of waste from hazardous organic solvents and reduces costs for conducting tests. It, also, reduces risk of exposing operators to hazardous chemicals when performing these tests. Of the 31 kits currently approved for use by FGIS for analysis of mycotoxins, 21 use water-based extraction technologies.

**Mycotoxin Monitoring Programs.** FGIS administers monitoring programs for deoxynivalenol (DON) and aflatoxins as part of an overall mycotoxin quality assurance program. In these programs, official service providers across the U.S. submit samples for reanalysis by FGIS reference methods, which utilize highly sensitive and selective instrumentation. In FY 2020, FGIS analyzed 1,207 samples, from 52 official testing locations, for DON and 1,464 samples, from 85 official testing locations, for aflatoxins. Weekly reports showing a comparison of the results obtained from the original inspections, to those obtained by the FGIS reference method, were provided to testing locations to assess their performance. Routine correspondence between official service providers and FGIS chemists was maintained to aid in report interpretation, quality control, and resolution of testing issues indicated by test results. These monitoring programs play a critical role in evaluating and improving the accuracy of official mycotoxin tests.





**Wheat Functionality.** The intrinsic qualities of wheat affects the quality of end products. To best determine the ability of wheat to meet specific end-use needs, accurate test methods are needed to differentiate functional qualities. These methods should also be practical, rapid, and reproducible among different laboratories to provide value transparency from the producer to the processor, thereby enhancing the marketability of U.S. wheat. The falling number test is an important measure of the effect of sprout damage on wheat and an indicator of the performance of wheat during the processing of flour for making various food products. In May 2019, FGIS implemented a new barometric pressure correction for the falling number test.

In FY 2020, FGIS completed two rounds of check sample distributions and continued falling number inspection monitoring to evaluate accuracy of official testing. Reports that summarized testing performance were issued for both the check sample and inspection monitoring programs. Through these programs, FGIS determined that the barometric pressure correction significantly reduced bias in official falling number test results. In addition, the FGIS, TSD visited two field offices and three official agencies prior to the COVID-19 pandemic to provide training, evaluate analyst performance, and validate instruments used for official falling number testing. In FY 2020, also performed a large increase in the number of falling number appeal tests in support of the domestic and export trade of wheat.



## REFERENCE METHOD ANALYSES

FGIS establishes and performs reference method analyses for protein, moisture, oil, and mycotoxins. These methods are used to: (1) maintain the accuracy of current testing in the official inspection system; and (2) support development of new rapid field tests. The protein, moisture, oil, and fatty acid reference analyses support the near infrared spectroscopic, dielectric, and nuclear magnetic resonance instruments used for rapid inspection at field locations that perform official testing. The mycotoxin reference analyses support the evaluation and standardization of rapid tests for official and commercial grain inspection, and support quality assurance programs ensuring consistent and reliable testing results. Reference method analysis is available upon request for Board Appeals of mycotoxins – aflatoxins, deoxynivalenol, fumonisin, ochratoxin A, and zearalenone.

The Japan Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) is considering new regulations for ochratoxin A OTA in wheat and barley. At the request of MAFF, FGIS agreed to participate in a 4-year study with MAFF for comparison of results from origin and destination testing of OTA in wheat and barley. FGIS completed the second year of analyses in FY 2020.





# BIOTECHNOLOGY PROFICIENCY PROGRAM

FGIS's Biotechnology Proficiency Program, which was initiated in 2002, enables organizations to assess and improve their accuracy and precision in identifying GE events in grains and oilseeds and gives grain buyers and sellers confidence in the results produced by GE testing laboratories: [www.ams.usda.gov/services/fgis/standardization/proficiency](http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/fgis/standardization/proficiency). The program involves 330 registered organizations (an addition of 6 compared to 2019) on five continents— Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America, with more than 80 percent of the participants from organizations outside the United States. FGIS biannually distributes blind test samples to participants and compiles and disseminates the results of tests.

**Response to Inadvertent Release of Unapproved Traits into the Marketplace.** In recent years, there have been rare occasions when unapproved GE events entered into the U.S. grain handling system. When such an inadvertent release occurs, a rapid response is necessary to identify and validate methods to detect the trait and thereby protect the integrity of U.S. grain markets. FGIS validated eight polymerase chain reaction (PCR) based methods for the detection of the Roundup Ready™ trait in wheat that was inadvertently released into the marketplace in 2019. In 2020, the PCR based methods were provided to Asian trade partners to re-open U.S. Wheat markets. The testing methods must be highly specific and sensitive to effectively maintain confidence in U.S. grain marketing systems. Current detection methods within FGIS's Biotechnology Laboratory focus on high-throughput DNA extraction, methodologies, which enables FGIS to more effectively respond to inadvertently released products. FGIS has completed

the development of high-throughput DNA extraction methods for corn, soybeans, wheat, and rice. FGIS assists government and private laboratories that use protein and DNA- based technologies by performing impartial third-party verification of their methods for both qualitative and quantitative detection of transgenic events in GE crops. FGIS involvement in responding to such incidents facilitates harmonization of sampling plans and of international testing for GE grains and oilseeds. FGIS provides expertise to USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) when responding to inadvertent releases of unapproved GE events.

**Harmonizing Biotech Reference Methods.** There is a need for highly specific and accurate tests for the various GE crops grown in the United States. FGIS has developed intra-laboratory validated real- time polymerase chain reaction methods and has evaluated the accuracy, reliability, and proficiency of publicly available methods used to detect and identify GE grains and oilseeds. FGIS participated on a scientific panel of experts engaging U.S. stakeholders and influencing outcomes on issues related to testing of GE traits in grains with the goal of developing global scientific consensus regarding the analysis of transgenic events. FGIS continues to collaborate with international organizations such as Analytical Excellence through Industry Collaboration, International Organization for Standardization, American Association of Cereal Chemists International, The Global Low-level Presence Initiative, and the Canadian Grain Commission to harmonize testing technologies for GE grains and oilseeds.



# STANDARDIZING COMMERCIAL GRAIN INSPECTION EQUIPMENT

In FY 2020, FGIS continued the cooperative effort with the National Conference on Weights and Measures (NCWM) and the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) to standardize commercial inspection equipment. The commercial inspection equipment includes moisture meters and any test weight modules contained within moisture meters, as well as near-infrared analyzers for protein, oil, and starch. FGIS served as the sole evaluation laboratory for grain inspection equipment under the NCWM National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) to determine if the equipment meets the requirements as legal for trade for states that regulate commercial grain transactions.



FGIS collected grain moisture meter calibration data for eight instrument models as part of the NTEP ongoing calibration program. Calibrations developed in this program provide traceability throughout the official FGIS moisture program, including the air oven reference method, and they are used in the majority of moisture meters used for commercial grain transactions throughout the United States.



In FY 2020, FGIS and NIST entered into its sixth five-year Interagency Agreement to support the ongoing calibration program that is funded primarily by the participating manufacturers in addition to funding from FGIS and NIST as specified in the Interagency Agreement. The NTEP ongoing calibration program certified moisture calibrations for hard red winter wheat, hard red spring wheat, hard white wheat, soft red winter wheat, soft white wheat, durum wheat, corn, soybeans, six-row barley, two-row barley, long grain rough rice, medium grain rough rice, oats, sorghum, and sunflower seeds (oil-type) grain types. Over the past 5 years, NTEP has maintained an accuracy level among all participating instrument models that agrees with the USDA air oven method (AACC standard reference method) within 0.15 percent moisture for corn, durum wheat, sorghum, and long grain rough rice, and within 0.1 percent moisture for all other grain types covering the primary market moisture ranges. Over the same time period, the NTEP models have consistently maintained that level of accuracy, deviating by no more than 0.4 percent moisture for corn and sunflower seeds, and no more than 0.3 percent moisture for all other grain types in any given year for some models when unusual crop conditions are encountered.

In FY 2020, FGIS's NTEP laboratory coordinated its issuance of Certificates of Conformance with FGIS's implementation of calibrations for the official moisture meter models for use with the major grains. This close coordination ensured that State-regulated commercial moisture meter users could use the same meters and calibrations as those used in official inspection.

In FY 2017, the NTEP laboratory began an evaluation of a near-infrared analyzer for moisture, oil, and protein. In FY 2019, the NTEP laboratory began an evaluation of a near-infrared analyzer for moisture, oil, protein, and test weight per bushel. The evaluations of these devices are ongoing. In FY 2020, FGIS will collect grain moisture meter calibration data for eight NTEP models and will conduct NTEP testing for new grain inspection equipment models upon request.



# Section IV

## Promoting U.S. Grain to International Customers



FGIS personnel frequently meets with delegations visiting from other countries to brief them on the U.S. grain marketing system, our national inspection and weighing system, U.S. grain standards, and FGIS's mission. Many of these delegations are sponsored by USDA Cooperator organizations like U.S. Wheat Associates and U.S. Grains Council, which arrange visits to grain production areas, FGIS field offices, onsite laboratories at export grain elevators, and the FGIS, NGC in Kansas City, Missouri. At the NGC, delegations often receive technical training on analytical testing procedures and grain inspection methods and procedures.

Starting in March, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, FGIS could no longer travel internationally to meet with importers and end users of U.S. grain in person to provide them with briefings about FGIS and hands-on grain inspection training as FGIS had done in the past.

- To improve the effectiveness of a virtual conference, FGIS updated its presentation materials, inserting short videos to demonstrate FGIS's technical inspection procedures.
- FGIS's Digital Media Group produced inspection procedure videos and printed wheat grading mats displaying the visual reference images of wheat damage used in the training sessions.
- Virtual meetings were conducted using video conferencing software so the audience could see the presenter and the presentations live, but in the safety of their own homes. These virtual training sessions enabled the organizing cooperators to efficiently reach more people from different countries in one conference rather than host multiple sessions in different countries. This saved time and travel costs for the cooperators, FGIS and the participants.
- Outreach materials, virtual briefings, and training sessions foster a better understanding of the entire U.S. grain marketing system and serve to enhance purchasers' confidence in U.S. grain. Ultimately, these efforts help move our nation's harvest to end-users around the globe.

## FY 2020 INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH

FGIS responded to customers' needs for technical assistance in foreign markets. Exporters, importers, and end-users of U.S. grains and oilseeds, as well as other USDA agencies, USDA cooperator organizations, and other governments, occasionally asked for FGIS's technical expertise to address their quality concerns. FY 2020 outreach highlights include:

- Working with the APHIS to make changes to our container fumigation procedures to meet the specific requirements of the importing countries. This was necessary to keep U.S. grain markets open as well as expand market access in new markets for U.S. grain.
- At the request of Foreign Agricultural Service, FGIS with approval from APHIS, will provide letterhead statements for U.S. food aid shipments, stating the commodity does not contain any biotech derived products. Many countries that receive USDA food aid shipments of grain and grain products now require such documentation to allow much needed food aid to enter their country.
- Traveling to Dubai to meet with the Iraqi Grain Board at the request of U.S. Wheat Associates and the USA Rice Federation to discuss its role in sampling and inspecting wheat and milled rice exports. FGIS discussed representative sampling methods that could be used at destination to eliminate discrepant results due to difference in sampling methods. FGIS also offered technical assistance to set up multiple wheat labs in Iraq and sent a list of needed sampling and laboratory equipment to the Iraqi Grain Board.
- Participating in a virtual conference in Singapore, at the request of the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), to explain the role of FGIS in inspecting export soybean shipments. The conference hosted attendees from the Southeast Asia region, giving FGIS the opportunity to reach many current and prospective customers. In response to participant questions, USSEC referenced FGIS data from the export soybean sample survey.
- Joining in several U.S. Wheat Associates-sponsored virtual seminars with flour millers from several countries, including Mexico, Venezuela, and the Caribbean. FGIS gave presentations on its role in exporting grain and conducting wheat inspections. Participants asked many questions about specific quality factors of the past wheat and current wheat crops so they could contract for the exact quality they desired. To answer many of their questions, U.S. Wheat Associates used the annual FGIS wheat export quality survey data published in U.S. Wheat Associates' annual crop quality publication.
- Collaborating with U.S. Wheat Associates to update their "Overview of U.S. Wheat Inspection" which is used as a marketing tool to promote the procedures used by FGIS in sampling, weighing, inspecting, and certifying the quality of U.S. wheat exports. U.S. Wheat Associates publishes this valuable marketing tool in different languages and distributes it to wheat buyers around the world in addition to posting it on their website.



**Corn, Soybean and Wheat Quality Surveys.** FGIS coordinated with the U.S. Grains Council, the United Soybean Board and U.S. Wheat Associates to conduct export corn, soybean and wheat quality surveys. FGIS assisted with the surveys by collecting, grading, and testing samples, and providing export inspection data. The surveys are conducted annually. U.S. Wheat Associates and the U.S. Grains Council use the survey data to create annual harvest quality reports which are expected every year by international customers. The customers use the data to make purchasing decisions for the coming year. The cooperator organizations use the survey data, to respond to trade issues that may arise due to changes in the importing country or changes to the buyer's quality specifications.

U.S. Wheat Associates referenced the FGIS annual survey data in U.S. Wheat Associates' Annual Wheat Crop Quality Report booklet during the FGIS meeting with Iraqi Grain Board in Dubai and in the virtual wheat seminars held in Mexico and other Central American countries. This data proved very valuable to buyers to know the quality and help them specify quality factors in their contracts to get the quality they want. This publication is helping the U.S. maintain our wheat markets and is now being used to open wheat markets in South American countries.

The U.S. Grains Council uses the FGIS corn survey data in their annual Corn Crop Quality publication to help them market U.S. corn around the globe.

## COMPLAINTS FROM U.S. GRAIN IMPORTERS

FGIS administers a formal process for investigating grain quality and weight discrepancies. When an importer of U.S. grain submits a claim regarding quality or weight, FGIS analyzes samples retained on file from the original inspection and analyzes samples submitted from the complainant (if the buyer chooses to submit them) and evaluates the accuracy of the initial inspection. This process allows FGIS to verify whether the original inspection and weighing service provided at the time of loading was correct, based on all available information. FGIS then issues a report outlining its findings.

Occasionally, a particular buyer or importing country reports repeated discrepancies which cannot be resolved by a shipment-by-shipment review under this process. In such cases, FGIS may conduct collaborative sample studies or joint monitoring activities to address the discrepancy in a more comprehensive manner.

In FY 2020, FGIS received two quality complaints from importers on grains inspected under the USGSA, as amended.

### SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS REPORTED BY IMPORTERS ON INSPECTION AND WEIGHING IN FISCAL YEAR 2020

Complainant	Grain/Commodity	Number of Complaints	Nature of Complaint
Mexico	Wheat	1	Infestation
Vietnam	Soybeans	1	High foreign Material and damaged shipping containers
TOTAL		2	

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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Learn more about the Federal Grain Inspection Service at [www.ams.usda.gov](http://www.ams.usda.gov)