FURTHER PROCESSING CERTIFICATION PROGRAM INDUSTRY GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF QUALITY CONTROL PROGRAM FOR MEAT AND POULTRY

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to set forth policies, procedures and guidelines for the certification of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) donated red meats and poultry under the Further Processing Certification Program (FPCP).

The following guidelines provide the criteria for approving and monitoring documented quality control systems used by the processor when participating in this program. A quality control system is defined as all processes that work together to produce one or more products.

Scope

The FPCP offers red meat and poultry further processors a uniform USDA/AMS certification. This program is intended to add value to further processed donated red meat and poultry commodities through a uniform process control while reducing costs. A minimum of one USDA grader per shift will be required to monitor the FPCP operations of the production facility. The FPCP emblem may be used in advertising and promotional literature for finished goods distributed to states, as well as commercial products produced with AMS Verification. All further processors who participate in the FPCP are required to have an approved Quality Control (QC) program prior to using the FPCP emblem. It is the processor's responsibility for developing a QC program in accordance with guidelines established by AMS. This document will not replace the manufacturer's responsibility to adhere to all other federal policies and safety regulations (e.g., FSIS - HACCP and FDA Standard of Identity, etc.). Each processor must secure an approved National Processing Agreement (NPA) with FNS. An acceptable FPCP QC program is one that establishes effective controls for each verification element following the guidelines in this document.

References

The following referenced documents are used for the application of this document. The latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 250, Donation of Foods for Use in the United States, its Territories and Possessions and Areas Under its Jurisdiction, Section 30, State Processing of Donated Foods

End Product Data Schedule (EPDS)

State Processing Handbook

National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), Handbook 44, Specifications, Tolerances, and Other Technical Requirements for Weighing and Measuring Devices

Policy

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) regulations (7 CFR Part 250, Donation of Foods for Use in the United States, its Territories and Possessions and Areas Under its Jurisdiction, Section 30, State Processing of Donated Foods) require that all processing of donated meat products be performed by the AMS verification service in plants operating under Federal Inspection (or State equivalent). Additionally, the AMS policy is to ensure USDA donated product is properly handled, processed according to specification, and traceable from school district to raw product supplier.

I. Definitions

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)	The USDA agency responsible for purchasing surplus commodities such as meat, poultry, fruits and vegetables. AMS also provides end product certification that, at a minimum, certifies against non-diversion and non-substitution and provides for metal detection of donated food.
Backhaul	Commodities that are physically picked up from a distributing agency (DA) or recipient agency (RA) for processing.
Batching	The process of combining the same kind of non-substitutable donated food from more than one State RA during a production run. Batching is only permitted with diverted raw material, not backhauled product.
Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program	A voluntary program administered by FNS that evaluates formulations to determine the contribution toward the meal pattern requirements. It also protects the school from exaggerated product claims and provides a warranty against audit claims, if used according to manufacturer's directions.
Commodity Equivalent	End product that is made using commercial meat which is equal to or better than the USDA commodities.
Commingling	The act of storing, combining, or blending commercial food and substitutable donated food together into a single inventory at a processor's plant. Processors must receive approval from FNS to commingle foods on a national level. Commingling is only permitted with diverted raw material, not backhauled product.
Corrective Action	Action to eliminate the cause of a detected nonconformity (NC) or other undesirable situation.
Distributing Agency (DA)	The agency, usually an agency of State government, which enters into an agreement with FNS for the distribution of donated food to eligible recipient agencies.

End Product	A finished product containing any amount of donated foods that have been commercially processed.
End Product Data Schedule (EPDS)	A standard form that describes the finished end product being produced. Information detailed on this form includes formulation, quantity of donated food needed to produce a specific number of units of end product, packaging and yield information.
First In First Out (FIFO)	An inventory control system based on the production.
Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)	The agency responsible for administering further processing of donated commodities.
Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)	The USDA agency whose primary mission is to inspect the wholesomeness of meat and poultry products.
National Processing Agreement (NPA)	A contract between the further processor and FNS to produce finished products.
Non-Conformance (NC)	A deviation from program requirements.
FPCP	Further Processed Certification Program.
Quality Control Employee	Designated company employee other than the plant owner, manager, foreman, or supervisor, authorized to examine product and to supervise production, processing, labeling, and other functions of officially identified meat or poultry products.
Quality Control Record	Document of any quality check the processor performs under the FPCP program and officially records either on an approved paper form or electronic system.
Rework	Wholesome, salvageable product generated during a production run that is not acceptable as the specified product. Product such as broken patties or nuggets, or other defects such as missing breading, lumps, and ridges would be classified as rework product.
Substitution	The act of replacing USDA donated commodities with commercially purchased materials of the same generic identity, and of equal or better quality to the donated food provided by USDA.
USDA Record Check	The USDA grader shall review processor's documentation to determine if the specific examination was performed, accurately documented and within the specified tolerances as required by the FPCP.
USDA Verification Check	The USDA grader shall observe designated processor's employee perform and document the specific task as required by the FPCP.

II. Submission of Proposal

Prospective processors are required to submit a written proposal prior to the commencement of production, addressing each requirement area and outlining specific procedures used to ensure that these requirements are met while processing products under the FPCP. Processors shall submit proposals to:

Richard.Lawson@ams.usda.gov
Darrell.Dowd@ams.usda.gov

Develop and maintain individual programs that address each requirement area outlined in the FPCP using the Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA). Programs, at a minimum, shall include requirements specified in this Procedure. If a section does not apply, indicate under the section why that section is not applicable. Further processors may include additional programs and requirements not listed in this program, which may be monitored and verified by the USDA grader.

Each Processor must ensure that all state participation agreements are signed and dated by the state representative and the further processor and that all EPDS are signed by the further processor as well as the LPS/QAD designee.

As applicable each processor must have an approved substitution plan.

Facility management must appoint, in writing, a member of the organization's management who shall ensure that the processes needed for the quality management system are established, implemented and maintained in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document. This management representative shall also serve as a liaison with AMS on matters relating to the quality management system. Additionally, facility management must provide the USDA grader with a letter certifying that all personnel performing authorized certification activities have been provided with training to achieve the necessary competence so that they are aware of the relevance and importance of their activities and how they contribute to the achievement of the quality objectives.

Develop and maintain a traceability program, capable of tracking product from raw product supplier to end item recipient and vice versa on a per case basis. This may be approved by either manually operated or electronic programs (those using bar coding and scanning devices).

Identify donated food clearly, through all stages of production, storage and shipment.

III. Cover Page

The cover page must contain the following information:

1) Company name.
2) Full address of the further processing plant location where EPDS products are manufactured.

3) Establishment number

4) Objective of the program.

5) Record Retention – State how long data will be maintained.
   Ex.: QC records for FPCP products will be retained for a minimum of one year.

6) Commitment to make all records and information generated as a result of the program available to USDA officials.

7) Signature of the establishment's official responsible for the program (e.g., President or Quality Control Manager).

8) A statement that QC personnel have the authority to halt production and restrict shipment of product if standards established in this program are not met.

IV. Detailed Information Guidelines

A. Products covered

List the name(s), including product codes of all EPDS produced by the plant. When new products are approved, the list must reflect the changes. A copy of the revised list must be submitted to AMS. The grader will evaluate the revised QC program and notify the Regional office through the appropriate channels.

B. Equipment

1) Scales

   a. Develop and maintain a scale verification program that is certified by state or local government officials or an equivalently registered or licensed technician annually. Ensure that each scale is properly identified with the certifier's initials and date of certification.
   b. Ensure that scales are checked for accuracy in accordance with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), Handbook 44, Specifications,

Tolerances, and Other Technical Requirements for Weighing and Measuring Devices.

c. Ensure that scales are calibrated within tolerance daily prior to the start of production with certified weights.
d. Maintain copies of licenses or certificates of all in-house technicians and a scale certification log for review by the grader.
e. Describe the method used for verifying each piece of equipment and include a statement about traceability to a national standard.
f. State the frequency of checks.
g. Identify the corrective action taken when the testing/measuring device(s) are out of balance.

2) Grinders and Blenders

a. Ensure that the grinding and blending systems producing products are free of non-program materials (i.e. uncertified commercial meat).
b. Perform a complete "clean–up" prior to re-introducing red meat or pork program materials, if non-program materials are introduced into grinders or any other equipment used in the processing of products for the FPCP.

3) Extruder/Elimination Systems

a. Ensure that extruder/elimination systems are attached to grinder heads and function in accordance with manufacturer specifications. Manufacturer specifications shall be available to the grader upon request.
b. Ensure that all extruded material is clearly identified and disposed of properly.

4) Thermometers

a. Ensure that thermometers are calibrated daily prior to the start of production.
b. Maintain thermometer calibration logs for review by the grader.

5) Metal Detectors

a. Ensure that finished product passes through a functioning, in-line metal detector/x-ray prior to initial placement into shipping containers.
b. Ensure that metal detectors/x-ray are calibrated in accordance with manufacturer specifications.
c. Ensure that metal detectors/x-ray equipment are capable of detecting stainless steel, ferrous and non-ferrous metals.
d. Declare the type of equipment, location, detection procedure, sensitivity levels, frequency of validating the equipment, and demonstrate how the product with metal contamination is excluded from complying product.

6) Packaging and Packing

Product may be checked in-line (pumped or vacuumed), prior to packaging, after packaging, or after packing using appropriate test strips as follows:

a. Prior to packaging - nuggets, patties, parts, etc. Testing shall be with a 1.5 mm 440 stainless steel strip.
b. After packaging or packing - bologna, roasts, turkey ham, rolls, nuggets, patties, or diced product etc. Testing shall be with a 3.0 mm 440 stainless steel strip.
c. In-line closed systems - Testing shall be with a flexible 3.0 mm 440 stainless steel test strip through a test port into the center of the detector field. Alternatively, a flexible 1.5 mm 440 stainless steel test strip inserted into the detector field at the outside edge of the pipeline may be used.

C. Red Meat Raw Material

Provide the grader with a Certificate of Analysis (COA) prior to the use of Fresh Boneless Beef (combos) for further processing. Processors should assure their suppliers fax the COA to arrive at delivery and provide the grader evidence that fat analysis has been conducted and is within the acceptable range. This evidence may be provided from the supplier or an outside laboratory. A COA is not required for frozen coarse ground beef as the microbiological analysis is known before shipment.

Conduct a product examination at the time of processing. The examination shall include, at a minimum, the following requirements:

1) Condition-Product must not show any evidence of mishandling, such as defrosting and refreezing, excessive purge, sticky surface slime, freezer burn, odor and/or discoloration.
2) Age-Beef and pork product with production dates up to 12 months old may be processed. Product exceeding the age limit will be considered non-substitutable and may only be processed under full certification.

D. All Raw Material (Red Meat and Poultry)

Continuous Process-Every effort shall be made to complete the processing of product from raw state to finished cases in continuous production. Processors may carry over product as long as the following requirements are met:

1) Product is held in clean containers. (Containers that have been washed and are free of any non-program materials.)

2) Containers are properly identified in accordance with the traceability program.

3) Product temperatures do not exceed 40°F.

4) Product is processed prior to newly ground/formulated product of the same item.

5) Exceptions for equipment failure will be handled on a case-by -case basis.

E. Formulation Control

1) As applicable to your product, include an example of a batch formulation.

2) State that the formulation used for production will match the formula percentage or weight as presented on the approved EPDS form.

3) State that the weight of each ingredient, except those mentioned in Section IV. E.4, will not vary more than 0.5 percent from the required weight designated in the formula.

   Ex: If the formula calls for 40.0 pounds of a seasoning, the allowable minimum/maximum amount for that formula is 39.8 - 40.2 pounds respectively.

4) Mention that the weight of restricted ingredients, such as phosphates, nitrites, erythorbates, etc., will not differ from the approved formulation.

5) For CN labeled product, state that no ingredient in the formulation may be substituted for another. The ingredient name and ingredient sub-listing (if applicable) must match the EPDS and label.

6) All products must meet the applicable product regulations (e.g., FSIS or FDA Standard of Identity) and applicable FNS requirements.

7) Indicate that QC will verify compliance with formulas. In addition, the QC program should mention the number of ingredients that will be checked and how often a QC person will check the weights of these ingredients.

8) The QC program must state that the formulation will be checked on a random basis to assure that each ingredient has an equal chance of being selected. State that whenever a formulation error is found in excess of the tolerance the following will be done:

   a. Immediate corrective and preventive action will be taken for the remaining product run.
   b. The formulated product will be corrected immediately.

c. If correction is not possible for the formulated product, that batch will be used in other EPDS product.

F. Component Weight Control

Child Nutrition Labeled Products

The raw weights and cooked weights (if product is cooked) must be monitored according to sections G. and H. This applies to products such as: unbreaded patties, links, unbreaded nuggets, and many others.

1) Raw Weights - The raw weight is checked on all portions and/or components, whether the finished product is raw or cooked.

2) Cooked Weights - Cooked weights are checked and compared with the portion size stated on the transmittal and on the CN label statement. Weights are also checked for precooked components of products against information on the label transmittal.

   Ex: A grilled chicken patty would be specified as follows - Raw weight 2.35 oz. patty; cooked weight 2.25 oz. patty

   The QC program will monitor the raw weight per patty and the finished cooked patty weight identified on the transmittal form each according to the lot, subgroup size, frequency, and weight tolerances established in Sections G. and H.

G. Lotting

The QC program shall address:

1) Lot Definition – A lot shall be defined for each product code separately. A lot may be defined as one shift's production of product.

2) Identification - Lots and sub lots of product are fully identified throughout the process and the QC program should include a description of how this is done.

H. Subgroup Size (weighing)

1) The QC program shall state the subgroup size and the frequency that samples will be certified. The subgroup sample size should be a minimum of 5 servings. Samples should be pulled one hour minimum between samples.

   However, the sample size and frequency may be more based on the rate of plant production[1].

2) The QC program shall state the subgroup weight range tolerance. The average weight of any single subgroup size may vary as follows:

Subgroup Sample size	5 to 7	8 and over
Weight range tolerance	- 10 percent	- 8 percent

It is recommended but not required to monitor the maximum weight range tolerance. However, the minimum weight ranges tolerance must be monitored for each component (e.g., meat patty component, breading component, sauce component, filling component, crust component, etc.) regardless of how many components are being monitored.

Ex: A label states that a serving is four 0.6 oz. chicken nuggets. Therefore, a subgroup of five servings would total 20 nuggets weighing 12.0 oz. This subgroup will have a weight range tolerance of 10.80 oz. to 13.20 oz.

3) When a subgroup weight falls below the predetermined minimum weight tolerance, state all product produced since the last acceptable check will be reworked when applicable according to section **M.** or retained and diverted as non-FPCP labeled product.

4) Indicate that the average of all subgroups taken from one shift of production (one production lot) must meet or exceed the label and label EPDS requirement. Also indicate that this applies to raw, cooked, and breaded products, and that each EPDS product will have its own shift average since combining products is not allowed.

5) Mention that whenever the shift average (average of all subgroups) of any product fails to meet the required minimum weight, the entire shift's production of that product will be diverted as non-FPCP labeled product or held pending negotiation for acceptance by LPS QAD according to H.6. (see below).

6) For items that have special regulatory requirements; such as breaded items, fritters, protein fat-free (PFF) products, meats with marinade or solutions, etc.; include how these requirements will be monitored in the QC program.

   Ex: Breaded products are limited to 30 percent batter/breading of the finished batter/breaded weight prior to blanching, freezing, or cooking. The QC program would specify that if the subgroup average of the breaded product exceeds the regulatory limit by more than three percent per unit, all products back to the last acceptable check will be retained. If the regulatory limit is 30 percent, the

program would call for the retention of any product that exceeds 33 percent breading. In addition, the QC program would state that if the shift's average of all subgroups exceeds the regulatory limit of 30 percent, the entire shift's production of that product will be retained and reworked or relabeled as appropriate

I. Batter/Breading Non CN Labeled

1) AQL Method:

Under this method the batter/breading must not exceed the percent stated on the EPDS of any sample.

2) Shift Average:

Under this method, a tolerance of +/- 3% of the target batter/breading percentage is allowed for individual AQL samples, provided the shift average for batter/breading present does not exceed the target percentage listed on the EPDS or specification. Product represented by individual AQL samples not meeting the +/- 3% tolerance is not eligible for certification and is rejected for use immediately. The AQL results for any rejected sampling period will not be used in the calculation for the shift average. To minimize the amount of product that would be subject to retention for being out of compliance, it is permissible for the processor to remove AQL sampling periods that caused the shift average to not comply with the requirements. Product removed to achieve shift average compliance is not eligible for certification.

J. Cook Temperatures

Product cooking temperature must be in accordance with the company's HACCP Plan.

K. Case Net Weights

Ensure that marked case net weights on the container label meet the minimum requirements specified on the appropriate EPDS. The following procedures shall be used when test weighing on an online basis.

1) Proper weighing equipment must be made available at established weighing stations where unbiased sampling can be accomplished.

2) Tare weight shall be established.

3) Select and weigh five containers each sampling interval.

4) The sample weights, minus the tare weights, shall be totaled, and the average net weight calculated for each sampling interval.

5) The acceptance criteria for each sampling interval are based both on the individual and average net weights. The minimum for individual shipping containers is 1 percent below the marked weight. Additionally, the average net weight for the five shipping containers must meet or exceed the marked weight.

L. Packaging and Labeling

Ensure that product is identified in accordance with the traceability program, that product is packaged in accordance with the appropriate EPDS, and that the label is legible, contains the FPCP emblem and is located on the front panel.

Each lot will undergo an examination for packaging and packing defects. Primary containers will be examined for cuts, tears, holes, improper closure, excess moisture, and dirty, smeared, or stained areas affecting the usability of the container. Shipping containers will be examined for condition, labeling, and markings. The examinations will be according to the criteria listed in the United States Standards for Condition of Food Containers.

Ensure that the labels are placed on the face panel. They must contain, at a minimum, the production date, product name, product code, case net weight, (Red Meat) donated commodity statement "Contains Commodities Donated by the USDA," and "This Product Shall Be Sold Only to Eligible Recipient Agencies."

M. Non-Conforming Product (Retained and Reworked Control)

The QC program shall state when and how product is retained due to short weights or an error in formulation.

Ex: All retained products are tagged with a company tag and placed in the area designated for retained product. The QAD supervisor or NMFS CSO is notified.

N. Monitoring Procedure

For procedures such as, calibration checks; fat control; formulation control; component weight control and subgroup size include the following information:

1) Who (by title) is performing the procedure

2) What is the sampling rate (how many and how often)

3) What are the step-by-step procedures that are to be used

4) How and where the results are to be recorded

5) What to do if the product does not meet set target

O. Record Keeping Procedure

1) Identify person responsible for keeping QC records.

2) All information and data generated by this program should be clearly and accurately recorded. A sample of copies of all forms, tags, and charts used must be included as part of the program (dates approved).

Ex: Scale Calibration Form
Component (s) Weight Form
Formulation Control Form
Rework Form
Hold Tag

3) All records should be stored in a convenient place and available to QAD Supervisors upon request.

4) When revisions are made to an existing approved FPCP QC program, such as changes in processing and monitoring procedures, the QC program must be submitted to the Quality Assessment Division, National Office prior to production. The processor must provide the following:

a. A letter requesting approval and identifying revisions

b. Documentation supporting the revisions (i.e., documents describing changes in monitoring and control procedures, purchase of new equipment that may affect processing procedures, etc.).

P. Noncompliances

Any noncompliance noted during the Grader's verification checks shall be addressed immediately. Product failing to meet requirements shall be placed under retention until the product is brought into compliance or until applicable USDA markings and product identification have been removed. A follow-up sample may vary between 10 minutes and one hour after QC advises the Grader that corrections have been made. If the follow-up sample is satisfactory, sampling will resume at the current monitoring frequency. If product is not in compliance, the Grader shall contact his/her Supervisor. The Supervisor will consult with the Regional Director and National Supervisor, to determine what additional corrective action is to be taken.

Additionally, corrective action must be documented and performed by the plant to prevent any future occurrences. A copy of the corrective action is to be provided to the Grader, Supervisor and National Supervisor.

To allow for processing anomalies, the processor is limited to two separate occasions of noncompliance found in verification checks. If three separate occasions of noncompliance's are found through verification checks within a six-month period, the processor is no longer eligible for the FPCP program and full grading and certification duties will revert back to the resident USDA grader(s). The Grader shall document each noncompliance in writing to the National Supervisor. Information to include shall be the date and the descriptions of the noncompliance's with copies of the corrective action taken by the plant. This report is due within 10 working days after the third noncompliance takes place.
The Grader shall advise the Supervisor and National Supervisor regarding any discrepancies that could compromise the integrity of the FPCP program.

Q. Meetings

The processor shall schedule and participate in FPCP meetings, a minimum of once a month; discuss program developments, proposed amendments, etc.; record meeting minutes and provide copies to the USDA grader; forward copies of meeting minutes to the USDA grader, FPCP coordinator, Supervisor, and all participants in the meeting.

R. Termination of FPCP

The FPCP may be terminated at any time by plant management upon written or verbal notice to the Supervisor. If voluntarily terminated at plant management's request, they may request reinstatement of the program within six months of the termination date. Approval of reinstatement will be at the discretion of the National Supervisor, Quality Assessment Division. FPCP may be terminated by USDA for infractions which indicate a lack of control by the plant. Such infractions include, but are not limited to:

1) Failure to make QC personnel available as needed to meet minimum online sampling requirements.

2) Interference or attempts by plant management or other personnel to influence QC personnel in the performance of their duties.

3) Repeated instances where officially identified product is packed and not adequately sampled by the QC personnel.

4) Repeated instances where officially identified product packed under QC supervision fails to meet requirements when verified by USDA.

5) Lack of control and/or monitoring of non-complying product.

Upon determination by the National Supervisor, QAD that sufficient evidence exists to terminate the FPCP, the National Supervisor, is to notify the plant in writing. The letter will state the specific reason(s) for the termination. Depending on the seriousness of the situation, verbal notice may be given of the immediate termination of the program. Termination action shall not be taken without the concurrence of the Regional Director. If terminated by USDA, the program may not be reinstated for at least one year, except at the discretion of the National Supervisor.

S. Contact Information

Richard.Lawson@ams.usda.gov

Darrell.Dowd@ams.usda.gov