



GIPSA NEWS

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

Charting a Course Beyond the Horizon And a few musings about what matters to our organization

By Larry Mitchell



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WASHINGTON— As you probably know by now, hitting the road every once in a while helps me clear the cobwebs and put matters into perspective. Driving back from a Packers and Stockyards conference in Texas recently I sensed strategic change in the wind. It reminded me that not only is summer a memory, but so is the 2015 fiscal year.

Recent passage of the Agriculture Reauthorizations Act of 2015, as well as a continuing resolution to fund our government, signals that it's time look beyond the horizon and adjust sights at the future roadmap of our organization.

The arrival of fall among America's farming and ranching communities typically spurs increased activity as daylight and temperatures decrease. It's a call to agricultural action and shifting plans into motion. At GIPSA it's no different. It's been a busy time.

Since Spring a combined team representing the grain and livestock programs began laying the groundwork to refocus our organization's strategic landscape for the next five years. The team hammered out three themes that highlight what we do internally for our employees and externally for our customers—*promote, provide, and protect*.

Maintaining a steady wheel requires us to *promote* the highest standards in grain, livestock, and poultry for domestic and international markets. As GIPSA continues to uphold an environment highlighting fairness and transparency, we also promote communication to ensure our workers understand the role they play in providing stability for domestic producers.

I'll highlight the theme *provide* with the image of first responders. In our case first responders include GIPSA field staff whose hard work each day provides integrity in the agricultural community. We help our stakeholders and customers succeed by maintaining the highest standards of grain inspection and daily regulatory monitoring

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Charting a Course Along the Horizon (cont.)

with livestock producers and poultry growers. GIPSA must continue on the road to agricultural prosperity for America by advancing the highest level of trust and confidence in the quality of products for our customers and stakeholders.

Safeguarding the integrity of markets requires that we *protect* the agricultural community by quickly pursuing violations, enforcing statutes, and regulations. Like any first responder, we must also protect with continuous focus on safety, diversity, and dignity. Our efforts and personal conduct with colleagues and customers must be consistent with our core values.

I recognize the challenges as we strive to achieve mission goals during this new fiscal year and beyond. Along the journey I ask for your support in shaping the culture of our organization by embracing GIPSA's core values as the essence of what matters. Our success depends on it.



Join your fellow federal workers who are making extraordinary things possible with their CFC donations. Support charities that are meaningful to you by making a generous contribution through the Combined Federal Campaign.

—GIPSA's Core Values—

- **Transparency** — Making the Agency's management processes more open to help the public understand how GIPSA supports the American public.

- **Participation** — Providing opportunities for GIPSA constituents and employees to shape and improve the organization's programs and services.

- **Collaboration** — Working cooperatively at all governmental levels, domestically and internationally, on policy matters affecting a broad audience.

- **Accountability** — Ensuring that the organization's performance, and all of its employees are measured against the achievement of GIPSA's strategic goals.

- **Customer Focus** — Serving GIPSA's constituents by delivering programs that address their diverse and dynamic needs.

- **Professionalism** — Building and maintaining a highly skilled, diverse workforce that exemplifies integrity.

- **Results Orientation** — Measuring performance and making management and fiscal decisions to direct resources where they are used most effectively.



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;





FGIS Matters

By Randall Jones, GIPSA Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Grain Standards Act Reauthorized!

I am pleased to inform that on September 30, the President signed into law the **Agriculture Reauthorizations Act of 2015**. Over the past year, a tremendous amount of time and energy has been spent by FGIS, GIPSA and USDA staff providing information and support for the reauthorization of the USGSA. Reauthorization, which last occurred in 2005, is an extraordinarily valuable process that provides the opportunity for stakeholders (producers, handlers, marketers, buyers, and consumers) to provide input regarding the official inspection system. There were stakeholder meetings held around the country, too numerous to mention, hearings held by Congress, meetings within USDA, meetings within GIPSA, meetings within FGIS—well, you get the idea. This stakeholder input and gathering of information is vital to the ongoing success of the Official Inspection system. The review of the USGSA is the ultimate “performance review” and a time when stakeholders have their opportunity to chime in as to what is working well and – maybe what might not be working as well as they like.



We heard that FGIS plays a critical role in the marketing of high quality grain in the U.S. and abroad. And yes, we heard some things upon which FGIS needs to improve and, hence, changes need to be made. But before we get into the changes, I am honored to say that as the result of your hard work and dedication, FGIS came through this “performance review” shining brightly.

On September 28, the reauthorization was on the floor of the House of Representative and the **Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Collin C. Peterson** made the following statement “the U.S. Grain Standards Reauthorization Act will allow the Federal Grain Inspection Service to continue official weighing and inspection services. Both grain buyers and sellers rely on a “gold standard” quality assurance, backed by the federal government, when conducting business.”

Congressman’s Peterson’s remarks that FGIS is the “gold standard” for grain inspection have been repeated numerous times during the past year and reflects highly of our program. We all have much of which to be proud.

And now for the changes ...

- ◆ Secretary must "immediately take action" in the event of disruption of official inspection and that GIPSA must report to Congress within 24 hours any disruption with daily updates.
- ◆ States will no longer have indefinite delegated terms and will now receive “delegations” of up to five years. Delegated states must provide FGIS 72 hours advance notice if the State temporarily suspends service.
- ◆ Weighing inbound barges will no longer be mandatory.
- ◆ Official agencies will be able to have designations for up to five years and increase licenses to five year terms. FGIS must consult with official agency customers during quality management reviews.
- ◆ Tonnage fees shall be based on a rolling five-year average and adjusted at least annually to maintain a reserve of 3-6 months.
- ◆ All of the expiring provisions will be reauthorized for five years.
- ◆ Within 180 days, reports must be submitted to Congress regarding the disruption of federal inspection of grain exports that occurred at the Port of Vancouver and policy barriers to grain producers in foreign countries.

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FGIS Matters (continued)

By Randall Jones, GIPSA Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Next steps – we will create a team that will draft implementing regulations to be reviewed and cleared by the **Office of General Counsel**. We will have to publish in the Federal Register a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that will outline our intentions to implement the changes and allow our stakeholders to comment on the proposed changes. After receiving the comments, we will publish a Final Rule in the Federal Register that will address any concerns raised and implement the changes of the Agriculture Reauthorizations Act of 2015. Our goal is to have the Final Rule published not later than September 2016.

Labor Management Forum. The **FGIS management team** and the **Union leaders** met on September 8 and 9 at the National Grain Center. The key topics discussed were timeliness of inspections, establishing a process for 301 forms, upward mobility, PAS sample selection, leave restrictions, staffing needs and promotions, licensing requirements, and uniforms. The union is working on drafting plans on timeliness of inspection, upward mobility, and PAS sample selection. FGIS management agreed to submit a draft of the Licensing Directive 9230.1 to the Union and to reissue Directive 4735.2 on dress code to incorporate the Memorandum of Agreement that resulted from negotiations. I want to thank **President Wallace Martin** and his team for their cooperation and dedication to making FGIS the best Program within USDA.

North American Millers' Association and Canadian Millers' Association Meeting. Last month, I was invited to be a keynote speaker at the **North American Millers' Association** and the **Canadian National Millers' Association Supply Chain Forum**. (Continued on Page 11)



ALGIERS, Algeria—Several members from the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) traveled to Algeria September 1-3 to conduct a training workshop (top and bottom photos) on corn, soybeans, and wheat export inspection. Mr. Barry Gomoll, a grain marketing specialist based in Washington, D.C., and Mr. Ronald Bundy, quality assurance specialist from the FGIS Toledo, Ohio field office, explained the U.S. inspection system and quality control procedures with support from officials from the U.S. Embassy and U.S. Grains Council. (USDA Photo)



Reunion with Class—GIPSA Style

Who's Smiling?



STEPHENVILLE, Texas— Who said you can't go home again? Well, not my Alma Mater at least. Last month I spent some time in my home state after attending the Packers and Stockyards conference in San Antonio. Following that event I headed to Tarleton State University as part of outreach efforts connecting students with alumni. After engaging with faculty, students, and staff in several classes about careers in agriculture and offering some reflections on life's experiences on the trail, I shared the spotlight with distinguished company during the university's Alumni Academic Forum Presentations. On my left is Tarleton President F. Dominic Dottavio. On my right are Ms. Chelsea Brookshire, Ms. Amy Chandler Crippen, Mr. L.V. Coffee, Mr. Ron Adams, and Dr. Karen Murray, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs. (Photo Courtesy of Tarleton State University)



WASHINGTON— The Department of Agriculture joins the nation in celebrating National Hispanic Heritage Month through October 15. During this time, the nation honors the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America. The start of National Hispanic Heritage Month also marks the anniversary of independence for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Mexico and Chile observe their independence September 16 and 18, respectively. The theme of this year's observance, *Hispanic Americans: Energizing our Nation's Diversity*, harkens vibrant and thriving contributions of Hispanics to our nation across the centuries.

Freedom of Information Act

Got FOIA?

GIPSA's Freedom of Information Act Officer Shares Advice

By Joanne Peterson



WASHINGTON— If you received a request from a grain trade organization for state inspection data, would you know what to do? I recently received a suggestion to provide Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) training. No problem. But do you really want to know the nitty-gritty details of processing a FOIA request, including exemptions and how to apply them? I didn't think so. Instead I will briefly cover the FOIA process in case you receive requests for records, data, and general information.

The Freedom of Information Act is the principal federal statute governing public access to government information, thereby enabling anyone to learn about government operations and decisions. The statute provides everyone the right, enforceable in court, to obtain federal records unless the records, or any portion, are protected by one of nine exemptions, or by one of three special law enforcement record exclusions.

In Fiscal Year 2011 the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) adopted a management system to handle FOIA requests—FOIAXpress (FX). To simplify and automate the process. FX electronically maintains the history of every FOIA request by department including receipt, acknowledgement, record searches, uploading records, redacting information, invoicing charges, fees, final responses, records delivery, recording final disposition, and request close-out. In addition to providing an array of administrative reports, FX makes the annual report an easier undertaking for FOIA staff compared to previous years.

Not every request for information requires processing under FOIA. In some cases directing the requesting party to the GIPSA website by providing a hyperlink will suffice. You may also provide the information directly.

GIPSA's internet website at www.gipsa.usda.gov provides public information and data without the need for a FOIA request. Simply provide the link to the web page for commonly used forms, brochures, annual reports, and directives. Other types of available information includes: FGISonline, grain inspection and weighing services, FGIS visual reference library, FGIS' advisory committee meeting minutes, P&SP's databases of regulated entities, expired entities, tariffs, the swine contract library, FGIS data and statistics, financial data, export grain inspection reports, and export grain.

Certain marketing, regulatory, and business records maintained by the Packers and Stockyard Program, the Federal Grain Inspection Service, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and the office of the GIPSA administrator are not in the public domain and will require access via FOIA.

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Freedom Of Information Act (cont.)

Other records subject to the FOIA review and disclosure process includes those that GIPSA generates, collects, and maintains such as:

- ◆ Business records relating to grain, livestock, meat, and poultry
- ◆ Internal and external correspondence, memoranda, electronic mail, telephone logs, and notes
- ◆ Records reflecting GIPSA decisions and the decision-making process
- ◆ Statistical data, data analyses, and electronic database information
- ◆ Ship loading files, including inspection and weighing work records, official certificates, test results, scale test reports, and stowage examinations
- ◆ Complaints filed on grain shipments, review and monitoring reports, investigation reports and supporting documentation
- ◆ Employee records
- ◆ Subpoenas for GIPSA records

The FOIA process is not burdensome and requests seldom take months to complete. Unlike other government agencies GIPSA does not receive hundreds of FOIA requests, nor does it have a huge backlog pending processing. Thank Goodness! GIPSA staff members conducting record searches are exceptionally conscientious and respond to requests very quickly. That enables me to review and process responses within the 20 days required by law. Now and then I receive a complex request that may require searching hundreds or even thousands of records. While this may take several months to complete, *rolling releases* is an effective strategy. Anyone requesting information from GIPSA may do so by e-mail, letter, phone or fax. Another option is the FOIA Public Access Link (PAL), a web portal that accepts on-line requests and monitors the status. PAL requires registration and a password.

Every FOIA request is weighed against the requirements of safeguarding national security and preserving personal privacy. Avoiding unintended disclosure of information considered privileged or confidential, containing names, personal data, or of an investigative nature is everyone's responsibility. It is essential to first contact the FOIA officer for guidance before making public GIPSA records, data, or information.

For questions or concerns regarding FOIA or public requests for information, I may be reached at (202) 720-8087, or by e-mail, Joanne.C.Peterson@usda.gov

Editor's note:

If you receive a Freedom of Information Act request by telephone, direct the caller to Ms. Peterson's number. If the request is electronic, provide Ms. Peterson's e-mail, or forward the person's email to her. She will acknowledge the request. If the request arrives via fax, simply scan the correspondence and e-mail it to Ms. Peterson.



Employee Appreciation



A shout out to...

*I would like to give a big thank you to senior management, facilitators and those who participated in the Real Talk/debriefing session for Employee Engagement in Atlanta and Kansas City this August. I appreciated your acts of kindness and welcoming me back. I also want to thank **Ms. Jennifer Hill** for her support with the debriefing for senior management and employees.*

*I really appreciated **Mr. Justin Tone-Pah-Hote**'s help in organizing the Kansas City visit as well as **Mr. Juan Luevano** from the Board of Appeals and Review Branch for giving me an overview of the work they do. I also want to thank **Ms. Kari McPherson** who assisted with the debriefing with senior management and employees.*

—Ms. Pat Ogunyale, Washington, D.C.



*During my military career I always encountered someone to offer me an azimuth check—Army talk for friendly advice. **Ms. Jennifer Hill** did just that when I arrived at GIPSA this summer. Ms. Hill handled the newsletter for several years as an additional duty at GIPSA Headquarters. She also volunteers for other department initiatives, including USDA's Feds Feed Families at the national level. No matter how many projects she was balancing, she always made time to listen and offer advice with a smile. Thank you, Jennifer. —The editor*

WASHINGTON— Ms. Pat Ogunyale, **(above)** program support specialist at GIPSA's Information Technology Branch prepares a lunch meal as a fund raiser for Feds Feed Families (FFF). Ms. Ogunyale serves as a champion for FFF at GIPSA headquarters. Ms. Jennifer Hill **(right)** recently received an award from GIPSA Administrator Mr. Larry Mitchell for producing the monthly *GIPSA News* during the past several years.

One final shout out to...

***Ms. Ebony Broadwater** was this year's chair for the FFF food drive at GIPSA headquarters. Thanks to her efforts at coordinating logistics for multiple events, raising cash donations and food items she helped neighbors put food on their table and combat food insecurity. She merits our gratitude for ensuring fewer children go to bed hungry tonight. —The editor*



Employees Who Make A Difference



WASHINGTON— There is always something to give thanks for at headquarters, especially now that fall is in the air. Mr. Mark Kemp, Safety and Health Manager, **(top left)** receives an award from GIPSA Administrator Mr. Larry Mitchell. Ms. Ebony Broadwater **(top right)**, chair for this year's Feds Feed Families campaign shares a farewell smile with Ms. Amanda Tucker **(on Ms. Broadwater's left)**. Ms. Tucker recently departed USDA for assignment in another federal agency after more than nine years with GIPSA as a secretary and later as program specialist to the administrator. Mr. Edward Chi, Information Security Manager, **(above)** receives a certificate of appreciation for his services from Mr. Mitchell. Mr. Dexter Coburn, Equal Employment Opportunity specialist **(right)** leads a discussion among senior leaders during the recent Packers and Stockyards conference. **(USDA photos)**

Welcome to Our New Employees



Ms. Gail Parrish was selected as a resource management specialist within the office of the director, National Grain Center. Ms. Parrish began her career with GIPSA in August 2008 as a Program Support Assistant within the office of the director. Prior to joining GIPSA, Ms. Parrish held a position in international sales and marketing with Farmland Foods providing administrative support to the vice president, coordinating logistics for exported products, and managing product inventory and distribution. Ms. Parrish previously served as assistant branch manager of Hillcrest State Bank in Gladstone, Missouri.

Mr. Jorge Vazquez was selected as a compliance officer and will report to the National Grain Center December 14. Mr. Vazquez began his career in 2002 working for a private agency, in Houston. In 2008, he was hired as an agricultural commodity technician with the USDA/GIPSA/FGIS team in League City, Texas. Mr. Vazquez learned about operations throughout all League City field offices by volunteering for various assignments. He took on the challenge of a vessel surveyor for special foreign projects, served in the National Safety Committee, assisted with the protein monitoring program, worked with the scale specialist, and was a member of the QAS team. In 2013, Mr. Vazquez accepted a position with the Stuttgart Field Office as a QAS/Program Manager at the West Sacramento, California duty point. He was responsible for overseeing two official agencies with jurisdictions in California and Arizona. Mr. Vazquez was part of the 2011 internship group and participated in the 2012 GIPSA Leadership Development Program. He received his associate degree from San Jacinto College in Houston.



Ms. Linda Lawrence was selected as industrial hygienist within the office of the director at the National Grain Center. Prior to joining GIPSA, Ms. Lawrence served as industrial hygienist with the Department of the Air Force and the Department of the Army. Her tours included stints in Texas, Alaska, and Kansas, as well as four years in Germany. Most recently, she worked for the Army at Fort Riley, Kansas. Ms. Lawrence earned a master's degree in Occupational and Environmental Health from the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences in Little Rock, and is credentialed as a Certified Industrial Hygienist by the American Board of Industrial Hygiene. She joined GIPSA September 20.

Ms. Adele Jackson-Croal was appointed management analyst to the administrator, Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration in Washington, D.C. September 20. Ms. Jackson-Croal began her career in the United States Army with more than 20 years of service as a senior logistician and equal employment opportunity manager. She served two combat tours including the Persian Gulf and theater of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Prior to arriving in Washington, Ms. Jackson-Croal was an equal opportunity advisor for more than seven years, before retiring to the suburbs of Atlanta. She worked for more than five years as lead logistics analyst contractor for BAE Systems at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Before joining GIPSA, Mrs. Jackson-Croal served as Substitute Teacher with Department of Defense Educational Activity. Mrs. Jackson-Croal earned a Masters of Business Administration with a minor in Human Resource Management and an additional Masters of Education— both with honors from Strayer University. She is currently a candidate for an Educational Doctorate with Phoenix University. Ms. Jackson-Croal was born in Georgia and raised in Florida. She hails from a family devoted to military service including a father and husband who served in the Army, and brothers in the Navy and Marines. Her eldest son serves in the Air Force.



FGIS Matters (continued)

By Randall Jones, GIPSA Headquarters, Washington, D.C.



Kansas City, Mo.—The Grain Inspection Packers and Stockyard Administration conducted its Labor Management Forum quarterly meeting at the National grain Center September 9-10. Representatives attending include: Top Row: Allen Duplech, Pat McCluskey, Alan Wadyko, Kerry Petit, Cary Ainsworth, Greg DeMott, Tony Goodman First Row: Vince Volpe, Wallace Martin, Randall Jones, Susan Keith, Jeana Harbison-Pasha, Ashley Linton, Jeff L’Heureux (USDA Photo by Ruth Goff)



ATLANTA— Got Soul? If your name is Erica Nelson, you bet. The auditor (pictured fourth from the left) from the Packers and Stockyards Atlanta office recently accompanied lead vocalist Mr. Ed Rolands and the rock band *Collective Soul* at the Georgia Music Hall of Fame Awards. (Photo courtesy of Ms. Erica Nelson)

Packers & Stockyards Program

Staff Hits Trail for All-hands Conference



Howdy! So why are all these GIPSA staff members smiling? You would be too if the boss informed you to pack your saddlebags and head to a conference—even better if it's in Texas. The Packers and Stockyards Program staff gathered on the steps of San Antonio's historic city hall for a group photo during their recent conference September 15-17. *The stars at night are big and bright...ok, you know the rest.* (USDA Photo by old cowhand)



SAN ANTONIO, Texas—Regional directors, supervisors, managers, auditors, economists, marketing specialists, and field agents from the Packers and Stockyards Program headed deep in the heart of Texas September 15-18 for a conference in a city renowned for its history and spirit of independence.

More than 100 staff members from the organization's three regional offices gathered for the first time in years in San Antonio's iconic Riverwalk for the latest information, policy updates, and procedures from administration officials, support agencies, field experts, and industry stakeholders.

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Ms. Lori Janes, entrepreneur and owner of The Cattleman's Resource, (left) explains software development trends in the livestock industry.

Packers & Stockyards Program

Staff Hits Trail for All-hands National Conference (Continued)

The three-day event featured general and breakout sessions covering a broad list of topics including presentations from industry guest speakers. Ms. Lori Janes, a software developer addressed variations in record keeping and the type of requests she receives to meet the needs of business owners from small to large operations.

Mr. Monte Cluck owner of a family-operated feed yard, and Mr. Jim Schwertner a Texas livestock dealer and banker, highlighted the importance of federal regulatory agencies like GIPSA in an industry where relationships thrive on trust and prompt payment .

Texas A&M University Professor John Carey addressed the latest USDA research on the spread of contagious disease impacting the poultry industry as well as recommended protocols and practical advice to limit the spread of Avian Influenza.



Mr. Larry Mitchell joined the event on the heels of his testimony to the House Agriculture Committee. He met with field staff and listened to comments and concerns during his two days of boots-on-ground in his home state.

Deputy Administrator Susan Keith (pictured above) led discussions and moderated several group sessions among the three regions and the Litigation and Economic Analysis Division in addition to providing guidance on various administrative and operational procedures throughout the conference.

Among the breakout sessions *Tips, Techniques, and Procedures for Investigations* highlighted the impact of persistent detective work in uncovering regulatory violations. Field Agents Justin Ham, John Mott (pictured left), Jade Friesz, and Avery Fisher provided examples using real cases to demonstrate how they successfully identified evidence of violations, including falsified prices, invoice and weighmaster discrepancies.

AURORA, Colo.— Not every hero wears a cape, a badge, or a uniform. Some are average citizens who confront crisis with courage and answer a call for help in their community.

Ms. Carol Carter, a GIPSA financial reports assistant at the Western Regional Office in Aurora, Colorado was recently presented with an award by the President of the Aurora Police Association, Sergeant Robert Wesner for stepping up to help a fellow citizen when a crime was being committed.

Ms. Carter stopped her vehicle to assist an assault victim and rendered first aid until paramedics arrived.

(Ms. Carter, center, receives her award from Aurora Police officials. Photo courtesy of Ms. Carol Carter.)





Supporting Farmers and Communities

GIPSA Headquarters, Washington, D.C.



(Above) The 2015 Feds Feed Families Campaign concluded October 4. Employees at the National Grain Center donated more than 5,500 pounds. Overall, GIPSA's totals exceeded 200,000 pounds. (USDA Photo by Ruth Goff). (Below) The weekly farmers market at GIPSA headquarters in Washington, D.C. also comes to an end this month. The USDA-sponsored event ran every Friday from May through October. Administrator Larry Mitchell proudly admits that supporting farmers is part of his DNA. Making time to support the local farmers market on Independence Avenue is also part of his Friday schedule. (USDA Photo)



WASHINGTON—The arrival of fall in the nation's capital is a yearly sign that heralds the start of major federal initiatives and the conclusion of others. Even as the Friday farmers market that became a weekly routine for area residents and government employees concludes this month, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced on October 2 that USDA will make available \$35 million in grant funding to support farmers markets, local and regional food systems.

The USDA's Agricultural and Marketing Service is administering \$25 million in two grants that will fund 324 projects to help ensure the livelihoods of the nation's farmers and ranchers while strengthening rural economies around the country.

The grants play an important role in American agriculture and in communities by supporting local and regional food systems and giving farmers and ranchers the chance to explore new market opportunities.