USDA

GIPSA news

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EMPLOYEES OF THE GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2013

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Message from the Administrator

Larry Mitchell, Washington, DC

Larry Mitchell

As you know, the across-the-board budget cuts known as sequestration took effect on March 1. As the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) implements the sequester, we are committed to carrying out these cuts in a manner that is equitable and provides the least disruption to our customers.

Last week, Secretary Vilsack sent an email to all employees updating us on our budget situation. As referenced in the email, the Department is currently operating under a continuing resolution through March 27, 2013. Congress is currently in the process of considering legislation to provide funding through the remainder of the fiscal year.

As a team, we have found ways to operate more efficiently and we are working with the Secretary to achieve significant savings through the Blueprint for Stronger Service. I want to thank you for all you have done to save money while maintaining outstanding service to the American people.

Since sequestration was implemented on March 1, our agency will be forced to absorb a 5 percent cut before the end of the fiscal year. The magnitude of such a cut means that we are may be facing furloughs in the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration. Because this is a possibility, unions have been notified that, in accordance with collective bargaining agreements, discussions about furloughs will begin.

Please understand that this message does not mean that furloughs are a certainty. I share Secretary Vilsack's hope that Congress will take action to address this harmful course of action. And let me assure you, that if we do come to the point that furloughs are a sure thing, you will receive more information from me about our situation, along with written notice of furlough actions no less than 30 days before they commence.

Thank you again for your patience as we navigate these difficult issues. I recognize that this is a stressful time and want to remind you that your USDA Employee Assistance Program Coordinator (Idelisse Rodriguez) can provide advice in this very uncertain time. Please know that Secretary Vilsack and all of us on his leadership team care deeply about your wellbeing and that of your family and we are working to do all we can to manage this difficult situation.

FGIS Matters...!

Randall Jones, Washington, DC

In February, we had an excellent meeting with the Union as part of our Labor/Management Forum and discussed many important issues such as the Agency budget situation for FY13 and FY14, tour of duty, performance appraisal system samples, quality assurance program, 2013 forum metrics, USDA review of the national contract and needed changes to bring the contract into conformance with government regulations, and changes to licensing directive.

We also had the opportunity to meet with several industry stakeholders in Washington D.C. including the Pea and Lentil Association, North American Export Grain Association, and USA Rice. Across each of these discussions the groups shared that they are very pleased with the services that we provide, but also recognize the need for doing more with each dollar spent by FGIS.

We are in the middle of reviewing and modifying the fees that we charge for export services and hope to have a final rule published in April that will effectuate these changes. Industry stakeholders continue to express substantial concerns regarding increases to that can ultimately result in reduced exports. It is paramount for us to be sensitive to these concerns and continue to find efficiencies in the delivery of services. The focus on our fees is compounded by the fact that we anticipate lighter workloads and reduced grain exports in the coming years. In 2012, we saw export tonnage at one of the lowest levels in the past 20 years. And for the first 5 months of this year, we are running behind last year by 10 percent. We do not anticipate any significant improvements in the grain exports in the near future which will continue to result in reduced revenue.

The Executive Management Team is working with all managers and supervisors, the Union and all staff to identify measures that will allow FGIS to continue to provide high quality services while finding efficiencies that will reduce our costs. Our goal is to limit the costs of our services to 2012 costs. This is not an easy task as each year we typically incur cost increases related to salaries and benefits, rent, utilities, etc. We are looking at all facets in our service delivery processes including work schedules that will ensure the effective utilization of staff time. It is apparent that moving forward we will have less funding and fewer employees which necessitates creating processes that require less time and staff. We have to look at all areas and find ways to do more with less that will allow us to absorb the future funding reductions that are anticipated over the next 10 years. While the 5 percent reduction that may be required by sequestration may not sound like a great deal, FGIS has taken significant cuts over the prior years and these cuts have impacted our employee development and training programs, equipment replacement, travel for compliance and audits, filling of positions following retirements, and the ability to expand our aflatoxin and equipment monitoring programs. FGIS as a whole must continue to find ways to increase the efficiency in service delivery. What I have realized is this must be viewed as the new norm. We need to treat these measures not as a negative, but as an expectation and challenge. We must position our Program such that we are able to continue to deliver our services and meet the needs of our stakeholders – U.S. grain producers, handlers, marketers and exporters. Together we can meet this challenge.

"In 2012, we saw export tonnage at one of the lowest levels in the past 20 years."

Until next time, keep up the good work and stay safe!

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

(800) 222-0364

(888) 262-7848 (TTY)

http://www.FOH4You.com

Confidential toll-free number 24 hours a day/7 days a week

Names in the News

Personnel

Please welcome **Susan Keith** as Deputy Administrator of GIPSA's Packers and Stockyards Program. She joined USDA in December 2010 as the Senior Counselor to USDA's General Counsel. Prior to joining USDA, she served as the General Counsel to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry during Senator Tom Harkin's chairmanship of the committee. She has also worked for the National Corn Growers Association and former Congressman Dave Nagle of Iowa.

Susan Keith

Also, welcome **Eli Salahuddin** (Sala-who-dean), GIPSA's newest Civil Rights team member. Eli comes to us from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Diversity and Inclusions Office, a native Washingtonian, retired Army Sergeant and huge Redskins fan. Eli joins the Civil Rights Office team to among other things, focus on GIPSA's Early Dispute Resolution and Mediation program. He's married and has three children and three step-children. He's super excited about joining the USDA family, and looks forward to being a key player in our team's future success.

Eli Salahuddin

Condolences

J. T. Abshier, former director of FGIS Compliance Division (now Quality Assurance and Compliance Division) from 1977 until the early 1990's when he retired from government service, passed away on January 7, 2013, in Fredericksburg, Texas. J. T. was 81. A memorial service with military honors was held on January 12.

A Shout-Out Goes to...

- A welcoming shout-out goes to **Meghan Flynn.** She recently transferred from the Eastern Regional Office in Atlanta to the PSP headquarters. Welcome to DC!
- A helpful shout-out goes to **Jennifer Hill**, **Sherri Murphy**, **Andy Greenfield**, **Idelisse Rodriguez**, and **Stephanie Feinberg** for attending GIPSA's booth during this year's Agricultural Outlook Forum. Thank you!
- A special shout-out goes to **Candace Hildreth**, **Ana Alvarado**, **Julie Nelis**, **Jennifer Weiland,** and **Jennifer Hill** for celebrating Black History Month while attending a tour of the American History Museum in Washington, DC.

Jennifer Hill, Jennifer Weiland Ana Alvarado, Candace Hildreth, and Julie Nelis

Continued, see **A Shout-Out Goes to…!** *on page 4.*

***A Shout-Out Goes to**… from page 3*

- A distinguished shout-out goes to CFC DC keyworkers, **Morgan Arvaneh**, **Lisa Fyall**, **Ana Alvarado**, **Jennifer Hill**, **Ruth Ortiz**, and **Angela Emrich** for their work and commitment during this year's CFC. Administrator **Larry Mitchell** presented them with a CFC certificate and mug in recognition of their outstanding job during this year's campaign.

Morgan Arvaneh, Lisa Fyall, Ana Alvarado, Larry Mitchell, Jennifer Hill, Ruth Ortiz, and Angela Emrich

- A remarkable shout-out goes to **Jessica L. Power**, Kentucky Resident Agent, for her outreach efforts. On Tuesday, February 5, 2013, Jessica was invited to discuss her science and math related career with the students at Mapleton Elementary School, Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. Students, kindergarten through fourth grade, were introduced to the livestock cycle from production to consumption. Power briefly described the application of science and math in a Resident Agent position, emphasizing the importance of Agriculture as a career choice for the young students.

Jessica L. Power

- An extraordinary shout-out goes to **Richard Aguilera!** He is featured in this month's **Toledo Field Office Employee Spotlight.**

Meet Richard Aguilera

Hired: July 2011
Position: Agricultural Commodity Aid (Intermittent)
Duty Point Location: Chicago

Richard brings an infectious smile and "can-do" attitude to work with him every day. Whether he is performing stowage exams on barges or containers (no matter the weather), or performing weighing duties, we always know the job is being completed in a professional manner. When he is not at work, Richard enjoys playing softball and rooting on his favorite teams: The Cubs, Blackhawks, Bears, and the Bulls.

Richard Aguilera

got change?

Fill out your change request form available at *inGIPSA* and email it to FGIS-CCWG@usda.gov

Getting to Know Your CCWG Members

Kari McPherson, Pierre, SD and
Marilynn Gallagher, Longview, TX

Last month's article featured brief biographies of members serving as the Chair, Co-Chair, and Co-Reporters of the Packers and Stockyards Program's Change Control Working Group (CCWG). So who else is serving on the CCWG? The CCWG is comprised of additional members from the Eastern Regional Office (ERO), Midwestern Regional Office (MRO,) Western Regional Office (WRO), and Headquarters. Here is a look at the rest of your CCWG members.

LaDondra Taylor

LaDondra has been part of the CCWG for approximately 6 months. She started with the Packers and Stockyards Program (P&SP) in January 2000 in the Midwestern Regional Office. As most of you know, this office had only been in operation for about a year. LaDondra began her career as a student under the former Student Temporary Employment Program. During that time, she did minor yet essential jobs such as shredding documents, copying multiple "green file" folders, and sorting through boxes of documents and organizing them in color coded folders. LaDondra received an Associates of Science Degree in Business Administration and applied to become an Administrative Assistant under the former Student Career Employment Program. Her excitement to be a USDA employee continued to blossom. She attended both day and night classes while working part-time until she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration. LaDondra then applied for a position in the Legal Instruments Examiner Unit and has been a part of that Unit since 2003. She is now currently participating on the CCWG. She believes this is a wonderful opportunity to implement the ideas of her fellow peers and contribute to our agency's goals. LaDondra encourages any and all to continue submitting their requests because in the words of her dad, "A closed mouth don't get fed."

Regina Ware

Regina is the youngest of five and grew up on a cotton and soybean farm in a small northern Louisiana town called Lake Providence. She received a B.S. in Agriculture Economics from Southern University Agricultural and Mechanical College located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Regina pursued and obtained an M.S. in Agriculture Economics from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, Arakansas. After receiving her Master's degree, she applied for several federal jobs and was hired by the New Orleans District of the Army Corps of Engineers as an entry level Economist. After working there for four years, she was hired by GIPSA and has enjoyed working here for the last six plus years. The CCWG has been a great experience for her as a Headquarters employee because it has allowed her to learn about the work that goes on in the regions that she hasn't had a chance to experience in person. Regina would like to see the CCWG move forward and become a more streamlined process and provide quicker implementation for approved change requests. The CCWG has been a voice for employees who actually do the work which makes it a viable source as Change Agents for the agency.

Onetisha Anderson

Onetisha is an Auditor with the ERO. She joined P&SP in 2007 after practicing accounting and preparing taxes for ten years with a private Certified Public Accountant (CPA) firm in Atlanta, Georgia. Onetisha is currently working on her second year with the CCWG team and would like to see us continue to grow in the future.

Marilynn Gallagher

Marilynn Gallagher is a Resident Agent with a focus on poultry with the WRO based in Longview, Texas. Previously, Marilynn was a Resident Agent with the ERO in South Carolina. Marilynn is a native of San Antonio. Her family comes from a working ranch and she worked there in the summers. She has both a Bachelor's and Master's in Animal Science. Her focus in graduate school was Bovine Theriogenology. To date, Marilynn is the only female to ever conduct field work for a thesis on the famed King Ranch in Kingville, Texas. Marilynn is published in the Unites States Library of Congress. She has completed her first year with the CCWG, her fifth year with P&SP, and looks forward to helping her fellow co-workers improve P&SP.

There you have it! You now have a better idea of who is serving on the CCWG. Each member looks forward to hearing about your concerns, ideas, or anything you want to see changed within P&SP.

Focus on Organic Agriculture in Aglearn

Caroline Thorpe, Washington, DC

What: Several courses on Organic Agriculture are available in AgLearn, which employees can take voluntarily. These provide basic knowledge on this fast growing sector of agriculture and a high profile area at USDA.

Why? According to Larry Mitchell, GIPSA's Administrator, our nation was built on organic agriculture for generations and more recent traditional methods have really been employed over the last 50 years. This sector has proved to be a crucial component of rural communities. Because organic products tend to be higher priced, fewer acres are required for an operation to be profitable. As a result, smaller, young, beginner and social disadvantaged farmers are able gain a foothold as start up businesses. Further, organic farms tend to strengthen local production and local economies with fresher food and in turn support initiatives such as know your farmer know your food.

Note: The retail value of the organic industry grew to $31.4 billion in 2011, up from $21.1 billion in 2008 according to the Council of Economic Advisors, White House Rural Council, and USDA.

Why at USDA? In recognition of the changing agricultural produce landscape Organic Food Production Act of 1990 required that the USDA develop national standards for organic products and the National Organic Program was established 2000. As a result, USDA has raised its focus on organic agriculture.

Description: Two courses are available in AgLearn on organic agriculture with the goal to help USDA employees understand the needs of organic agricultural producers. Also, this is intended to help employees make USDA organic programs and services more accessible and to connect them with appropriate resources. To locate the courses in AgLearn either click on the links below or go to your AgLearn account and enter the text of the titles below in the search box located on the right hand side of your AgLearn account and click brows.

Organic 101: Introduction to Organic

Organic 201: Intermediate Organic

Mandatory Training Due (all employees otherwise stated)

FY2013 USDA Information Security Awareness Training	**3/31/13**
Ethics: Seeking Non-Federal Employment	6/30/13
Ethics: Basic Post-Employment Restrictions	6/30/13
Ethics: Fundraising	6/30/13
Workplace Harassment	9/30/13
Cultural Transformation Diversity on the Job: The Importance of Diversity and the Changing Workplace	7/31/13
Veterans USDA USERRA 2010 or "Veteran Employment Training for Federal Hiring Managers (Hiring Managers)	7/31/13

Voluntary Webinars (Announced via e-mail)	Scheduled Date	
Leadership Panel Discussion	4/3/13	12:00-1:30pm

Framework for Change

Eli Salahuddin, Washinton, DC

As you may know, the "Framework for Change" initiative announced on May 3, 1990, extended the coverage of the critical performance element to all employees, regardless of their supervisory responsibilities. The purpose of the EEO/Civil Rights element is to assist in creating and fostering an environment that values workforce diversity, ensures that no person is unjustly advantaged or disadvantaged, and to provide services that reflect fairness in the delivery of GIPSA programs. In recent meetings with managers the subject of EEO/Civil Rights performance elements guidelines had come into question. With that in mind, here's some important information that may be useful for managers to successfully engage their employees in a discussion on the purpose, guidelines, standards and responsibilities involved in the evaluation of the critical performance elements of the civil rights program. Access these guidelines by logging into inGipsa, and using this link: https://ingipsa.gipsa.usda.gov/eeocr_perf.aspx , click on the Guidelines for Applying EEO/Civil Rights Performance Element option under Policy. You can also select the EEO/CR option under Employee Resources. If you have further questions or concerns, please contact the Civil Rights office by calling (202) 720-9528 or FAX (202) 690-0609.

Sick Leave and FERS

Traditionally, the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) did not allow credit for unused sick leave. Public Law 111-84 changed that. FERS employees retiring between the effective date of that law (October 28, 2009) and December 31, 2013, get half-credit for unused sick leave. Those who retire on or after January 1, 2014, will get full credit. If you retire on or after January 1, 2014, a year's worth of sick leave will translate into a percentage increase in your FERS annuity; 1.1 percentage points if you are at age 62 or older with at least 20 years of service at retirement. And, you do receive credit for sick leave that amounts to less than a year.

Mid-Year Performance Progress Reviews

Idelisse Rodriguez, Washington, DC

We have reached the midpoint of the FY 2013 performance cycle. Per USDA Directive DR4040-430, supervisors are required to conduct mid-year performance reviews of their employees. The Department requires all mid-year performance reviews be completed by **April 30, 2013**. You may be asked by your supervisor to provide a summary of your mid-year accomplishments. These summaries aid supervisors in the preparation of mid-year performance progress reviews. To assist you with this task, a tip sheet for preparing accomplishment reports has been created for your use. This document provides helpful hints for preparing effective accomplishment reports, along with suggestions regarding appropriate grammatical and formatting styles.

Mid-year performance progress reviews are to be completed between March 1 and April 30, 2013**,** so now is the time to draft your accomplishments. The Tip Sheet for Writing Accomplishment Reports is available on the Intranet at http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/performance_management/downloads/MRP_accomplishment_report.pdf .

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me by phone 202-720-5688 or via email at Idelisse.Rodriguez@usda.gov.

2013 Women's History Month Honorees

National Women's History Project via Jody Boydston-Johnson and Onethisa Anderson

The 18 Honorees for National Women's History Month 2013 are all extraordinary visionaries and role models in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, where women are still noticeably underrepresented. The theme for March 2013 highlights women in the STEM fields: "*Women Inspiring Innovation Through Imagination: Celebrating Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.*"

These 18 Honorees represent a remarkable range of accomplishments and a wide diversity of specialties including medicine, robotics, computer programming, atmospheric chemistry, architecture and primatology. Here are the 18 Honorees for 2013:

Hattie Elizabeth Alexander (1901 -1968) - **Pediatrician and Microbiologist**—Hattie Alexander developed the first effective remedies for Haemophilus influenzae, reducing the mortality rate from nearly 100 percent to less than 25. Alexander was also among the first scientists to identify and study antibiotic resistance, which she correctly concluded was caused by random genetic mutations in DNA.

Marlyn Barrett (1954) - **K-12 STEM Educator—**Marlyn Barrett is a coordinator of science instruction for Worcester County Public Schools and a project director for a grant which provides professional development for 135 teachers in 14 counties throughout Maryland.

Patricia Era Bath (1942) - **Ophthalmologist and Inventor—**Patricia Bath's invention of the Laserphaco Probe was an important milestone in the advent of laser cataract surgery. Bath co-founded the American Institute for the Prevention of Blindness (1976) committed to "protect, preserve, and restore the gift of sight."

Elizabeth Blackwell (1821-1910) - **Physician**—Elizabeth Blackwell was the first fully accredited female doctor in the United States. She, along with her sister, Emily, founded the first medical school for women, resulting in greater acceptance of female physicians, more opportunities for meaningful work for American women, and stricter standards for medical schools as a whole.

Katharine Burr Blodgett (1898 -1979) - **Physicist and Inventor—**Katharine Blodgett was the first woman awarded a PhD in Physics from the University of Cambridge (1926) and the first woman research scientist for General Electric's Schenectady, New York laboratory (1920). Blodgett received eight US patents, most famously for inventing low-reflectance "invisible" glass.

Edith Clarke (1883 -1959) - **Electrical Engineer**—Edith Clarke was the first woman to earn an M.S. in electrical engineering from MIT (1919) and the first woman professor of electrical engineering in the US (University of Texas at Austin 1947). She invented the Clarke Calculator, a graphical device for solving power transmission line equations, and is also well known for authoring an influential textbook on power engineering.

Dr. Rita R. Colwell (1934) - **Molecular Microbial Ecologist and Scientific Administrator**—Dr. Colwell served as the first woman Director of the National Science Foundation (1998-2004), where she exemplified the importance of STEM education by her leadership in K-12 STEM education, graduate STEM education, and the increased participation of women and minorities in science and engineering.

Dian Fossey (1932 - 1985) - **Primatologist and Naturalist**—For 18 years Dian Fossey studied, lived amongst, and befriended the gorillas of Rwanda. Fossey made many discoveries about gorillas including understanding gorilla vocalizations, gorilla group hierarchies and social relationships, and gorilla diet and recycling of nutrition.

Susan A. Gerbi (1944) - **Molecular Cell Biologist**—Susan A. Gerbi is the George Eggleston Professor of Biochemistry at Brown University, where her research team devised a method to map the start site of DNA replication at the nucleotide level. Her current research suggests that a steroid hormone receptor may play a direct role for regulating the initiation of DNA replication, with potential significance to understand the role of hormones in certain cancers.

Continued, see **Women's History…!** *on page 9.*

Women's History *from page 8*

Helen Greiner (1967) - **Mechanical Engineer and Roboticist**—Helen Greiner is co-founder and former President/Chairman of iRobot Corporation, a world leader in consumer and military robots, and current CEO of CyPhyWorks.

Grace Murray Hopper (1906 -1992) - **Computer Scientist** Grace Hopper was a pioneering computer scientist and Rear Admiral in the United States Navy. Hopper joined the Navy Reserve during World War II and worked as one of the first programmers of the Harvard Mark 1 Computer. She later wrote the first computer programming compiler (1952) and conceptualized the first modern programming language (1954).

Olga Frances Linares (1936) - **Anthropologist and Archaeologist**—Olga Linares is a senior staff scientist (emerita) at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Linares is best known for her work on the cultural ecology of Panama, concluding that Central America served not only as a corridor between Mesoamerica and South America but as home to indigenous populations.

Julia Morgan (1872 -1957) - **Architect**—Julia Morgan was the first woman admitted to the architecture program at l'École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and the first woman architect licensed in California. Morgan designed over 700 buildings in California and is best known for her work on Hearst Castle in San Simeon.

Louise Pearce (1885-1959) - **Physician and Pathologist**—Louise Pearce was a physician and pathologist with the Rockefeller Institute. Pearce worked on the team that found a cure for African Sleeping Sickness (1919) and made a solo trip to the Belgian Congo to test the new drug (1920).

Jill Pipher (1955) - **Mathematician**—Jill Pipher is president of the Association of Women in Mathematics (2011), and director of the Institute for Computational and Experimental Research in Mathematics (2011). The ICERM is a NSF funded mathematics institute supporting cutting edge research on the intersections of mathematics and computers.

Mary G. Ross (1908 -2008) - **Mechanical Engineer**—Mary Ross was the first woman engineer at Lockheed's Missiles Systems Division (1952), and the first known Native American woman engineer. At Lockheed, Ross designed missiles and rockets, and developed systems for human space flight and interplanetary missions to Mars and Venus.

Susan Solomon (1956) - **Atmospheric Chemist**—Susan Solomon is the Ellen Swallow Richards Professor of atmospheric chemistry and climate science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her groundbreaking research on chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) as the cause of the Antarctic ozone hole was part of the basis of the international treaty that has effectively regulated damaging chemicals.

Flossie Wong-Staal (1946) - **Virologist and Molecular Biologist**—Flossie Wong-Staal is one of the world's foremost authorities in the field of virology. Wong-Staal was a pioneering researcher of retroviruses and with her team deciphered the structure of the HIV virus as the cause of AIDS. She was the first to clone and complete the genetic mapping of HIV making it possible to develop HIV tests.

Are EEO/CR issues or concerns affecting your employment with GIPSA? Do you have questions? Need help?
Then let your voice be heard. Call the Civil Rights Staff at 202-720-0216

Issuance Report

Terri Henry, Washington, DC

Issuance Change No. 2 to the Moisture Handbook, dated January 28, 2013

FGIS Directive 9070.5, Grain Handling Practices, dated February 22, 2013

FGIS Directive 9020.1, Exemptions and Waivers of Official Inspection and Class X Weighing Requirements, dated February 22, 2013

FGIS Policy Memorandum Reference No. 254, Submitted vs. "Type" Sample, dated February 25, 2013

GIPSA Idea Hotline

GIPSA Idea Hotline is open for business. Please send your suggestions or ideas to GIPSA-Ideas@usda.gov; fax them to 202-690-2173; or telephone them to 1-800-455-3447 or 202-720-7045. It is best to send them via fax or email to reduce the possibility of transcription errors; however, ideas will be accepted regardless of the method of transmission.

GIPSA News is the employee newsletter of the USDA Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration. Send your news, ideas, suggestions, comments, questions, or thoughts for the next issue to:

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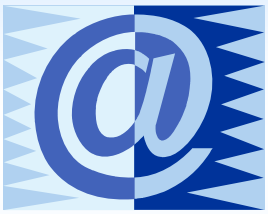

by April 1, 2013

Retiring? To be included on our email distribution list after you retire from GIPSA, please send your email address to Idelisse.Rodriguez@usda.gov.

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