

Directive

9180.81

March 25, 2009

QUALITY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: REQUIREMENTS FOR OFFICIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

Contents

1. PURPOSE	2
2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS.....	2
3. AUTHORITY	2
4. POLICY	2
5. STRUCTURE OF THE QMP	3
6. RESPONSIBILITIES.....	3
7. QUESTIONS	4

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternate means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint, write to the USDA, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.

1. PURPOSE

This directive establishes the requirements for the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Quality Management Program (QMP). AMS is adopting the QMP as part of a wider effort to introduce more flexibility, accountability, and innovation into the official inspection system.

The AMS QMP melds modern quality management principles with the legal and regulatory requirements under the U.S. Grain Standards Act (USGSA) and Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended (AMA), to create an overarching program to drive progress within the official system. The QMP will be a key component for evaluating the performance of Official Agencies and Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) field offices (collectively known as Official Service Providers) in meeting their legal and regulatory obligations under the USGSA and AMA.

2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This directive replaces FGIS 9180.81, Quality Management Program: Requirements for Official Service Providers (dated 9/6/07).

3. AUTHORITY

This directive is established under the authorities of the United States Grain Standards Act (7 U.S.C. 71-87), the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C. 1621-1627), as amended, and the regulations established under both Acts. It does not alter, relax, or otherwise amend any statutory or regulatory obligations applicable to Official Service Providers (OSP).

4. POLICY

AMS relies on a variety of arrangements with other government and private entities to carry out the requirements of the USGSA and the AMA to achieve its mission. These entities provide U.S. agriculture with a variety of sampling, inspection, and testing services in accordance with specific AMS policies and procedures. Compliance with these policies and procedures is mandatory and essential to promote accurate, consistent, impartial, and standardized results – the true value of the official certificate.

Modern business practices embrace the principle that leading and operating an organization successfully must necessarily include directing and controlling it in a systematic and transparent manner. AMS believes it is essential that OSPs embrace, where appropriate, proven, successful management principles that promote continual improvement and meet today's challenging business environment. A QMP fits these criteria. For these reasons, AMS is establishing a QMP for the official inspection and weighing system. All OSPs will develop and maintain a QMP in accordance with this directive. An OSP's compliance with this directive will be used by AMS to assess overall performance with respect to renewals of designations, contracts or other official arrangements.

5. STRUCTURE OF THE QMP

- a. OSPs develop and implement a local quality program that meets the criteria in this directive and includes a quality manual addressing the elements of the “Quality Manual Template” contained in the annex to this directive.
- b. OSPs submit their quality manuals to AMS/FGIS Compliance Division’s Review Branch (Review Branch) for a “desk audit” to assess compliance with the QMP.
- c. Persons or governmental agencies seeking to become an OSP submit their proposed quality manual conforming to the provisions of this directive to the Review Branch as part of their application package.
- d. OSPs address problem areas in their local quality manual identified during the “desk audit” before implementation.
- e. The Review Branch initiates on-site audits of individual OSPs to assess whether an OSP is fully implementing the provisions of its quality manual as well as AMS policies, procedures, directives, and standards.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Field Management Division

Provide assistance and guidance to OSPs, as necessary, in developing and implementing quality manuals that conform to this directive.

b. Compliance Division

- (1) Integrate the provisions of this directive into the triennial renewal program specified in AMS/FGIS regulations for designated agencies and States.
- (2) Integrate the provisions of this directive into routine performance reviews of FGIS field offices and export port operations of delegated States.
- (3) Perform “desk audits” of OSP quality manuals. The Review Branch will work with OSPs to implement a phased schedule for submission of quality manuals to begin within 3 months of the date of this directive, taking into account the triennial review schedule. For State and private agencies applying to become an OSP, the Review Branch will evaluate proposed quality manuals submitted as part of the application process for conformance with AMS’s QMP directive.
- (4) Help OSP management address any problem areas found during the “desk audit.”

- (5) Review OSPs annual audit reports on the performance of their local quality program. In conjunction with individual OSPs, implement a timeframe for submission of annual audit reports. Help OSP management to address problem areas found during the annual audit.
- (6) Conduct on-site audits of OSP programs. Audits of all OSPs should be conducted within 2 years of the date of this directive. Future audits will be conducted on a 1, 2, or 3 year basis at the discretion of the Compliance Division and will depend on the performance of individual OSPs.

c. Official Service Providers

- (1) Submit a quality manual to the Review Branch conforming to this directive and the attached quality template within 3 months of the date of this directive for a “desk audit,” or at another time as agreed upon with the Review Branch.
- (2) Submit manuals electronically in MS Word (version 2003 or later).
- (3) Correct discrepancies in its quality manual detected by the Review Branch during the “desk audit.”
- (4) Implement the final quality manual as mutually agreed upon with the Review Branch. Update the quality manual, as necessary, to ensure that it reflects current operations and personnel assignments.
- (5) Conduct and submit the results of annual audits of the local quality program to the Review Branch for review. Address any problems detected during the annual audit.

7. QUESTIONS

Contact the AMS/FGIS Review Branch at 202-720-8262 regarding any questions on the provisions of AMS’s QMP, including final quality manuals and audits.