

2015 SUPPORTING STATEMENT
Survey of Customers of the Official Grain Inspection and Weighing System
0580-0018

TERMS OF CLEARANCE:

If the agency wishes to renew this collection for a further period of time, please submit an explanation of what new information is being gained by continuing to deploy this satisfaction survey.

By continuing this survey we are able to gather information about how various changes to the system are being perceived by customers. The continuation of this survey also allows the agency an opportunity to hear directly from the customers their suggestions for improvements or praises for changes. For example, FGIS ran a campaign February 2013 through April 2013 soliciting responses from current and potential customers. This resulted in 343 responses. FGIS reviewed the responses addressing actionable items and passing suggestions and observations to appropriate entities within the agency for consideration in future projects.

A. JUSTIFICATION

- 1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.**

The United States Grain Standards Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 71-87) (USGSA), and the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended (7 U.S.C. 1621-1627) (AMA), authorize the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture to establish official inspection, grading, and weighing programs for grains and other agricultural commodities. Under the USGSA and AMA, the Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration's (GIPSA) Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) offers inspecting, weighing, grading, quality assurance, and certification services for a user-fee to facilitate the efficient marketing of grain, oilseeds, rice, lentils, dry peas, edible beans, and related agricultural commodities in the global marketplace. Under FGIS oversight, the official inspection, grading, and weighing program is a public-private partnership including Federal, State, and private agencies that provide official inspection, grading, and weighing services to the domestic and export trade.

There are approximately 9,000 current users of the official inspection, grading, and weighing programs. These customers are located nationwide and represent a diverse mixture of small, medium, and large producers, merchandisers, handlers, processors, exporters, and other financial stakeholders. These customers request

official services from an FGIS Field Office; a delegated, designated, or cooperating State office; or a designated or cooperating private agency office.

The goal of FGIS and the official inspection, grading, and weighing system is to provide timely, high-quality, accurate, consistent, and professional service that facilitates the marketing of grain and related commodities. To accomplish this goal and in accordance with E.O. 12862, FGIS is seeking feedback from customers to evaluate the services provided by the official inspection, grading, and weighing programs. FGIS will also collect information from non-customer entities, such as potential customers or industry representatives that are not currently utilizing agency services.

As required by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), GIPSA is requesting renewal authority to continue conducting an annual customer satisfaction survey during the next 3 years. This survey would be limited to collecting data that solicits voluntary opinions and would not involve information that is regulated.

2. Indicate how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

As a predominately user fee program, FGIS is committed to understanding its customers' expectations and satisfaction with existing services along with comments from non-customer entities.

The survey is separated into two parts (Customers of the National Grain Inspection Program vs Non-Customers). The survey questions have not changed for customers of the National Grain Inspection Program. The non-customer portion is a single open question that will allow FGIS to collect information from entities, such as potential customers or industry representatives that are not currently utilizing agency services. FGIS can ascertain customers' current satisfaction and compare current and past levels. Non-customer entities information will assist FGIS in fully meeting the domestic and international needs of the grain industry as they evolve. FGIS will make the proposed survey available year round with periodic reports provided annually and as needed. Without this information, FGIS would be precluded from providing the best customer service possible.

FGIS' senior management team uses the data collected from the customer survey to determine where and to what extent services are satisfactory or can be improved. Senior management shares the results with managers and program leaders who are responsible for making necessary improvements at the agency, program, and project level. These customer satisfaction surveys result in program and policy changes that aim to increase program and service efficiency and effectiveness. For example, customer comments obtained as part of the 2010 customer survey provided the senior management team with further justification for proceeding with electronic certification of inspection results.

Based upon verbal feedback from customers, FGIS has learned that the factors of most interest to customers are timeliness, cost-effectiveness, accuracy, consistency, usefulness of services and results, and professionalism of FGIS and the official inspection, grading, and weighing programs' employees. By conducting annual surveys designed with these factors as the focal points, FGIS can quantify customer satisfaction, compare multi-year results, and implement changes to improve program efficiency and effectiveness.

In addition, customer survey results have and will continue to be integrated into FGIS' auditing process. In accordance with the USGSA, FGIS routinely audits its official service providers during their day-to-day operations to ensure that they comply with existing regulations, policies, and procedures. These routine assessments provide FGIS an opportunity to monitor customer satisfaction and service needs. The customer survey is an extension of that process to further evaluate its official service providers overall effectiveness.

3. **Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also, describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.**

FGIS determined that using information technology techniques improves the quality and response percentage of data and reduces the burden on the public. In an effort to encourage participation, the survey will be available year-round utilized by its customers. FGIS hopes that customers and non-customers will view the opportunity to share their feedback as convenient and this greater convenience will increase the response rate. FGIS will also work with official agencies and field offices to solicit participation from their customers.

4. **Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purpose described in item 2 above.**

FGIS has both internal and external review processes that prevent duplication of effort or information collected.

FGIS does not plan to conduct any other surveys which duplicate the content of the proposed customer survey.

5. **If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.**

This voluntary survey gives customers of the official inspection, grading, and weighing programs who are primarily in the grain, oilseed, rice, lentil, dry peas, edible bean, and related agricultural commodity markets an opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of services they receive and new services that they would like to receive. Some of those surveyed may represent small businesses or other small entities. FGIS keeps the burden on such entities to a minimum by asking for opinions on a strictly voluntary basis and by asking for the minimum amount of information needed only to evaluate FGIS' performance in key areas of concern.

6. **Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.**

At meetings with industry representatives and with the Grain Inspection Advisory Committee, FGIS is often asked how it meets customer needs and measures the level of customer satisfaction in key areas of concern including timeliness, accuracy, consistency, and cost effectiveness. By conducting the proposed survey

focused on key areas of concern to customers, FGIS can quantify customer satisfaction and respond intelligently to customer inquiries.

FGIS believes that this information collection could not be conducted less frequently. Annual surveys have conferred improved performance and service quality in specific program areas. There are no technical or legal obstacles to reducing this burden.

7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the general information collection guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5.

This collection of information is consistent with 5 CFR 1320.5.

8. Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting form, and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB.

On August 31, 2015, GIPSA published a notice in the *Federal Register* (80 FR 52442), soliciting public comment on its intent to seek OMB approval of this collection. A copy of the *Federal Register* notice is attached.

We received no comments on the information collection before the comment period ended on October 30, 2015.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than reenumeration of contractors or grantees.

No payment or gift will be provided to respondents.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

Documents submitted by the public are considered confidential and are used for official purposes only. All public records are maintained and handled according to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom

the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

This collection of information contains no questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 10 minutes (*i.e.*, 0.167 hours) per response. The primary respondents will be interested current or potential customers of the official inspection, grading, and weighing program who either visit the GIPSA website or receive the link via outreach communications. Based on previous website traffic, FGIS will attempt a 55-57% percent response rate.

For previous requests, FGIS sought approval to conduct its customer survey once per year over the 3-year period an annual survey. Given the transition to a solely electronic- based survey, FGIS will make the proposed survey available year round with periodic reports provided annually and as needed.

FY 2016:

- Estimated Number of Respondents: 605 (*i.e.*, 1100 total customers times 55% response rate =605).
- Frequency of Responses: 1.
- Estimated Annual Burden: 109 hours. (605 responses times 0.167 hours/response plus 495 non respondents times 0.0170 hours/response = 109 hours).

FY 2017:

- Estimated Number of Respondents: 616. (*i.e.*, 1100 total customers times 56% response rate = 616).
- Frequency of Responses: 1.
- Estimated Annual Burden: 111 hours (616 responses times 0.167 hours/response plus 484 non respondents times 0.0170 hours/response = 111 hours).

FY 2018:

- Estimated Number of Respondents: 627 (*i.e.*, 1100 total customers times 57% response rate = 627).
- Frequency of Responses: 1.
- Estimated Annual Burden: 105 hours (627 responses times 0.167 hours/response plus to 473 non respondents times 0.0170 hours/response = 113 hours).

- 13. Provide estimates of the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information, (do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in items 12 and 14). The cost estimates should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component annualized over its expected useful life; and (b) a total operations and maintenance and purchase of services component.**

There are no capital/startup or operation/maintenance costs associated with this collection of information.

- 14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Provide a description of the method used to estimate cost and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.**

The estimated annual cost to FGIS is \$10,000 for staff costs.

- 15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 or 14 of the OMB form 83-I.**

In previous years when surveys were mailed directly to customers FGIS had an on staff statistician. The statistician was able to determine based on our customer base the number of respondents needed for a representative sample. Moving to the solely electronic collection process we hope and expect to reach similar response rates as a result of outreach and communication (e.g.; emails, articles in trade publications, word of mouth).

- 16. For collections of information whose results are planned to be published, outline plans for tabulations and publication.**

FGIS will share the average results (*i.e.*, overall average for each quantitative question) with employees, customers, and the public via GIPSA's Internet site and monthly newsletter. A more detailed summary report will be distributed to all FGIS managers. FGIS managers are responsible for sharing the more detailed results with the managers of the State and private official agencies within their respective circuits.

- 17. If seeking approval to not display the expirations date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.**

Not applicable.

- 18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19 "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act."**

There are no exceptions to the certification statement.