



United States Department of Agriculture

February 4, 2022

TO: Danielle Jones
Senior Desk Officer
Office of Management and Budget

THROUGH: Levi Harrell
USDA Information Collection Officer

FROM: Michele Brooks
Director, Regulations Management Division
Innovation Center, Rural Development, USDA

SUBJECT: Request for Emergency Approval of a New Information Collection Request for the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program

The Rural Business-Cooperative Service of the Rural Development (RD) Mission Area (Agency) within the United States Department of Agriculture, is requesting emergency review and approval of a new information collection for the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) Request for Applications (RFA). The Agency is requesting emergency approval by February 24, 2022.

The RFA will become effective 60 days after it is posted to grants.gov and allow the Agency to implement the MPPEP program as authorized by Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Public Law 117-2). Pursuant to this authority, USDA is making funding available to promote competition and give more and better options to producers by increasing meat and poultry processing capacity. Therefore, in order to ensure that any Information Collection and Recordkeeping activities are approved on the effective date, RD is requesting emergency approval of the new information collection in coordination with OMB clearance of the associated RFA. Use of the normal clearance procedures is likely to prevent or disrupt the collection of information from applicants for this vital program that is needed to decrease consumer prices for beef, pork, and poultry.

The need to improve resiliency is urgent, particularly due to the severe impacts of COVID-19 or other disasters such as fires or cyberattacks on small and mid-sized participants in the meat and poultry supply chain. The impacts are felt all the way to the dinner tables of all Americans in pricing and availability, and ultimately threatening the national health and economy.

An emergency clearance approval for this information collection is formally requested due to the need to effectively implement the program as quickly as possible to decrease consumer prices for beef, pork, and poultry (a measure commonly known as “food at home”). According to the Economic Research Service, the price of food increased by 6.5% in December 2021 over the previous year with meat prices being the biggest contributor to rising grocery costs.

Since December 2020, prices for beef have risen by 14.0%, pork by 12.1%, and poultry by 6.6%. Food prices create hardship for America families that continue to struggle financially as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This program is part of the Biden-Harris Action Plan for a Fairer, More Competitive, and More Resilient Meat and Poultry Supply Chain, which commits to taking immediate action to provide more affordable options to consumers.

The 60-day notice for comments will be published in the Federal Register as soon as possible after the RFA is posted to www.grants.gov. in order to submit the regular request to obtain a 3- year approval from OMB after receiving the 6-month OMB emergency approval. Due to the need to consider comments received and then issue another notice for the *Federal Register* for an additional thirty days of comment, the Agencies would not be able to complete the information collection process before the regulation will go into effect, which would hinder the program's processing and servicing. Please note that after the 60-day comment period closes, the Agencies will submit the collection package for a 3-year approval addressing any comments received.

In compliance with OMB regulations (5 CFR Part 1320), which implements the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13), the information collection and recordkeeping requirements that may be imposed by this section are submitted to OMB for emergency review and approval. Attached are the supporting statement and spreadsheet for the regulation.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Michele Brooks, Director, Regulations Management Division, Innovation Center, Rural Development by telephone at (202) 690-1078 or by email at Michele.Brooks@usda.gov or Lauren Cusick, Branch Chief, Regulations Management Division, Innovation Center, Rural Development by telephone at (202) 720-1414 or by email at Lauren.Cusick@usda.gov.

Thank you in advance for your quick review and response to us.

Attachments