



GIPSA News

A newsletter for the employees of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

November 1998

From My Desk

Jim R. Baker

photo A

GIPSA Administrator Jim Baker

The past few days have been filled with good happenings. John Glenn returned to space after 35 years at the age of 77. He is considered a hero in our time and it seems to me that there are fewer heroes each year. The United States brokered an agreement that focuses on peace in the Middle East, a region that has been filled with unrest for many years. We can hope that success will be measured by peace in that region. Congress passed the 1999 budget that provided needed disaster funding that will help producers of food and fiber in many parts of the country. I know that in some areas, crop production failed due to weather and insects. The disaster that hit this year will be felt for many years to come as farmers' financial positions will challenge their ability to continue farming.

The fiscal year 1999 budget also included money to reorganize GIPSA's Packers and Stockyards Programs. Two and one half million was approved to restructure the regions and pay for relocation costs, and an additional \$400,000

was included for packer competition and industry monitoring work. The appropriators approved the restructuring plans and provided the money to make it happen. Now it is our responsibility to ensure that the restructuring will produce results, regulate marketing practices, and allow us to enforce the P&S Act in a timely, beneficial manner.

Our biggest challenge is to keep focused on the work to be done, make the transition, and maintain the sensitivity to the needs of our employees. This is how we will be measured from this day forward. Our success lives in the future not the past. We have the opportunity to implement this structure that will provide a foundation for monitoring competition, trade practices, and financial positions well into the 21st century.

October brought on badly-needed workload increases for the grain program. We set a record in shiphold inspections in New Orleans —102 ships in 7 days. That surpasses the old record by nine. **Albert Nelson** and his crews are to be commended for this effort. Records are made to be broken, it sure helps to see some positive signs. Portland is back to working four elevators, two with night shifts. This points to increased demand in export markets.

I appreciate the good work that this Agency performed in FY 1998. Everyone played a part in our accomplishments. Thank you!

Names in the News

Personnel

Robert Schmidt has been selected as Supervisory Auditor of the Financial Unit in the Atlanta regional office.

Welcome to **Louise Jones**, who is the new secretary in the P&S Office of the Deputy Administrator and to **Robert Clemans**, computer specialist, Denver.

The Compliance Division's Review Branch thanks the following field-based people who have assisted us with conducting these recent onsite compliance reviews: **Don Akers**, quality assurance specialist, Corpus Christi, **Ray Kirkpatrick**, agricultural commodity grader (ACG), Portland, and **Jim Tullous**, assistant field office manager, for the review of three official agencies in the Grand Forks Field Office circuit; and **Terrell Bailey**, ACG, New Orleans, for the review of the State of Alabama.

Farewell to **Carol Coburn**, legal instruments examiner, Indianapolis, who transferred to APHIS, and to **Reba Howell**, legal program assis-

tant, Lenexa, who transferred to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Awards

Lynn Burnette, Washington, DC, received a performance bonus for outstanding performance in support of the office of Director of Field Operations.

The New Orleans Field Office's **Raymond Andrews**, **Larry Bennett**, **Paul Breaux**, **Neil Foster**, **Clay LaFosse**, **Regina Landry**, **Larry Richard**, **William Smith**, **Willie Washington**, and **James Mackey**, New Orleans, received an extra effort group award for providing efficient and timely service to the rice industry in the Crowley circuit.

Carmon Adam, **Cynthia Butz**, **Mark Einarson**, **Penny Kilbride**, **Mary Knutson**, **Frederick Lindseth**, **Christopher Olson**, **Edward Stallman**, and **James Tullous**, Grand Forks, received spot awards for their efforts during the field office reviews conducted by Compliance Division August 6 through 13, 1998.

Henry Greenwood, Washington, D.C., received a time-off award for his effort in developing the vessel loading observation procedures to the point that it was expanded to include all Farm Service Agency export commodities.

Travel Offset

John Good, Washington, DC

Effective July 1998, the Department of the Treasury began subjecting travel advance and travel voucher payments to administrative offset in order to collect delinquent debts. This action is in accordance with the provisions of the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996. Many types of delinquent debts owed to Federal agencies, including past-due child support, are eligible for offset.

At least 30 days prior to offset, the National Finance Center will send each applicable employee a notification letter stating that his/her debt is delinquent and will be collected by salary offset. At the time offset occurs, Treasury will send a letter notifying the debtor of the offset, along with additional information about any remaining debt.

Travelers can avoid any hardship that might be created by an offset of a travel advance or voucher by entering into a repayment plan with the creditor agency to repay the debt. All debtors are provided this option before a debt is submitted by the creditor agency to the Department of the Treasury for collection by administrative offset.

In This Issue

P&S Conference	3
New FGIS Teams	3
ISO 9002 Certification	4
Idea Hotline Update	5
New DON Test Kit	5
Travel Bits & Pieces	6
FEHB Open Season	6
October Issuances	6
Rice Training for Sem Chi	7

P&S' Successful Management Conference

John Stencel, Washington, DC

Packers and Stockyards Programs (P&S) recently held their annual management conference in Des Moines, IA. **Harold Davis**, deputy administrator for P&S, called the three day meeting "a great success"! In addition to learning from fine guest speakers, we laid out operating plans for the next 2 years that reflect our transition period and beyond that will carry us through FY 2000. The speakers and our managers are commended for their insight into and commitment to identifying the challenges ahead of us.

In his address to the group, GIPSA administrator **Jim Baker** said that P&S programs will be "measured from this day forward". Restructuring has brought many changes and provides many new opportunities for P&S, including the opportunity to regulate the industry and ensure open, fair, and competitive markets for livestock. In the FY 1999 budget, Congress included funding for restructuring P&S to allow significantly larger staffs to be located near the concentrations of beef, pork and poultry production and slaughter. Managers will be challenged to manage more people and to formulate conclusions about the numerous and complex anti-competitive issues that have arisen recently in the livestock and meat packing industries.

Dr. Isi Siddiqui, deputy under secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, also addressed the group. **Dr. Siddiqui** challenged the managers to deliver services equal to the best in business. He said P&S programs is taking steps to meet customer needs, and that Department fully supports P&S' reorganization and the increased role of economists and attorneys in the Agency. **Dr. Siddiqui** went on to say that the Department is fully committed to addressing the competitive implications of structural changes that are occurring in the livestock, meat, and poultry industries.

*Continued, see P&S Conference
on page 6.*

New FGIS Teams

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

On October 6-7, 1998, FGIS management (all headquarters and three field office managers) met to discuss a number of issues impacting the future of FGIS and its employees. One of the outcomes of the meeting was the formation of four cross-cutting teams to address priority hot issues. Here are the teams and their members:

- **Federal Export Inspection** -- John Giler, team leader, Field Management Division (FMD), Washington, DC; Dave Mundwiler, FMD, Toledo; Virginia Roseberry, Compliance; Eurv Williams, Technical Services Division (TSD).
- **Geographic Boundaries** -- Neil Porter, sponsor, Compliance; John Sharpe, FMD; Steve Bennett, FMD, Minneapolis; Dave Mundwiler, FMD, Toledo; Ken Critchfield, FMD, Wichita; Karen Guagliardo, Compliance; Jim Williams, Compliance; Phil Spinelli, Economic/Statistical Support; Dave Lowe, TSD.
- **Standardization Services** -- Larry McDonald, team leader TSD; Tom Hearon, Compliance; John Giler, FMD, Washington, DC; Mike Johnson, FMD, California.
- **Workforce Planning** -- Marianne Plaus, team leader, Office of the Deputy Administrator (ODA); Dana Stewart, ODA; John Sharpe, FMD; Brian McKee, FMD; Larry Smith, FMD; Jan Hart, Compliance; and, Ron Bicsak, TSD.

The Union president, **Graig Watts**, or his designee will provide input for each of the teams.

Future newsletter articles will review the team objectives and progress.

ISO 9002 Certification

Ronald Bicsak, Technical Center

The Technical Center's Air Oven (Moisture) and Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer (Protein) Laboratories, which conduct the official FGIS reference methods for moisture and protein, have been recommended for ISO 9002 certification! As far as I know, these are the first USDA programs with ISO certification!

After a year of developing and implementing a new quality system and working instructions, TSD was visited by auditors from the British Standards Institute (BSI) on June 30, 1998. The auditors conducted a total assessment of our quality system, which included detailed working instructions and procedures. At the conclusion of the assessment, the auditors reviewed their findings with TSD managers and stated they were recommending ISO certification for the two laboratories.

Just what is ISO 9002? The International Organization for Standardization (ISO), located in Geneva, Switzerland, was founded in 1946 to develop a common set of standards in manufacturing, trade, and communications. It is a non-governmental, worldwide federation of national standards institutes and organizations from 97 countries, including the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). The ISO publishes thousands of standards, but the ISO 9000 series is having major impact on international trade. First published in 1987, the standards have been rapidly adopted by organizations in Europe, Asia, and

North America. The standards have been endorsed by the American Society of Quality, the European Standards Institute, and by the Japanese Industrial Standards Committee.

The ISO Standards are documented agreements containing technical specifications or other precise criteria to be used consistently as rules, guidelines, or definitions of characteristics to ensure that materials, products, processes, and services are fit for their purpose. These Standards contribute to making uniform quality control standards simpler and to increasing the reliability and effectiveness of the goods and services we use.

What are the benefits of ISO Certification? Increasing numbers of international trade treaties and a rapidly growing effort for worldwide harmonization of scientific methodologies are demanding compliance with standardization requirements that apply to all entities doing business with particular segments of multinational industries. Simply stated, any company doing international business

must conform to ISO 9000 standards or lose the ability to trade internationally.

FGIS' services are frequently utilized in satisfying international trade contracts and to settle contractual requirements between international buyers and sellers. FGIS' domestic and international reputation for accurate and quality results hinges on its reference standards. These standards are documented in the form of rules, written procedures, line slides, and chemical reference methods. ISO certification signifies that these FGIS standards are also consistent with an internationally recognized set of quality standards.

The benefits of obtaining ISO certification are seen in the improved quality of work provided to internal and external customers of the Air Oven and Combustion Nitrogen Analyzer laboratories. These improvements and ISO's worldwide acceptance give customers of GIPSA increased confidence that our analytical results are accurate and reproducible.

Asking for help is a sign of courage

For confidential assistance,
call your Employee Assistance Program

Washington, DC personnel --
call 301-570-3900

Field personnel --
call 1-800-222-0364



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC



Here are the ideas received on the GIPSA Idea Hotline during October. If you have questions about any ideas or the Hotline, please call me at 202-720-1017.

Suggestor

Suggestion

Charles Williams, New Orleans, LA	Check Into Aflatoxin Sampling For Possible Health Risks
Sara K. Wright, Memphis, TN	Modify PSP Annual Report Letters To Include Office Closings and New Addresses
Judy Hawkins, Portland, OR	Make Landover forms Warehouse Accountable For Their Poor Performance
Jeannene Henehan, Washington, DC	Send Documents Electronically For Review
	Update and Reprint the FGIS Correspondence Manual
Paul Robertson, League City, TX	Appoint Contact Person to Handle Travel And Administrative Problems
Ron Glass, New Orleans, LA	Have Grade Limits and Standards on the Computer
James Woodard, New Orleans, LA	Provide USDA Symbol When Giving An Award

October's tee-shirt winner: **Judy Hawkins**, Portland, Oregon!

GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During October 1997

This list does not necessarily indicate that the idea was implemented as suggested or that it is currently in place (it could be in the development/implementation stage). To avoid the chance of misinterpretation, please call the Hotline if you have any concerns or questions regarding the following list of ideas.

-  Modify PSP Annual Report Letters To Include Office Closings And New Addresses
-  Make Landover Forms Warehouse Accountable For Their Poor Performance
-  Scrap the Customer Service Award Program
-  Modify the Triannual Renewal Procedure For Inspectors

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via GroupWise to GIPSAIDEA; HP Desk to Ideas; Internet to ideas@fgis.usda.gov; FAX to 202-720-1015; or telephone 800-455-3447 or 202-720-1013. **We encourage you to send ideas via fax or e-mail to reduce the possibility of transcription errors; however, ideas will be accepted regardless of the method you choose to use.**

New DON Test Kit

GIPSA has approved for official use Romer Labs' DON ACCUTOX, a quantitative test kit for deoxynivalenol (DON), also known as vomitoxin. The DON ACCUTOX has been certified for use on the following commodities: barley, corn, malted barley, oats, wheat, wheat flour, and wheat midds. Approval of this test kit affords GIPSA greater flexibility in performing DON analysis for its customers.

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

VISA Travel Card Update. If you are a current American Express cardholder, you should be receiving your new VISA card in the very near future. NationsBank stated that all cards should be mailed to the cardholders' homes by November 15. Watch your mail carefully for this card because it may look like junk mail. The envelope does not specify what is inside for security reasons. You will receive your pin number for ATM transactions in a separate mailing. You will also receive in a separate mailing a user ID and password to access the EAGLS (Electronic Account Government Ledger System) system that will allow you to view your VISA account online. If your card has been canceled by American Express, you will not receive a VISA card.

If you are traveling on or around November 29, please carry your American Express and your new VISA card with you. The VISA card becomes effective at 7 pm EST on November 29 and at that time your American Express card will deactivate.

The payment terms of the VISA card will remain the same as they are now -- full payment due upon receipt. Also in effect with the VISA card is the retail block on transactions over \$100 for shops and department stores when in TDY. The ATM transaction fee for the new VISA card will be 1.9%.

Relocation Web Site. For those who will be relocating in the future, check out this www.sacbee.com/ib/tools/movewiz.html. After entering pertinent information about your move, the relocation wizard will create a timeline checklist of things to do and when to do them when preparing to move from one state to another.

Telephone Call Update. Last month, we reported on allowances for telephone calls. For those who do not have immediate family at the official duty station, the traveler is allowed one phone call per week to a nonfamily member within the employee's local duty station's immediate commuting area to notify him or her of the traveler's safe arrival and to check on the traveler's residence.

FEHB Open Season

Federal Employees Health Benefits
Open Season runs from:

November 9 - December 14

To review health plan information,
use the following website:
www.opm.gov/insure/

October Issuances

Charlie Turner, Washington, DC

PN-98.22, Implementing New
Sunflower Seed Standards,
dated 10-20-98

Directive 9100-1, Foreign Qual-
ity and Weight Discrepancies,
dated 10-8-98.

P&S Conference, from page 3.

Additional speakers included **Jerry Bange**, chairperson of the World Agricultural Outlook Board, and **George Slover**, antitrust lawyer, the Justice Department. Both speakers provided valuable information to help P&S programs attain their goals and objectives for the next 2 years.

Highlight of the meeting included presentations by and Q&A sessions with representatives of the livestock and poultry industries. **Donna Reifschneider**, president of the National Pork Producers Council; **Clark Willingham**, president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association; and **Dan Cunningham**, the Department of Poultry Science at the University of Georgia discussed major issues facing their respective commodities. Addressing these issues brought focus and direction to the planning activities.

The last two days of the conference were devoted to setting priorities and goals for the next 2 years. **Tim Blackburn**, deputy director, Organizational and Professional Development, APHIS, facilitated the meeting. In break-out sessions, the management team identified projects and activities around our core area of responsibilities of competition, financial protection, and trade practices. The managers were realistic in what they could accomplish and set priorities that are important to the industry and that foster open, competitive markets.

The 2-year operating plan will be a work in progress that will be reviewed and revised as markets and industry structure change.

Rice Training for Sem Chi

Gary Zella, Stuttgart

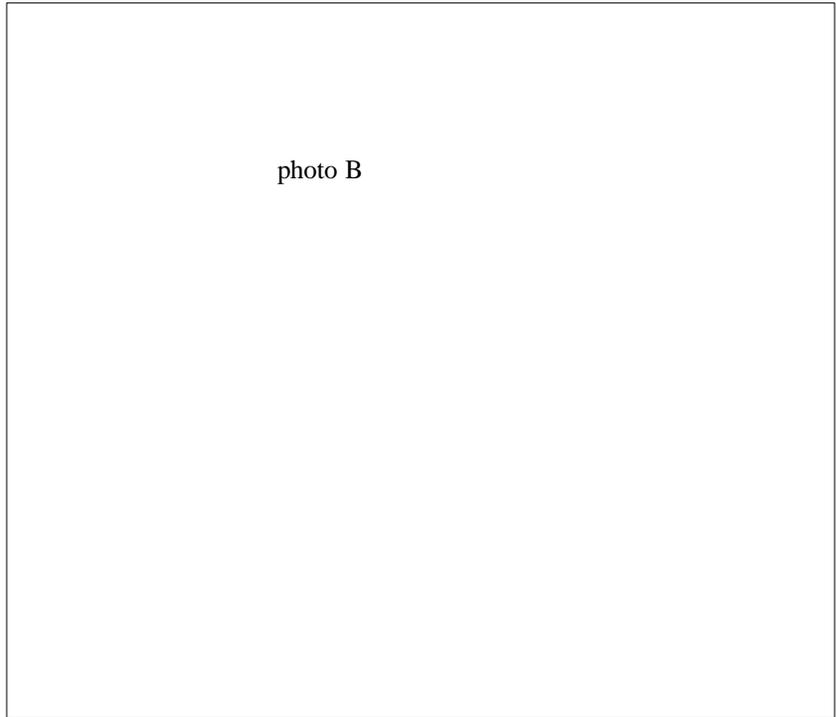
As a quality assurance specialist in the Stuttgart, AR, Field Office, I recently spent 3 weeks near the Everglades on an exciting teaching assignment at the largest and one of only two rice mills in Florida.

Klaus Sengelmann, vice president and general manager of Seminole Chief Rice Corporation, better known as Sem Chi, called to ask for GIPSA's help. Specifically, he asked us to help educate four Sem Chi employees who had no previous experience in grading about the U.S. Standards for Rice, and teach them the proper procedures and analyses for rough rice and milled rice. It was interesting to find out that **Mr. Sengelmann** was the secretary of agriculture for Nicaragua from 1975 through 1979. In fact, during one week of my stay at Sem Chi, I trained **Manolo Porro III**, who was flown in from Managua, Nicaragua, to take part in my training sessions. **Manolo** is the son of **Manolo Porro, Sr.**, who originally built and started the Sem Chi Rice Mill in Florida. **Manolo III** was in the U.S. for training because his family is now building a new rice mill in Nicaragua.

The training was well-received, and my students appreciated learning about official standards and procedures.

I also learned interesting information during my stay. I found that rice fits into the natural Everglades water cycle, since it is grown in the summer and early fall when there is enough rainfall to naturally flood the rice fields. In addition, the rice cultivated and harvested in the summer gives Everglades growers a unique opportunity to plant not only rice, but also sugar cane and winter vegetables on the same land.

All in all, I enjoyed this valuable opportunity to take on a new challenge and bring credit to the GIPSA team!



GIPSA's rice instructor Gary Zella (second from left) and students (left to right) Maynor Mejia, Juan Carlos Osejo, and Alex Yzquierdo take a moment from their studies at Sem Chi's rice mill in Loxahatchee, Florida.

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 November 24, 1998!

American Indian Heritage Month
November 1998

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