

## **USDA Continues To Investigate Starlink Situation**

WASHINGTON, D.C., January 6, 2003 - USDA's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) said today that it is continuing to work with Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (MHLW) to investigate the recent report that StarLink corn was detected in a portion of a U.S. export shipment.

On December 27, 2002, the Japanese MHLW reported a positive test for StarLink in a 1,200-ton portion of a 19,234-ton shipment. This is the first shipment to test positive since a protocol was developed and implemented in 2000, following the discovery of StarLink in U.S. grain. MHLW has now indicated that it will increase the rate of testing of future shipments.

"GIPSA continues to investigate this situation. At this point, we have determined that the buyer's and seller's contract, which required the shipment to be tested prior to export, was followed," said Dave Shipman, Deputy Administrator for the Federal Grain Inspection Service. "The barges that made up this shipment were tested under conditions that met the established protocol, and were conducted by a network of official agencies designated by GIPSA to perform official inspection services. All test results were negative."

GIPSA administers a monitoring program to evaluate the accuracy of StarLink testing services provided by its designated agencies. The most recent report shows the agencies accuracy rate was 97.9 percent. Japan implemented a program in April 2001 to monitor for the presence of StarLink in food corn shipments imported from the United States. This is this first time MHLW has reported a positive test result.

"GIPSA's StarLink testing program has been extremely successful during the past 2 years to assure buyers and sellers alike that our corn exports are negative for StarLink, said Shipman. While our initial investigation indicates that testing requirements were met or exceeded, we are continuing to work with MHLW to determine the reasons for the differing test results. Our goal is to ensure an effective and reliable system and we hope this investigation will provide additional information to continue to maintain a strong testing program."

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