Department of Agriculture (USDA) Fiscal Year 2020 Agency Report

1. Please provide a summary of your agency's activities undertaken to carry out the provisions of OMB Circular A-119, "Federal Participation in the Development and Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards and in Conformity Assessment Activities" and the National Technology Transfer and Advance Act (NTTAA). The summary should contain a link to the agency's standards-specific website(s) where information about your agency's standards and conformity assessment related activities are available.

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) provides grading services, and price and volume reporting for a range of commodities including cotton, dairy, fruits and vegetables, livestock, poultry, seed, tobacco and grain. AMS supports these services by maintaining commodity quality standards on its website at https://www.ams.usda.gov/. The grade standards provide a common language of trade between buyers and sellers and are voluntarily used by the supply chain to promote orderly and efficient trade of agricultural products. AMS grading services certify products according to these standards or to contract terms. In addition, AMS purchases a variety of food products for the National School Lunch Program and other Federal food assistance programs. These purchases provide food to those in need and help stabilize agricultural commodity prices by balancing supply and demand. Fresh and processed food purchased under these programs includes fruits and vegetables, beef and pork, poultry and egg products, and fish. To support the procurement process, AMS maintains a series of purchase specifications that are used by contractors to deliver food products and by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to determine product acceptability. If purchase specifications require laboratory analyses, only official standard analytical methods are used.

USDA also offers voluntary, independent food safety audits of fruit and vegetable suppliers throughout the production and supply chain. USDA's Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) audits verify that fresh fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled, and stored in the safest manner possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards. USDA GAP and GHP audits verify adherence to the recommendation in the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and industry-recognized food safety food safety practices. In FY 2020, AMS' Specialty Crops Program, Specialty Crops Inspection Division (SCI) and its licensed auditors performed 4,150 food safety audits (primarily GAP and GHP audits) on more than 100 different commodities in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

Other USDA audit services focus on Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), which verify adherence to FDA's GMP regulations: current (CFR Title 21 Part 110) and staggered effective dates from 2016 to 2018 (CFR Title 21 Part 117); Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP), based on FDA's Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards of Fresh-cut Fruits and Vegetables and the HACCP principles established by the National Advisory Committee On Microbiological Criteria for Foods; food defense protocols, based on FDA's Food Producers, Processors, and Transporters: Food Security Preventive Measures Guidance; and traceability procedures.

The USDA National Organic Program (NOP) did not use any Government Unique Standards in lieu of Voluntary Consensus Standards in FY 2018. NOP also did not participate in any Voluntary Consensus Standards Activities during FY 2018.

The program continues to use the following Voluntary Consensus Standards. These are incorporated by reference in the USDA organic regulations:

(1) ASTM D5988-12 ("ASTM D5988"), "Standard Test Method for Determining Aerobic Biodegradation of Plastic Materials in Soil," approved May 1, 2012.

(2) ASTM D6400-12 ("ASTM D6400"), "Standard Specification for Labeling of Plastics Designed to be Aerobically Composted in Municipal or Industrial Facilities," approved May 15, 2012

(3) ASTM D6866-12 ("ASTM D6866"), "Standard Test Methods for Determining the Biobased Content of Solid, Liquid, and Gaseous Samples Using Radiocarbon Analysis," approved April 1, 2012.

(4) ASTM D6868-11 ("ASTM D6868"), "Standard Specification for Labeling of End Items that Incorporate Plastics and Polymers as Coatings or Additives with Paper and Other Substrates Designed to be Aerobically Composted in Municipal or Industrial Facilities," approved February 1, 2011.

(5) ISO 17088:2012(E), ("ISO 17088"), "Specifications for compostable plastics," June 1, 2012.

(6) ISO 17556:2012(E) ("ISO 17556"), "Plastics—Determination of the ultimate aerobic biodegradability of plastic materials in soil by measuring the measuring the oxygen demand in a respirometer or the amount of carbon dioxide evolved," August 15, 2012.

USDA's Cotton & Tobacco Program utilizes ASTM environmental and laboratory cotton fiber testing standards to provide the methodology for the cotton classification process. In addition, physical and descriptive cotton classification standards for visual and instrument grading serve as the reference for all cotton classification measurements. The applicable websites are listed below:

https://www.astm.org/
https://www.ams.usda.gov/grades-standards/cotton
https://www.astm.org/search/fullsite-search.html?query=d13.11&resStart=0&resLength=10&toplevel=products-and-services&sublevel=standards-and-publications&

USDA's Dairy Program (DP) is accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) as Administrator of the U.S. Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Technical Committee 34, Subcommittee 5 for Milk and Milk Products (TC34/SC5). As the U.S. member body to ISO, ANSI relies on U.S. TAGs to support the development of voluntary, consensus-based international standards used in the global marketplace. DP concurrently engages in and facilitates U.S. TAG activities to determine consensus positions from members representing all sectors of the U.S. dairy industry in the development, approval, reaffirmation, revision and withdrawal of international ISO standards. Moreover, DP as the TAG Administrator organizes the U.S. delegation for ISO meeting attendance and oversees the nomination of experts to represent the U.S. on ISO technical committees.

Another part of DP's commitment to building and using voluntary consensus standards, is participation in related U.S. TAGs that serve as national mirror committees to related ISO technical committees and subcommittees, including the U.S. TAG for TC34 for Food Products and the U.S. TAG for TC34/SC9 for Microbiology. Participation and facilitation of U.S. TAG activities in support international standards allows DP to have a direct role in the development and use of voluntary consensus standards.

Relevant Websites:
• ISO: https://www.iso.org/about-us.html
• ANSI U.S. TAG Listing:
https://share.ansi.org/Shared%20Documents/Standards%20Activities/International%20Standardization/ISO/US%20TAGs%20to%20ISO/ISOTAG_Nov2020.pdf
• ISO TC34/SC5 for Milk and Milk Products: https://www.iso.org/committee/47878.html
• ISO TC34 for Food Products: https://www.iso.org/committee/47858.html
• ISO TC34/SC9 for Microbiology: https://www.iso.org/committee/47920.html

USDA's Livestock and Poultry Program (LP) led the development of international voluntary consensus standards for eggs, meat, and poultry, and provided leadership in conformity assessment activities through active participation on global accreditation boards. For example, LP served as the Administrator and Chair of the U.S. Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Technical Committee 34, Subcommittee 6 for Meat, Poultry, Eggs, Fish, and their products. As Administrator, LP participated in virtual plenary sessions organized by the Chinese delegation to review standards, submitted ballot initiatives for consideration, and engaged in various Working Groups. Topics considered included: Meat and Meat Products Basic Terminology, Specifications for Fermented Meat Products, and Operating Procedures for Pig Slaughter. LP also participated in the review and amendment of Laboratory methods of analysis for Glutamic acid content, and Determination of total phosphorous content specifically related to SC6 products. As future collaboration grows for laboratory cultured protein among stakeholders participating in TC34SC16, LP stands ready to represent U.S. interests on this emerging topic.

LP led the development of the United Nation's (UN) global standards for egg, poultry, and meat products to assist U.S. producers with marketing their products throughout the world. As the U.S. representative to the Specialized Section on the Standardization of Meat, LP was re-elected as the Vice Chair of the Specialized Section and was elected to the position of Vice-Chair of the UN Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards. LP participated in the global workshop organized by the Specialized Section and provided technical expertise on a range of topics including imaging methods for meat quality, linking product descriptions with harmonized tariff codes, and international security and sustainability of standards during the COVID-19 pandemic.

LP served as a member of the ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board and represented the interests of the U.S. agricultural industry. Board participation included providing guidance for the international development of accreditation processes in accordance with management systems standards.

LP led the development of international voluntary consensus standards for molecular biomarkers in

food products including crop pathogen detection and identification, bioengineered foods, plant variety identification and meat speciation. As the committee manager of the International Organization for Standardization's (ISO) technical committee 34/subcommittee 16 for horizontal methods for molecular biomarker analysis LP provided oversight, coordination and expert input for over 30 ISO technical specifications and standards. LP participated in drafting and coordinated the publication of: ISO/TS 16393:2019 Molecular biomarker analysis -- Determination of the performance characteristics of qualitative measurement methods and validation of methods; ISO 20813:2019 Molecular biomarker analysis -- Methods of analysis for the detection and identification of animal species in foods and food products (nucleic acid-based methods) -- General requirements and definitions and ISO/DIS 21572-2019 Foodstuffs — Molecular biomarker analysis — Immunochemical methods for detection and quantification of proteins.

LP led the US development of ISO standards for bioinformatics in the life sciences. The US technical advisory group for ISO TC 276 WG 5 "Data processing and integration" aims to develop ISO deliverables for traceable, searchable, and interoperable data together with integrated data processing for biotechnology/life sciences. The main foci are definition of data and model formats and their interfaces; definition of metadata and relations of data and models; quality management of processed data and models.

LP led the establishment of a new US ISO technical advisory group for ISO TC 34 Food Products/SC 5 Milk and milk products. The US Dairy industry has not been involved in ISO standardization of dairy products even though many dairy analytical methods are under ISO stewardship. The new TAG will permit US stakeholders to participate in the development and maintenance of ISO Dairy standards.

LP provided a professional expert for the development and publication of the ISO International Workshop Agreement number 32 GMO cotton. In addition, LP provided an expert professional for the development of international voluntary consensus standards in several ISO technical committees including ISO TC34 Food Products, ISO TC 34/SC 17 Food Safety Management Systems, and ISO TC 34/SC 9 Microbiology of the food chain. LP representatives attended 6 international meetings to support ISO standardization development. ISO standards for food products are used throughout the world and referenced directly in USDA and AMS standards.

LP represented the USDA at the two Interagency Committee on standards policy (ISCP) meetings and participated in the annual ANSI ISO Forum meetings.

2. Please list the government-unique standards (GUS) your agency began using in lieu of voluntary consensus standards during FY 2020. Please note that GUS which are still in effect from previous years should continue to be listed, thus the total number in your agency's report will include all GUS currently in use (previous years and new as of this FY): 1

(1) Government Unique Standard

WILDLAND FIRE FOAM: GUS Number: 5100-307a; June 2007. Title: Specification for Fire Suppressant Foam for Wildland Firefighting (Class A Foam). [Incorporated: 2010]

Voluntary Standard

NFPA 1150 - Standard on Fire-Fighting Foam Chemicals for Class A Fuels in Rural, Suburban, and Vegetated Areas.

Rationale

Foam fire suppressants contain foaming and wetting agents. The foaming agents affect the accuracy of an aerial drop, how fast the water drains from the foam and how well the product clings to the fuel surfaces. The wetting agents increase the ability of the drained water to penetrate fuels. Foam fire suppressants are supplied as wet concentrates. This standard was developed with international cooperation for Class A Foam used in wildland fire suppression situations and equipment. Standard was created by the USDA Forest Service in cooperation with the Department of Interior (DOI), the State of California, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Center. The Forest Service has not chosen to utilize NFPA 1150 as it is designed specifically for application by municipal fire agencies in the wildland-urban interface, utilizing apparatus and situations that they are likely to encounter. The Forest Service's GUS for foam products is specific to use by wildland fire equipment and situations that are unique, e.g. helicopter use of foams, remote storage situations, and varied quality of water sources in the wildland settings. The agency feels this standard more accurately reflects the needs and mission of the federal wildland fire suppression agencies.