

**United States Department of Agriculture  
Agricultural Marketing Service, Science & Technology  
Pesticide Data Program**

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**1. Purpose:**

To provide standardized procedures for all States participating in the USDA/AMS Pesticide Data Program (PDP) for the following:

- development of quarterly sampling plans and sampling documentation.
- sampling procedures.
- packing and shipping procedures.
- implementation of Sample Information Forms (SIFs) and Chain of Custody.

**2. Scope:**

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) shall be followed by all State personnel involved in the management and collection of samples for PDP.

**3. Outline of Procedure:**

**5. SAMPLING PLANS AND DOCUMENTATION**

- 5.1 Sample Availability
- 5.2 State Sample Allocation
- 5.3 State Sample Collectors List
- 5.4 Master List of Sampling Sites
- 5.5 Relative Volume Information for Sampling Sites
- 5.6 Quarterly Selection of Sampling Sites and Dates
- 5.7 Quarterly Sampling Schedules, Fact Sheets, Laboratory Mailing Addresses, and Shipping Assignment Charts

**6. SAMPLING PROCEDURES ON SITE**

- 6.1 Training and Evaluation of Sample Collectors
- 6.2 Assignment of Sample Collectors
- 6.3 Sample Designation and Amount
- 6.4 Sampling Procedures for Commodities
- 6.5 Purchasing Samples

**7. PACKING AND SHIPMENT OF SAMPLES**

- 7.1 Packing Procedures for Commodities
- 7.2 Shipment of PDP Samples

**8. SAMPLE INFORMATION FORMS AND CHAIN OF CUSTODY**

- 8.1 PDP General Requirements
- 8.2 Paper Sample Information Forms
- 8.3 Electronic Sample Information Forms (e-SIFs)

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8.4 Chain of Custody

9. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUAL COMMODITIES

4. **References:**

- Sample Advisory Committee Meeting, December 2-4, 2008
- Sample Advisory Committee and Sampling Manager communications (email and telephone), January, February, and April 2008
- Email from Phil Kott, NASS, March 27, 2007
- Sampling Managers' Conference Call, March 19, 2007
- Sampling Managers' Conference Call, March 13, 2006
- PDP/MDP Federal/State Meeting, Denver, CO, September 27-29, 2005
- Program Plan, January-June 2005
- Program Plan, July-December 2005
- Sampling Managers' Conference Call, November 18, 2004
- PDP Federal/State Meeting, Fairfax, VA, October 26-28, 2004
- Sampling Managers' Meeting, Manassas, Virginia, June 18-19, 2002
- Semi-Annual Program Plan, June-December 2002
- Federal-State Meeting, Seattle, Washington, October 30-November 1, 2002
- Sampling Managers Meeting, Manassas, Virginia, April 18-19, 2000
- Memo; APDP Sampling and RDE Issues, November 16, 1999
- Federal-State Meeting, Alexandria, Virginia, October 26-28, 1999
- PDP/MDP Technical Meeting, Richmond, VA, March 27-31, 2006
- Sampling Managers Meeting, Alexandria, Virginia, April 18-19, 2000
- Memo; "Sample Sizes," January 21, 2000
- USDA Tropical Products Transport Handbook, September 1989
- USDA Agricultural Export Transportation Handbook, August 1997
- The Packer--1999 Produce Availability and Merchandising Guide
- USDA, AMS, Transportation and Marketing Programs; Protecting Perishable Food During Transport; August 1999
- FedEx Guide to Proper Packaging
- FedEx Guide on Packaging Perishable Shipments
- Federal/State Meeting, Alexandria, VA, October 26-28, 1999
- Sampling Managers' Conference Call, April 13, 2006
- Email communication from Ken Stoub, Group Seven Environmental Services, May 20, 2005
- Meeting with Monitoring Programs Office (MPO) database personnel, Roger Fry and Milton Bonilla, to discuss electronic sample information form requirements, March 30, 2005

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- MDP/PDP Remote Data Entry (RDE) e-SIF Software Information Sheet, August 23, 2004
- User Guide for PDP/MDP Remote Data Entry (RDE) System, July 23, 2004
- SAMP APPE-1: A blank Sample Information Form (version effective January 1, 2000) with accompanying instructions.

## **5. Sampling Plans and Documentation**

Designated samples shall represent a given number of units, volume, or weight of a specific commodity collected at an assigned site on an assigned date. Each commodity sample is unique in that its label and associated Sample Information Form (SIF) contain information indicating it is different from other samples of the same commodity in at least one of the following areas: collection State; collection date; collection site; lot number; and origin of grower, packer, or distributor.

### **5.1 Sample Availability**

**5.1.1** Sample collectors should make every effort to collect samples at the scheduled primary site. If it is determined that the commodity(ies) will not be available at the primary site, sample collectors should then choose an alternate or proxy (retail) site. The alternate site should be similar in size to the primary site, if feasible. Proxy (retail) sites should be coordinated and approved by each State Sampling Manager. It is preferable, but not required that proxy sites be supplied by the primary site.

**5.1.2** If the sample is collected at an alternate or proxy site, it is the sample collector's responsibility to include the primary (scheduled) site code on the sample identification label that is affixed to each individual sample. If the sample is collected at a proxy site, the sample collector shall include the appropriate Source ID ("P" or "U-Z") in the Source ID Code box of the e-SIF (or paper SIF).

**5.1.3** It is desirable for States to call ahead to the scheduled sampling site up to one business day in advance of the assigned sampling date to inquire about the availability of the commodity(ies) to be sampled.

**5.1.4** Personnel at the collection sites may randomly select a sample carton/container and have it available for the sampler to pick up at the site, only if a sampler is not provided access to the collection facility. Although many collection sites do not allow collectors access to the inside of their facilities, this collection method shall be an exception and shall be used only when necessary.

**5.1.5** Samples collected from proxy sites must be in their original carton/container and collected from the retail store's storage room, if possible. Only pre-packaged commodities may be collected from the retail store's shelf *provided all necessary sample information can be verified*. Sample collectors shall ensure that all necessary information on the sample is available and that it is correctly recorded on the SIF.

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**5.1.6** If a proxy site is used for the collection of samples, the sample collector must note the following information on the SIF: (1) the primary site code number and the correct Source ID code (either a “P” for a single sample collected at a proxy site or “U-Z” for multiple samples collected at a proxy site) shall be recorded on the SIF and on the sample identification label of the sample and (2) the name and address or name and store number of the proxy site shall be entered in the facility name field.

**5.1.7** If a sample collector calls ahead to have the product available upon arrival, the collector shall request that such product be stored in a refrigerated area until pick up.

## **5.2 State Sample Allocation**

**5.2.1** Each participating State shall be assigned a number of samples to collect per commodity each month. This number shall be determined by the Monitoring Programs Division (MPD) Program Administrative Director, in consultation with the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) statistician.

**5.2.2** The assigned number of samples per month is based on State population. This number shall remain constant from month-to-month throughout the calendar year, unless otherwise indicated.

**5.2.3** The State Sampling Manager may authorize the collection of single, double, or triple samples from each site until the required number of samples is obtained. If double or triple sampling is performed, the sample collector shall ensure that each sample is taken from a different grower, packer, or distributor. If a product with a different grower, packer, or distributor cannot be found (preferred selection), it is acceptable to sample second or third products with a different lot number. When two or more samples are collected from the same site on the same day with these distinctions, differentiation shall be made between the samples by entering A through M for a primary site or U through Z for a proxy site in the Source ID Code box of the e-SIF and on the sample identification label. If special sampling or different labeling distinctions are requested by MPD, the sample collector will find instructions on individual commodity Fact Sheets. [Refer to Section 5.6.2 for further details on double or triple sampling.]

**5.2.4** States performing PDP sample collection may be required to ship samples to one or more State or Federal laboratories for analysis. Specific information regarding such assignments is provided in the "PDP Sample Shipping Assignment Charts" [refer to Section 5.7].

## **5.3 State Sample Collectors List**

**5.3.1** Each participating State shall maintain a list of personnel involved in the collection of PDP samples. This list shall include the following:

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- Name
- Assignment of sampling sites, cities, and geographical regions (if appropriate)
- Whether the employee works on PDP full-time or part-time
- The estimated number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) used to fulfill the requirements of PDP sampling. This number shall include ALL aspects of sampling, i.e., sample collection, management of the program, tracking samples, clerical duties, etc.

**5.3.2** The PDP Sampling Manager shall be notified of changes to the sample collectors' information or FTEs as they occur.

#### **5.4 Master List of Sampling Sites**

**5.4.1** Each State participating in PDP sample collection shall be responsible for documenting a master site list that includes all PDP collection sites.

**5.4.2** The master site list shall include the following information for each sampling site:

- Site code
- Region or other geographical division (if applicable)
- Facility name and mailing address
- Date of inclusion or date of deletion from the site list, when known, clearly marked as such [Refer to Section 5.4.13 and 5.4.14 for requirements on the recording of new and deleted sites.]
- Type of facility (e.g., terminal market, chain store distribution center, retail-wholesale market, etc.)
- Type(s) of commodities available at that site (i.e., fresh/canned/frozen fruit and vegetables, etc.). This information will be used by MPD to code the sites in the PDP database so that individual commodity type lists can be printed.
- Relative volume information (Refer to Section 5.5 for method of calculation)

**5.4.3** The number of collection sites for each commodity or commodity type will vary from State to State, and specific guidance on whether to include particular sites will be available from the PDP Sampling Manager and NASS statistician on a case-by-case basis. A State's internal SOPs shall explain the basic criteria used to determine which sites to exclude.

**5.4.4** Small, remote sampling sites that are too expensive or difficult to access to collect a sample may be deleted from the State's sampling site by the State Sampling Manager. However, the State Sampling Manager shall notify the PDP Sampling Manager, or designee, and the NASS statistician of such changes.

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**5.4.5** For all types of sampling facilities, States shall assign each site a unique numerical reference code per MPD instructions. At terminal market locations, each vendor will be assigned a unique site code. This "site code" will be included as part of the sample's permanent identification number.

**5.4.6** If site codes are assigned based on a particular organizational structure, rather than random numerical or alphabetical order, this numbering system shall be easily identifiable on the site list. For example, a State may divide its sites into geographical regions and assign the site codes accordingly (i.e., 100's for Region 1, 200's for Region 2, etc.).

**5.4.7** Changes to the master site list shall be made as they occur. Information on site changes shall be provided to both the PDP Sampling Manager, or designee, PDP Database Administrator, and the NASS statistician. NASS must be aware that sites have been deleted or made inactive so that they are removed from the quarterly selection process. Likewise, if new sites are added or previous sites are reinstated as active, the PDP Sampling Manager, or designee, PDP Database Administrator, and the NASS statistician shall be notified as soon as possible because these sites should be included in the routine site selection process. If a State selects sites for sampling from its own Master Site List, notification of changes need only be reported to MPD as they occur.

**5.4.8** MPD shall be responsible for updating the PDP database to reflect sampling site changes as they occur. MPD will send the State Sampling Manager an updated site look-up table for distribution to his/her sample collectors for import into their Remote Data Entry (RDE) electronic SIF system when new sites are added.

**5.4.9** Periodically, MPD shall provide State Sampling Managers with a copy of their State's master site list, which will also include the codes for the collection sites, type of commodities sampled at each site (i.e., canned/frozen/fresh fruit and vegetables), and relative site size measures (refer to Section 5.5). The State Sampling Managers will be responsible for comparing the database printouts with their records to detect any discrepancies, and send revisions to the PDP Sampling Manager, or designee. MPD will make corrections, as needed, to update the information and prepare it for downloading by the RDE contact.

**5.4.10** Site codes shall be assigned only once. If the physical location and facility remains the same (only the name changes) the site may retain the original site number. The old and new name should be shown on the master site list for referencing samples collected prior to the name change.

**5.4.11** If the site name remains the same, but the physical location of the facility is moved to a new address, a decision on the assignment of the original or a new site code will be made by the PDP Sampling Manager in consultation with NASS on a case-by-case basis.

**5.4.12** If a site has been deleted from active sampling, and is later reinstated, it must retain the same site number as before.

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**5.4.13** Additions to a master site list shall be given a new number never used before, with the date of addition provided. When locations are added to a master site list, *each new location's corresponding relative volume information shall also be provided.* The revised master site list and annual volume information shall be included with the Quarterly Sampling Plan when it is provided to NASS.

**5.4.14** Inactive sites must remain on the master list, but shall be marked through with a single line and dated to signify they are no longer included in active sampling. Inactive sites may become “active” again later if appropriate. The site code, and all other information pertaining to an inactive site, shall remain on the master site list for future reference. The reason for changing the status of the site (i.e., no longer carries commodities needed, no longer wishes to participate in the program, occasionally denies access, etc.) shall be provided in a cover memorandum.

## **5.5 Relative Volume Information for Sampling Sites**

**5.5.1** Each State shall provide comparative volume information (quantity of the produce distributed compared to other sites) for each of the sampling sites on its master site list. The State, in collaboration with the NASS statistician, will determine the “size measure” (comparative volume number) for the random selection of the sites. It is very important that States keep the NASS statistician up-to-date on any changes in the sites that will affect the size measure. *These measures must be reviewed and updated as changes occur.* If the State Sampling Manager encounters any problems in obtaining this volume information, he/she should inform the PDP Sampling Manager or the NASS statistician. It is the responsibility of the State to provide comparative volume information on its Master Site List and to update it with MPD and the NASS statistician as changes occur.

**5.5.2** When possible, States should further break down the volume information for a site into commodity groups (e.g., fresh produce, canned produce, and frozen produce). It is permissible, however, to have a single size measure for all available commodities or commodity groups. The NASS statistician is available to assist the States in making these determinations.

**5.5.3** The size measures shall be the basis of random site selection. For example, on a scale of 1 to 10, a site distributing 100,000 pounds of produce may be given a size measure of 10, whereas a site distributing 10,000 pounds of produce may be given a size measure of 1. The site with a site measure of “10” will then be ten times more likely to be selected during any one month than the site with a measure of “1.”

**5.5.4** Internal SOPs for each State shall explain how the size measures were determined. States have the option, if they desire, of using the services of the NASS statistician to perform the quarterly site selection for them. If a State chooses to select their own sites, they shall confer with the NASS statistician to determine the statistically defensible method to use.

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**5.5.5** Size measures shall be included on the master site list and provided to MPD. Sample collectors should also have this information with them in the field to aid them in making alternate site selections that are closely equivalent in size to the primary site.

## **5.6 Quarterly Selection of Sampling Sites and Dates**

### **5.6.1 Sampling Sites for Commodities**

**5.6.1.1** Collection sites for PDP samples will be as close to the point of consumption as possible.

**5.6.1.2** Sites shall be chosen for the entire quarter. Afterwards, they may be separated into three distinct subsets of equal size at the convenience of the State (e.g., based on geographical location). The three groups may then be randomly assigned in a one-to-one manner to each of the three months in the quarter. Alternatively, the NASS statistician will randomly assign selected sites to months. For every month in a quarter a commodity is double sampled, the number of subsets is increased by one. When there is triple sampling, the number of subsets is increased by two.

**5.6.1.3** Each participating State has the option of seeking advice and/or assistance from the NASS statistician regarding the quarterly site selection process. Even if a State chooses to perform its own quarterly site selection, the NASS statistician should be provided with all relevant information regarding the site selection process for his/her approval.

**5.6.1.4** No site, regardless of its size measure, shall have more than two samples of each commodity collected from the same site in a given month. Exceptions will be approved by PDP and the State Sampling Managers.

**5.6.1.5** Every reasonable effort should be made to ensure the assigned number of samples are collected. Good communication between the sample collectors and their Sampling Managers, as well as between the State Sampling Managers and the laboratories is essential for detecting and correcting problems with missing, unavailable, or damaged samples. State Sampling Managers are encouraged to request assistance from MPD, if needed, to facilitate this process.

**5.6.1.6** The selection of an alternate site number or vendor shall be totally objective in nature, with no pre-determination made regarding the date of last sampling, variety of commodity available, etc.

**5.6.1.7** When more than one commodity is scheduled for sampling at the same site on the same date, all may be sampled from the primary or an alternate site/vendor, based on availability. All do NOT have to be sampled at the same site.

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**5.6.1.8** If the alternate site/vendor also does not have the commodity(ies) needed, the sample collector may procure samples from another site of similar size as long as the site has not been sampled for the same commodity during the sample selection period (usually a month, but this can be a fraction of a month when the product is scheduled for double or triple sampling).

**5.6.1.9** For primary and alternate site sample collection procedures, sample collectors should refer to Section 6.4, Sampling Procedures for Commodities.

## **5.6.2 Double or Triple Sampling**

**5.6.2.1** Double or triple sampling refers to extra samples collected during a specified period of time to make up for times (most likely, seasons) when certain commodities are unavailable and therefore are unable to be collected. Extra sampling will generally occur during a commodity's peak availability months e.g., fresh cranberries in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.

**5.6.2.2** Double or triple sampling must be approved by the MPD and the NASS statistician, and coordinated with the laboratory(ies) receiving the samples.

**5.6.2.3** Double sampling is defined as the collection of twice the assigned monthly number of samples per commodity; for example, double sampling of a given commodity that normally has 7 samples collected per month would entail the collection of 14 samples for that commodity that month.

**5.6.2.4** Triple sampling is defined as the collection of three times the assigned monthly number of samples per commodity; for example, triple sampling of a given commodity that normally has 7 samples collected per month would entail the collection of 21 samples for that commodity that month.

**5.6.2.5** Double or triple sampling shall be conducted during the entire designated collection time period unless otherwise directed by MPD.

**5.6.2.6** Each extra sample shall be collected at a different site OR on a different day than the regularly collected sample of the same commodity. *More than one sample must not be collected from the same site on the same day* [Refer to Section 5.2.3 for exceptions].

**5.6.2.7** Extra samples may be collected at proxy sites. A proxy site for a particular distribution center will be considered a completely different site than the primary distribution center site.

**5.6.2.8** The sample collector shall ensure that all requested sample information is recorded correctly on the SIF. Omission of pertinent data may void the extra sample and resampling may be required.

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**5.6.3** Sampling Dates for Commodities:

**5.6.3.1** The PDP Sampling Manager, or designee, will assist in the coordination between the State Sampling Managers and laboratories to agree on the selection of specific sampling weeks for the collection of the assigned number of samples per commodity. If necessary, the same commodity may be collected over a 2-day period of time; however, the receiving laboratory shall first be notified and must agree to the 2-day collection timeframe. When coordinating sampling weeks, each participant must also be made aware of any Federal or State holidays or other days when samples cannot be received at the laboratory.

**5.6.3.2** States may group different commodities for collection on the same day at the same site.

**5.6.3.3** State Sampling Managers and laboratories shall agree between them upon sampling dates by the 1st of the month prior to the start of the next quarter. This collaboration will allow the States time to finalize their sampling schedules and post them to MPD's Extranet site by the 15th of the month prior to the beginning of the next quarter. [Refer to Section 5.4.7 for notification for States that select sites from their own Master Site List.]

**5.6.3.4** Days of the week included in the date selection process may vary from State to State, but shall include one of the first three working days of the specified collection week. Exceptions to this schedule must first be approved by the receiving laboratory or may occur when one of the first three days of the specified collection week is a Federal or State holiday.

**5.6.3.5** Friday sampling is not permitted for fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables.

**5.6.3.6** Collected samples must not be mailed the day before a Federal or State holiday. However, States that "hand" deliver samples directly to the laboratory may arrive the day before a holiday if prior arrangements have been made with the receiving laboratory.

**5.6.3.7** Additional information regarding sample collection, packaging, and shipping will be provided in writing by the PDP Sampling Manager, or designee, 30 days prior to the beginning of the next quarter.

**5.6.4** The State Sampling Manager shall ensure the following schedule is met:

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Quarter	Notify NASS of changes to the site selection methodology <sup>1</sup>	Send updated Master Site List to NASS <sup>1</sup>	Post site selection to PDP Extranet
1	November 15	December 1	December 15
2	January 1	February 15	March 15
3	May 15	June 1	June 15
4	August 15	September 1	September 15

1 Applicable only to States that use NASS for quarterly site selection

**5.7 Quarterly Sampling Schedules, Fact Sheets, Laboratory Mailing Addresses, and Shipping Assignment Charts**

**5.7.1** Forty-five (45) days prior to the beginning of each new quarter, the PDP Sampling Manager, or designee, will provide State Sampling Managers and Laboratory Directors with a draft of the proposed PDP Quarterly Sampling Schedule, new commodity Fact Sheets (when applicable), laboratory mailing addresses, and Shipping Assignment Chart for commodities to be collected in the new quarter. These schedules are initial suggestions only: State Sampling Managers and Laboratory Directors should review the documents *through communication with each other* and offer their preferred schedule to the PDP Sampling Manager, or designee, within 2 weeks of receipt of the documents. The final PDP Quarterly Sampling Schedule, new Fact Sheets, and Shipping Assignment Chart will be distributed 30 days prior to the beginning of the new quarter.

**5.7.2** The Shipping Assignment Chart is updated quarterly to reflect program changes, and is provided to the State Sampling Manager for distribution to the sample collectors. The Shipping Assignment Chart indicates the sample amounts required by the MPD Program Administrative Director, not those required by the State. The State Sampling Manager may choose to create a smaller, individualized chart for his/her particular State.

**5.7.3** State Sampling Managers shall ensure final copies of their monthly schedules are posted onto MPD's Extranet site two weeks prior to the beginning of each new quarter. PDP's Sampling Manager shall post final copies of all sampling documents to the Extranet site three weeks prior to the beginning of the new quarter. PDP's Sampling Manager shall ensure that MPD-posted documents are updated on the Extranet site as changes occur.

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**5.7.4** The State Sampling Schedule shall be divided into the three months of the quarter.

**5.7.5** Each month's schedule shall include at least the following information:

- Sampling dates and commodity(ies) to be sampled
- Primary site numbers for each commodity
- Alternate site numbers where applicable

**5.7.6** State Sampling Schedules should never include any sites known to be inactive or that have declined participation in the program. For these reasons, site lists must be kept current and the PDP Sampling Manager, or designee, and NASS statistician informed of any changes [refer to Section 5.4.7 for notification for States that select sites from their own Master Site List].

## **6. Sampling Procedures on Site**

### **6.1 Training and Evaluation of Sample Collectors**

**6.1.1** PDP-based training and evaluations serve as tools from which to teach and judge the sample collector's level of knowledge and skills for PDP sampling operations.

#### **6.1.2 Training**

**6.1.2.1** Training shall be conducted at least once a year to ensure that sample collectors have an acceptable level and working knowledge of PDP SOPs, the PDP RDE system, and current program updates. Although it is preferable that collectors meet personally with their State Sampling Manager for their training needs, it is acceptable for Sampling Managers to deliver training via electronic means.

**6.1.2.2** At least once a year, sample collectors shall be provided with a list of objectives and responsibilities that are set by their respective State Sampling Manager.

**6.1.2.3** Sample collectors shall view a sampling procedure training presentation offered by MPD or their State Sampling Manager at least once a year.

**6.1.2.4** Sample collectors shall be updated on PDP program changes at the time State Sampling Managers are notified of such changes by MPD.

**6.1.2.5** Sample collectors shall be provided with reference documents listed in Section 6.4.1.1.1.

**6.1.2.6** New sample collectors shall become familiar with PDP SOPs, view applicable training presentations, and spend ample time in the field collecting, packaging, and shipping PDP

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commodities with their respective State Sampling Manager, or designee, prior to initiating their own collections.

**6.1.2.7** Sample collectors shall be provided and become familiar with all collection, packaging, and shipping supplies that are approved for use by their State Sampling Manager, or designee.

**6.1.2.8** State Sampling Managers shall keep on file a record of the training each sample collector receives and shall have such records available for viewing by MPD when requested. (Refer to SOP PDP-ADMIN).

### **6.1.3 Evaluation**

**6.1.3.1** Sample collector evaluations shall be conducted once a year or more frequently as necessary.

**6.1.3.2** As part of the sample collector's routine evaluation, the State Sampling Manager, or designee, shall accompany the collector into the field to observe his/her sample collection techniques and knowledge of PDP SOPs.

**6.1.3.3** Evaluations shall include a review of electronic Sample Information Forms (e-SIFs) with the collector to ensure sample information is being obtained and recorded in an acceptable manner.

**6.1.3.4** Collection problems shall be corrected as they occur and shall include collector re-training as necessary.

**6.1.3.5** Sampling Managers shall keep a record on file of the evaluations each sample collector receives and shall have such records available for viewing by MPD when requested. (Refer to SOP PDP-ADMIN).

## **6.2 Assignment of Sample Collectors**

**6.2.1** Each State shall designate individuals to serve as their sample collectors and maintain a list of such personnel (refer to Section 5.3). Changes to this list shall be provided to the PDP Sampling Manager, or designee, as they occur.

**6.2.2** States shall designate the number of commodity samples, with corresponding dates and sites, to be collected by each sample collector per month.

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**6.2.3** If a sample(s) will not be collected due to personal emergency, plant closure, weather conditions, etc., the sample collector shall report it to the State Sampling Manager for reassignment to a different collector, alternate site, or sampling date.

**6.2.4** If it is found that a sample collector cannot sample a product on the scheduled day, he/she shall immediately notify the State Sampling Manager of such scheduled change. The State Sampling Manager (or designee) shall in turn notify MPD and contact the receiving laboratory to arrange for a resampling date.

**6.2.5** It is permissible to collect a sample on the month following the scheduled sample collection date **only** under one of the following circumstances: (1) carrier delays result in the sample(s) not arriving in acceptable condition on their scheduled date near the end of a month and it is not possible to resample before the month's end, (2) the sample(s) has arrived at the laboratory in unacceptable condition and it is not possible to resample before the month's end, (3) general unavailability of commodity, or (4) special circumstances arise where consultation is made between the collection State and MPD and it is determined that resampling the following month is deemed necessary. In any of these instances, MPD *and* the receiving laboratory must be notified for approval to "make up" the lost sample(s) on a specified day the following month. Frequent make-ups are strongly discouraged. Over time, these actions may introduce undesirable bias in the PDP results. Make-up sampling shall not occur at the end of a calendar year because the results would represent sampling efforts from two different years.

### **6.3 Sample Designation and Amount**

**6.3.1** MPD provides Fact Sheets that include collection information for each commodity. Fact Sheets contain statements regarding the size, variety, list of acceptable and unacceptable products for collection, details on specially requested e-SIF information, and special packing/shipping instructions. Fact Sheets are not comprehensive, but serve as a reference to be used in conjunction with PDP SOPs.

**6.3.2** A sample collected by State sample collectors from a specific collection site will be termed a "site-sample."

**6.3.3** The amount per sample, as designated by MPD, shall be collected for each commodity. Information regarding the amount of each sample collected will be provided in the Fact Sheet and Shipping Assignment Chart by the PDP Sampling Manager, or designee, prior to the beginning of each new quarter [refer to Section 5.7].

**6.3.4** Sample collectors should be careful to collect as close to the targeted weight as possible. The use of a simple scale is encouraged. Acceptable collection weights shall be within  $\pm 20\%$  of the specified weight. Samples that weigh less or are smaller in size than the lowest end of these ranges

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are not acceptable; in these cases, the sample collector may be asked to re-sample the commodity. The PDP Sampling Manager will provide, via commodity Fact Sheets, additional requirements concerning sample weights on a commodity-by-commodity basis. To avoid collecting unnecessary additional units for processed commodities, refer to commodity Fact Sheets for more detailed allowable weight ranges.

**6.3.5** For dry goods, grain products, and selected fresh produce as authorized by MPD, if the size or weight of the available sample is at least twice the required amount designated by the PDP Shipping Assignment Chart or Fact Sheet, the sample collector may open the container or package and remove the required amount. Once containers are opened, the collector shall take necessary precautions not to contaminate the sample [refer to Section 6.4.1.2].

**6.3.6** States may be required to collect larger amounts per sample for Quality Assurance programs, or to split samples within the collection State. Sample collectors shall receive specific instructions from the State Sampling Manager regarding these exceptions.

**6.3.7** If a sample will be analyzed by more than one laboratory location, it may be necessary for the collector to pick-up duplicate amounts of the sample for shipment to each appropriate laboratory. When applicable, references will be made in PDP Shipping Assignment Charts for instructions on sample duplication and shipping destination.

## **6.4 Sampling Procedures for Commodities**

### **6.4.1 Fresh Commodities**

Fresh commodities refer to raw, whole produce (i.e., whole carrots, heads of lettuce, celery stalks, etc.). Not included are "prepared" produce, such as salad mixtures, sliced carrots or chopped celery, unless otherwise stated in writing by MPD. Items that are merely washed, brushed, or bagged are acceptable (i.e. leaf spinach, apples). The term, "delicate commodities," refers to fresh produce (e.g., strawberries, raspberries, peaches, etc.) that are highly susceptible to bruising, crushing and/or deterioration during the sampling, packaging, and shipping process.

#### **6.4.1.1 Procedures for the Collection of Fresh Commodity Samples at Collection Sites**

**6.4.1.1.1** Sample collectors are responsible for carrying the necessary reference documents with them when sampling:

- Fact Sheets
- Access to SOPs
- Blank paper SIF forms
- Site List
- Site Volume Information

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- Current Shipping Assignment Chart
- Current collection schedule
- Phone numbers of all active sampling sites within collection State

**6.4.1.1.2** Samples shall be collected at sites that include chain store distribution centers, warehouses, and terminal markets where each vendor is assigned an individual site code. Refer to Section 5.1 for exceptions.

**6.4.1.1.3** When selecting a pallet/group to be sampled at a vendor site, the sample collector shall use an appropriate means of random selection that is outlined in the State’s internal Sampling SOPs. These SOPs shall be kept on file by the State Sampling Manager. The random selection process used by the sample collectors must be acceptable to both the NASS statistician and the State Sampling Manager.

**6.4.1.1.4** Personnel at collection sites may randomly select a box or crate of product and have it available for the sample collector to pick-up. The sample collector shall request that the product remain in a refrigerated area of the collection site until sample pick-up if that commodity normally requires refrigeration. Personnel at collection sites may not collect the site-samples from a box/crate.

**6.4.1.1.5** Once a pallet/group has been randomly chosen, it is permissible to collect the entire sample from one box/crate or from a variety of boxes/crates, provided that all boxes/crates are from *the same lot number*. However, it is preferred, that an entire site-sample be selected from the same box/crate, when possible.

**6.4.1.1.6** Sample collectors should make every attempt to locate and record origin and grower/packer/distributor information.

**6.4.1.1.7** Sample collectors shall be careful to select individual fruit or vegetables that are in good condition without any noticeable bruises, decay, or other visible defects. Additional information regarding sampling of various fresh fruit and vegetables is provided on commodity Fact Sheets.

**6.4.1.1.8** For the collection of delicate commodities, refer to Section 6.4.2.

**6.4.1.1.9** Sample collectors shall take note if any expiration dates are recorded on the commodity that is being sampled. It is highly preferred to sample a product that is not beyond its expiration date. However, if it becomes necessary to sample a product beyond its expiration date, the collector shall ensure that it is in good physical condition and shall also note in the Comments Field of the SIF that it was beyond its expiration date. A “Best Used By” date is not the same as an expiration date and only

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describes possible quality changes over time. Sample collectors may collect samples after a “Best Used By” date if the quality of the product has not been compromised.

**6.4.1.1.10** Whenever possible, samples should be collected and bagged in the warehouse facility to avoid exposure to inclement weather, high or sub-freezing temperatures, and external contamination possibilities. If necessary, however, an entire case or carton of product may be taken to a more convenient location before removing the sample portion, provided that sufficient precautions are taken to ensure the sample remains in optimum condition and is not contaminated by external factors. Perishable products must be stored at refrigerated temperatures if the transfer/transit time exceeds 30 minutes before packaging for shipment is initiated.

**6.4.1.1.11** Additional information regarding the sampling of specific fresh fruit and vegetables will be provided, as necessary, in writing to State Sampling Managers by the PDP Sampling Manager.

**6.4.1.2** Special Sampling Techniques for the Collection of PDP Samples

**6.4.1.2.1** When collecting and packaging more than one commodity at the same site (or even on the same day), the sample collector shall incorporate a means of preventing cross-contamination between samples. This process may be accomplished by a number of methods such as utilizing disposable gloves, sterile hand wipes, or the washing of hands with soap and water between commodity types. If gloves are used (preferred method), they must be worn throughout the process of collecting the entire sample, properly discarded afterwards, and replaced by fresh gloves prior to collecting the next sample.

**6.4.1.2.2** All supplies used for the collection and storage of samples must be free of any contaminants that may affect the analytical results.

**6.4.1.2.3** Samples shall be placed in a plastic bag. Paper bags may be used only for certain commodities with written permission from the PDP Sampling Manager (paper bags may contain compounds that will affect analytical results).

**6.4.1.2.4** The bag containing the samples shall be sealed in a manner that any attempt to tamper with the contents would easily be noticed. A detailed description of the tamper-proofing method used shall be included as part of the State's internal SOPs for sampling. These SOPs must be kept on file by the State Sampling Manager. If the sample is hand delivered to the laboratory, tamper-proofing methods are optional, provided chain of custody is maintained. *The tamper-proofing mechanism shall be dated and initialed by the sample collector.*

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**6.4.1.2.5** Each sample bag shall be labeled with information that uniquely identifies the commodity sample (i.e., the sample ID). The sample identification number is a 17-digit number that uniquely identifies each sample. The identification number must include: 2-letter State of collection, 6-digit date (yy/mm/dd), 4-digit site code number, 2-letter commodity code, and 3-character receiving laboratory code. An example sample identification number is: CO-150817-0046-AP-WA1 (Colorado collected on August 17, 2015 at site 0046 a sample of fresh apples that will be analyzed at the Yakima, Washington laboratory).

**6.4.1.2.6** All information may be pre-entered on the label except for the site number, date, and whether an alternate and/or proxy site was sampled. *All information for a particular sample shall be unequivocally identified before leaving the site.*

**6.4.1.2.7** If only the exact sample amount(s) will be taken from the sampling site, the correct portion may be placed in the official sample container (bag) and sealed by the sample collector prior to exiting the facility. The entire case of product may, in agreement with the warehouse management, be taken to a more convenient location within the facility before removing the sample portion (e.g., area of the warehouse maintained at normal room temperature).

**6.4.1.2.8** If the entire case of product will be taken from the sampling site, it is permissible for the sample collector to exit the facility prior to removing the sample portion (e.g., taking the case of product to the collector's vehicle).

**6.4.1.2.9** Delicate fresh fruit and vegetables should be collected in accordance with Section 6.4.2.

## **6.4.2 Collection of Delicate Fresh Fruit and Vegetables**

For the purpose of this Section, delicate commodities are referred to as fresh perishable produce (e.g., cherries, strawberries, peaches, and raspberries) that are susceptible to bruising or crushing during collection, packaging, and shipping or may deteriorate if exposed to excessive temperature or humidity.

**6.4.2.1** Sample collectors should select fresh commodities with uniform maturity or ripeness.

**6.4.2.2** It is recommended that sample collectors select fresh commodities that are not fully matured or ripened to ensure that the sample arrives to the laboratory in acceptable condition. For example, strawberries that contain a small amount of green outside flesh are acceptable. Some commodities may be difficult to determine maturity or ripeness, but collectors should use their best professional judgment when collecting samples. Because ripeness or maturity

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of fruit is not an issue with the laboratory, collection of under ripe or immature product is encouraged.

**6.4.2.3** Sample collectors should exercise extreme caution when handling delicate commodities to minimize bruising or crushing.

**6.4.2.4** If the sample collector transports fresh commodities from a location other than the collection site for packaging and shipping, necessary precautions should be taken to package the product in a container to minimize shifting of product during transit.

**6.4.2.5** When the sample collector transports the product during the warm season, delicate commodities should be packaged in a pre-cooled insulated container to minimize damage from heat and humidity during transit. Maintaining recommended transit temperature for fresh delicate commodities is crucial in ensuring that the product arrives in acceptable condition.

**6.4.2.6** If a situation arises where the commodity cannot be packaged and shipped on the same day as sample collection, the commodity must be refrigerated. Additionally, the State Sampling Manager, the receiving laboratory, and MPD shall be notified.

**6.4.3** Processed Commodities

**6.4.3.1** Sampling procedures for processed commodities (canned, frozen, concentrates) will be the same as those for fresh commodities wherever possible, refer to Section 6.4.1. If deviations are required, they shall be approved in writing by the PDP Sampling Manager.

**6.4.3.2** Sample collectors should attempt to collect products as close to the amount designated by the PDP Shipping Assignment Chart and Fact Sheet as possible. Sample collectors may not open frozen or canned products to obtain the appropriate size or weight unless previously approved in writing by MPD. Refer to Section 6.3.5 and commodity Fact Sheets for partial sampling of dried goods and grain products.

**6.4.3.3** Additional information regarding sampling criteria for processed products will be provided on the commodity Fact Sheets or otherwise in writing by the PDP Sampling Manager.

**6.4.3.4** Collectors shall be careful to select products that are free from any noticeable dents, leakage, or other noticeable exterior damage.

**6.4.3.5** Processed commodities shall consist of only the commodity to be sampled. For example, creamed corn, vegetable mixes, Italian style tomatoes, juice blends or cocktail juices, etc. are not acceptable.

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**6.4.3.6** In some instances, frozen or canned commodities may be substituted for fresh commodities. However, any substitution information will be provided on commodity Fact Sheets or otherwise in writing by the PDP Sampling Manager.

**6.4.3.7** Occasionally, the collection of concentrated commodities will be alternated with ready-to-serve products, or a frozen commodity will be alternated with a liquid form based on the ratio of U.S. consumption or national sales. Additional information regarding sampling criteria for concentrated commodities will be provided in writing to the State Sampling Managers by the PDP Sampling Manager unless otherwise stated in the Shipping Assignment Chart and commodity Fact Sheet.

## **6.5 Purchasing Samples**

**6.5.1** The sample collector shall make payment to the appropriate site/vendor(s) as necessary.

**6.5.2** Exact method of payment (e.g., cash or State voucher) is determined by the individual States.

**6.5.3** A receipt must be provided by the vendor and retained by the State for all sample payments for a two year period. After two years, State Sampling Managers may transfer these receipts to a Federal Records Center (FRC) by completing form SF-135 for Supporting Data Packages (refer to procedures and templates in SOP PDP-ADMIN). MPD should be contacted for any questions concerning the disposition or transfer of records or if a State wishes to transfer records within a timeframe shorter than two years.

**6.5.4** The sample collector may purchase either the required sample amount or the entire case of product as required by the vendor.

**6.5.5** If an entire case is purchased, records must be kept and retained for two years by the States as to the disposal (donated, left with vendor, discarded, etc.) of the unused product. After two years, State Sampling Managers may transfer these records to an FRC by completing form SF-135 for Supporting Data Packages (refer to procedures and templates SOP PDP-ADMIN). MPD should be contacted for any questions concerning the disposition or transfer of records or if a State wishes to transfer records within a timeframe shorter than two years.

**6.5.6** Payment for samples should approximate the local retail price, but an additional amount may be added, as appropriate, for the vendor's time and trouble.

**6.5.7** Specific procedures/requirements regarding the purchase of PDP samples shall be explained as part of the State's internal SOPs for sampling.

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**7. Packing and Shipment of Samples**

**7.1 Packing Procedures for Commodities**

These packing procedures provide minimum PDP requirements and are presented as general guidelines. Each participating State shall, as part of their internal sampling SOPs, have on file written procedures that include specific details as to the materials and procedures used for packing the PDP samples. Both the PDP SOPs and the State's internal SOPs will be used as the measure of compliance during MPD sampling reviews.

**7.1.1 Fresh Commodities**

**7.1.1.1** Each sample shall be packed by the sample collector.

**7.1.1.2** Sample collectors shall use precautions to prevent samples from being contaminated by compounds that will affect the analytical results.

**7.1.1.3** Samples may be boxed and prepared for shipment at the collection site, or transported to a local State office, shipping facility, or other location for packing. If samples are transported more than 30 minutes away from the collection site for later packing, samples of commodities that require refrigerated temperatures must be maintained in a cooled container until they are packed for shipment.

**7.1.1.4** Samples of commodities that require refrigerated temperatures to maintain their original integrity shall be placed in a pre-cooled, insulated shipping container. Because these commodities must remain properly cooled during shipping, an adequate number of frozen cold packs shall be placed in the shipping container, surrounding the samples (top, bottom, and sides), to ensure refrigerated temperatures of the product during transit. **Loose, wet ice is not an acceptable coolant material.**

**7.1.1.5** Sufficient room shall be provided inside the shipping box so that samples are not squeezed, broken, bent, or bruised and there is no danger of rupturing hermetically sealed bags.

**7.1.1.6** To avoid sample damage, frozen cold packs shall not come into direct contact with the sample. The cold packs should be wrapped in an insulating material to ensure that samples do not freeze.

**7.1.1.7** The collector shall use a sufficient amount of packing materials (i.e., recycled paper, white butcher paper, and/or bubble wrap) to prevent movement of the produce during transit, thereby protecting the samples from bruising or damage. These packing materials also

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provide insulation against sub-freezing temperatures during air transport. **Newspaper, brown butcher/kraft paper, and shredded computer paper are not acceptable packaging materials.**

**7.1.1.8** If computer/electronic problems occur that prohibit the use of e-SIFs, the sample collector shall fax a SIF to the laboratory or a paper SIF shall be placed inside a separate re-sealable zipper storage bag and packed inside the same shipping container as the corresponding site-sample.

**7.1.1.9** If a sample will not be collected, an e-SIF must be completed for each site-sample not collected and sent or emailed to MPD. If paper SIFs are used for notification of an uncollected sample, the paper SIF must be sent, faxed, or emailed to the receiving laboratory who in turn notifies MPD.

**7.1.1.10** If commodities have been grouped for collection, it is permissible for more than one commodity type to be placed directly in the same shipping container. However, when packaging more than one fresh commodity type, collectors should attempt to package together fresh commodities that have similar temperature, moisture, packaging, and shipping requirements to minimize product degradation. Information regarding these requirements is provided on each commodity Fact Sheet.

**7.1.1.11** If the shipping container will not change hands, thereby maintaining chain-of-custody, it is not necessary for the packing box to be sealed [i.e., the collector “hand” delivers the site-sample(s) to the laboratory]. However, the collector must ensure that the container lid fits tightly and securely so that it does not open during transit.

**7.1.2** Packaging of Delicate Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

**7.1.2.1** Samples may be prepared for shipment at the collection site or transported to a State office or shipping facility [refer to Sections 6.4.2.4 and 6.4.2.5].

**7.1.2.2** The commodity should be culled to sort out overripe, bruised, decayed, or otherwise defective products.

**7.1.2.3** The sample collector shall ensure adequate sanitation during packaging to avoid contamination of product.

**7.1.2.4** Each sample shall be packed by the sample collector and sealed so that any attempt to tamper with the contents would easily be noticed. [Refer to Section 6.4.1.2.4]

**7.1.2.5** Samples shall be packed in an insulated container (e.g., Styrofoam lined) for shipping.

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**7.1.2.6** Sample collectors shall use shipping containers that are the correct size for the commodity being shipped.

**7.1.2.7** Collectors may place a solid polyethylene bag liner in the insulated container to ensure against inadvertent leakage. The liner should be closed and properly sealed.

**7.1.2.8** Loose samples or prepackaged containers (e.g., clamshells) shall be bagged using a two (2) millimeter thick plastic bag.

**7.1.2.9** Commodities should be arranged compactly inside the insulated container allowing space for coolants.

**7.1.2.10** The collector shall use a sufficient amount of packing materials (i.e., recycled paper, white butcher paper, and/or bubble wrap) to prevent movement of the produce during transit, thereby protecting the samples from bruising or damage. These packing materials also provide insulation against sub-freezing temperatures during air transport. **Newspaper, brown butcher/kraft paper, and shredded computer paper are not acceptable packaging materials.**

**7.1.2.11** Use as many frozen cold packs as necessary to maintain transit temperature because most products will not be shipped via temperature controlled transportation. Cold packs should be insulated from the commodity by creating a barrier with a material that will prevent direct contact with the commodity, thereby preventing any “freezer burn.” Maintaining recommended transit temperature is crucial to ensure that the product arrives in an acceptable condition. **Loose wet ice is NOT an acceptable coolant material.**

**7.1.2.12** If commodities have been paired for collection, it is permissible to ship more than one commodity in the same shipping container. However, it is recommended that only commodities with similar sizes, weights, cooling requirements, and ethylene sensitivities be placed together in the same container.

**7.1.2.13** For light-weight commodities (e.g., blueberries, raspberries, etc.) there is no limit on the number of like samples that may be shipped together in one box/container, as long as there is no possibility of crushing or damaging the samples. For heavier commodities such as nectarines and peaches, no more than two (2) samples shall be shipped together in the same box/container.

### **7.1.3 Processed Commodities**

Packaging procedures for processed (canned, frozen, and concentrates) commodities are essentially the same as those for fresh commodities, with the exception of the following:

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**7.1.3.1** All containers of the sampled commodity must have the same lot number (time stamps may vary; however, the entire lot number must be the same).

**7.1.3.2** Processed products shall be packed in a manner to conserve space, maintain temperature, and to minimize movement of product to avoid rupturing or crushing of containers while in transit.

**7.1.3.3** Frozen samples must be packaged using a method that will ensure that the samples arrive at their receiving laboratory at least cold-to-the-touch.

## **7.2 Shipment of PDP Samples**

**7.2.1** In an effort to help reduce sampling costs, the reuse of shipping containers and coolants is encouraged. If a State elects to have a shipping container and packaging materials returned, a return shipping label must be included inside the box. Return shipping should be accomplished by the most cost effective means possible.

**7.2.2** Samples may be boxed and prepared for shipment at the collection site, or transported to a local State office or shipping facility for packaging.

**7.2.3** Individual sample Fact Sheets shall be referenced for shipping time requirements.

**7.2.4** Fresh and/or perishable commodities may be shipped to arrive at their respective laboratories at the latest by 5:00 p.m. on the day following sample collection if refrigerated internal temperatures can be maintained throughout transit. Receiving laboratories must approve this shipping schedule; otherwise, a 10:00 a.m. receiving time on the day following sample collection shall be followed.

**7.2.5** Frozen samples shall be shipped frozen by the sample collector on the date of collection in a manner that ensures they arrive at least “cold-to-the-touch” at the laboratory(ies). For “delicately frozen” commodities (i.e., fish), it is suggested that the product be frozen overnight before shipping.

**7.2.6** Canned samples will be shipped at ambient temperature and should be shipped by ground to save on shipping costs.

**7.2.7** If perishable samples are hand delivered to a local State office, shipping facility, or State laboratory, collectors shall place the product in a pre-cooled insulated shipping container along with a sufficient number of ice packs to ensure refrigerated temperatures during transport.

**7.2.8** The sample collector and/or primary State laboratory shall be responsible for ensuring that samples are shipped to the correct laboratory(ies) as provided quarterly on PDP Sample Shipping Assignment Charts.

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**7.2.9** Perishable commodities shall not be shipped on Friday or the day before a Federal or State holiday. Refer to commodity Fact Sheets for individual commodity shipping instructions.

**7.2.10** Samplers should receive prior approval from the laboratory for any samples arriving on Friday or the day before a holiday.

**7.2.11** Copies of shipping transactions for all samples shall be kept on file by the State in the event that shipping problems arise.

**7.2.12** Any additional information regarding packaging, shipping, and temperature requirements of commodities will be provided on PDP Fact Sheets or sent to State Sampling Managers in writing from the PDP Sampling Manager.

**7.2.13** Shipping of Delicate Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

**7.2.13.1** The sample collector may label the outside of the box with statements such as: 1) FRAGILE, 2) THIS END UP, 3) PERISHABLE PRODUCT, or 4) REFRIGERATE UPON RECEIPT.

**7.2.13.2** All samples must be shipped by a service that results in the sample arriving at the assigned laboratory no later than the day following sample collection. Sampling Managers are responsible for follow-up to determine if the samples are arriving within the established timeframe, are in acceptable condition, and/or taking action (e.g., changing delivery services) as needed if they are not.

**7.2.13.3** Samples shall be shipped so that they do not arrive at the receiving laboratory on a Friday, unless prior approval is granted by the receiving laboratory's Director.

**7.2.13.4** Samples may not be shipped on a Friday or the day before a Federal or State holiday.

## **8. Sample Information Forms and Chain of Custody**

### **8.1 PDP General Requirements**

**8.1.1** The sample collector shall ensure that *one* SIF is completed for each assigned site sample. A SIF must be completed even if a site sample was not collected.

**8.1.2** In addition to sample identification information, the PDP SIF shall include: (1) available information regarding State of origin, grower, packer, distributor, and lot number, and (2) details pertaining to agricultural practices employed during or after production such as organically grown or chemically treated with sanitizers.

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**8.1.3** Product variety information must always be included on the SIF, when available.

**8.1.4** When proxy (retail) sites are used for sample collection, the sample collector shall include the appropriate Source ID, the proxy site's name (or store number), and address.

**8.1.5** Collectors shall ensure that SIFs are fully and correctly completed and that the correct number of SIFs are submitted. SIFs allow MPD to track the number and type of samples collected, the number of missing samples, and the reason(s) why the sample was not collected/analyzed. States should make every effort to collect the assigned number of samples each month.

**8.1.6** *It is important that sample collectors complete all necessary fields of the SIF.* Free-form fields such as Variety, Packer Name, Grower Name, Distributor Name, and Lot Number/Other ID, **must not be left blank**. If the requested information cannot be found on the commodity container/box/carton, the sample collector shall enter "unk" or, preferably, "NA" or "na" in the field provided.

**8.1.7** It is strongly recommended that when routine tracking information is not available, the collector record any other available identification information that could be used to track the sample in the Comments Field of the SIF.

**8.1.8** Paper versions of the SIF are acceptable only in instances where problems occur with the use of the electronic version (power outages, computer shut-downs, etc.). When paper SIFs are used, copies must be faxed or emailed to the appropriate laboratory within a timeframe to coincide with sample arrival [refer to Section **7.1.1.8**].

**8.1.9** MPD occasionally requests that special information (specific ingredients, generic varieties, etc.) be recorded and collected for certain commodities. Sample collectors are required to include this information on their SIFs. The Fact Sheets list these special requests and explain where the information should be recorded on the SIF. Also included on the Fact Sheets is a list of current unacceptable commodities, i.e., commodity types that should not be collected.

**8.1.10** If, due to illness, natural disaster, weather conditions, etc., a State is unable to collect the scheduled sample(s), a new collection date shall be rescheduled for a different week/day of that month with the approval of the receiving laboratory. When the items are collected on the rescheduled date, the new collection date shall be entered on the SIF.

**8.1.11** If re-scheduling must occur during the following month [refer to Section 6.2.5 for special exceptions], the new collection date shall be entered on the SIF, along with a brief explanation of the delay.

**8.1.12** If the sample collector has no samples to ship, he/she shall notify the State Sampling Manager, complete the SIF with the required information, and email or fax the SIF to the appropriate laboratory.

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**8.1.13** Once the sample collector has mailed, faxed, or e-mailed the SIF, no changes shall be made to the document without approval from the State Sampling Manager.

## **8.2 Electronic Sample Information Forms (e-SIFs)**

**8.2.1** Sample information is entered on a windows-based laptop, desktop, or tablet computer.

**8.2.2** Proper training for all sample collectors on the use of the e-SIF system is strongly recommended.

**8.2.3** Sample information shall be entered into the e-SIF system as specified in the RDE e-SIF User Guide , which is available on the MPD Extranet.

**8.2.4** If sample information is pre-entered into the sample collector's e-SIF device, special care must be taken to review all entered data AFTER sample collection is completed. As an example, an unplanned change in collection site may necessitate site code changes/additions. Re-checking is important to ensure that accurate comparisons can be made between the sample once it is received at the laboratory and its corresponding e-SIF.

**8.2.5** Multiple samples may be exported from the e-SIF system into a text file that shall be transmitted to MPD.

**8.2.6** All e-SIF text files shall be e-mailed to a designated USDA account ([amsmpo.data@ams.usda.gov](mailto:amsmpo.data@ams.usda.gov)).

**8.2.7** It is strongly recommended that e-SIF files be emailed on the same day as sample collection; however, e-SIF files **must be e-mailed no later than 8:00 a.m., Eastern Time, on the day following sample collection when samples are shipped to arrive at laboratory by 10:00 a.m. on the day following sample collection. If samples are shipped to arrive in the afternoon on the day following sample collection, e-SIFs must be emailed no later than 11:30 a.m., Eastern Time, on the day following sample collection.**

**8.2.8** New RDE program information shall be updated on State's field computers (handheld or laptop computers) when supplied by MPD.

## **8.3 Paper Sample Information Forms**

**8.3.1** Although not encouraged, it is acceptable for sample collectors to hand-write sample information on a paper SIF for later recording on the electronic SIF. If this practice is performed, the sample collector must: (1) record all necessary sample information on the paper SIF BEFORE leaving the site, (2) sign and date the paper SIF and, (3) keep all paper SIFs on file for a minimum of two

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years because they are considered “raw data.” It is required that all hand-written sample information be recorded on a paper SIF form to ensure that all pertinent sample information is included.

**8.3.2** After two years, State Sampling Managers may transfer paper SIF forms to a FRC by completing form SF-135 for Supporting Data Packages (refer to procedures and templates in SOP PDP-ADMIN). MPD should be contacted for any questions concerning the disposition or transfer of records or if a State wishes to transfer records within a timeframe shorter than two years.

**8.3.3** It is required that all hand-written sample information be recorded on a paper SIF form. Sample collectors shall ensure that all applicable portions of the form are PRINTED neatly and legibly. Mistakes on the SIF shall be marked through with a single line and dated and initialed at the time of the correction.

**8.3.4** The SIF must be signed and dated by the sample collector at the time of collection. If someone else collects the sample in place of the originally assigned collector, that individual must sign the form. Forms should never be pre-signed prior to sample collection.

**8.3.5** Paper SIFs for uncollected samples shall be packed in a separate sealed plastic bag in the same box with any other samples collected by the sample collector and mailed to the designated laboratory(ies).

**8.3.6** Sample collectors shall refer to the PDP SIF instruction sheets for further explanation on filling out the form. Instructions may be found on MPD’s Extranet site.

**8.3.7** Paper SIFs shall be faxed to MPD as soon as possible after completion.

#### **8.4 Chain of Custody**

**8.4.1** Chain of custody requirements ensures the chronological possession of samples as they pass from sample collector to the carrier to the laboratory.

**8.4.2** When e-SIFs are used, written documentation (a paper SIF placed inside the sample shipping container) is unnecessary if all sample collection information entered into the e-SIF is received by the laboratory.

**8.4.3** Paper SIFs serve as written documentation of the sample collector’s possession of the sample and shall include the commodity collected, the site code, the date the samples were collected, the signature of the individual collecting and packaging the samples, and the date and time of transfer to the carrier.

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**8.4.4** Two duplicate legible and permanently marked sample labels shall be placed in a clear packing envelope affixed to the outside of each sample bag. Notations shall include: (1) unique sample identification information [refer to Section 6.4.1.2.5], (2) date, (3) collector name, and (4) alternate or proxy site information (if applicable). The tamper-proofing mechanism shall be initialed and dated by the sample collector who has bagged the sample. This information, coupled with a Quarterly Sampling Schedule that each laboratory maintains on file, will suffice to complete chain of custody requirements and will allow initiation of sample processing and analysis in the event of a delayed e-SIF.

**8.4.5** The sample collector shall ensure that all chain of custody requirements are fulfilled.

**9. General Guidelines for Individual Commodities**

Specific information regarding individual commodities is available on the PDP Commodity Sample Fact Sheet. General guidelines are provided in the USDA, AMS, Transportation and Marketing Programs handbook *Protecting Perishable Food During Transport*.

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*07/01/2016*

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*August 19, 2016*

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- Combined all requirements from PDP Sampling SOPs 1-5 into a single document as follows: