

From: GIPSA
To: YOU
**Happy Holidays and
a Happy New Year!**



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GIPSA *NEWS*

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

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2012

Message from P&SP Deputy Administrator Alan Christian, Washington, DC

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The holiday season is a time that often inspires the best in us; it is a time to reflect on the past year and it is a time to prepare for the opportunities ahead of us. For me, the end of 2012 brings to a close a very significant chapter in my life as I complete my career with USDA and begin a new chapter with my retirement in January 2013.

During my tenure at GIPSA, it has been an honor to represent each of you and a pleasure to work with such a wonderful group of people dedicated to ensuring fair and competitive markets for agricultural commodities. While much of my tenure with GIPSA was focused on the Packers and Stockyards Program, I had a number of opportunities to work with the Federal Grain Inspection Service employees and as a result, I have a great appreciation for the important and difficult work you do to facilitate grain exports and ensure US grain maintains its worldwide reputation for quality.

GIPSA is a great organization and while we along with almost every other Federal Agency are going through some tough times with frozen pay and uncertain budgets, I believe the future is bright. There is no doubt that you are the most valuable resource in GIPSA and working together, we can get through these current challenges and not only succeed, but thrive.

We have come a long way since I first joined this organization six years ago, but like anything in life, the minute you sit back and rest on your laurels, you get passed by. I believe the key to success is continual improvement, in the work we do, in our organization and our work environment. In that regard, GIPSA has a head start when compared to other agencies with such a dedicated, passionate workforce that in my experience is always willing to step up and volunteer to make things better. I am confident you will be in good hands with Administrator Mitchell and I am sure that my replacement will bring fresh ideas and newfound enthusiasm to the GIPSA leadership team.

I have very much enjoyed my time at GIPSA. I have enjoyed working with each of you and I appreciate your support. Once again, I want to thank each of you for your dedication to our mission and to improving our organization. My best wishes to you and your family for a safe and wonderful holiday season, and may the New Year bring you health, happiness, peace, and prosperity.



Message from the Administrator

Larry Mitchell, Washington, DC



The 2012 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results are now available. Thanks to all who provided their input and helped influence positive change!

I want to thank each and every one of you who took the time and exercised your rights and responsibility to respond to the 2012 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). The exercise and the resulting report are an indispensable tool for improving our ability to deliver GIPSA missions, expanding dialog among all members of the GIPSA team, and allows us to recognize our improvements, strengths, and weaknesses on many key issues.

When reviewing and comparing the 2010, 2011, and 2012 survey results from the FEVS, it is evident that things have improved in almost every category. In 2012, we held or improved upon the scores of the five questions that had increased the most between 2010 and 2011. Also, in 2012, we improved upon the scores for the five questions that had decreased the most between 2010 and 2011 and even exceeded the 2010 levels on many.

As many of you will recall, as a result of previous feedback from the 2011 FEVS, management heard the calls for the return of the GIPSA Newsletter and more communication between employees and managers. GIPSA held an all-employee meeting in the headquarters and after hearing employee's comments and participating in a discussion of their feedback, management requested volunteers for three, D.C.-based teams: training, recognition, telework. The teams were asked to look at current policy, procedures, and identify opportunities for improvement. Some of the teams' recommendations that we have implemented include the promotion of teleworking, webinars conducted by in-house experts, and a peer-to-peer recognition section in our newsletter.

Positive survey responses in the past three years show an undeniable upward trend and our GIPSA management team members, modest as they are, really have something to celebrate – but that celebration will be brief as we do not have the time to rest upon our laurels. We must work hard and with earnest with all GIPSA employees to build upon our improvements because, while the GIPSA results are good overall, there are several problematic areas which still demand improvement.

At this time, we are in the planning stages for our next all-employee to be held early in 2013 here in headquarters. With heavy involvement of all GIPSA staff, our management will closely analyze results specific to our agency and identify areas of strengths and opportunities for improvement.

I also welcome you to send any and all comments and suggestions directly to me using the **Administrator's Confidential Mailbox** at <http://dcweb2/gipsaconfidential/>

Please follow this link to access the FEVS results available in our [InGIPSA](#) page under Planning and Performance/Outcomes and Results.

Thanks again to those that completed the survey and I look forward to working with you all as we move forward.

“Please follow this link to access the FEVS results available in our [InGIPSA](#) page under Planning and Performance/Outcomes and Results.”

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



FGIS Matters....!

Randall Jones, Washington, DC

I want to start by saying how proud I am to be part of this Program which once again has shown to be a true leader of all USDA programs! The 2012 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results were just released and clearly show that the FGIS and GIPSA staff believe in our Program, believe in our agency, and believe in each other. Together, we have built our Program that is second to none and the results prove it. If you haven't already, please take a few moments to review the Administrator's message regarding the Survey.

While the Survey shows much success, there are also areas in which we can, and will, do better. This brings me to my next topic – critical initiatives for FY 2013.

A goal is a simple but powerful way to motivate people and communicate priorities. We operate more effectively when leaders, at all levels of the organization starting at the top, set clear measurable goals aligned to achieving better outcomes. The **FGIS Executive Management Team (Mary Alonzo, TSD, Stephanie Brown, ODA, Dave Funk, TSD, Bob Lijewski, FMD, Tom O'Connor, QACD, and John Pitchford, DIIA)** has embraced the power of goal-setting as a means to achieve near-term performance acceleration through focused attention identifying 18 initiatives for 2013. These initiatives reflect performance improvement priorities of the management team that support achieving the full scope of the agency mission: to facilitate the marketing of U.S. grain.

The Executive Management Team identified three areas of which initiatives were developed focusing on quality, service delivery, and employees. Across these initiatives, the management team will involve employees and their Union representatives in pre-decisional involvement (PDI). PDI is a process which provides for employee input in the decision-making process in order to design and implement comprehensive changes necessary to champion change in Federal Government agencies to transform them into organizations capable of delivering the highest quality service to the American people.

It is vital that we regularly engage the organization and partners in critical reviews of progress on these goals. This leads to the discovery of what works and what does not – guiding action and investment. The best programs embrace a culture where performance measurement and evaluation are regularly used and complement one another.

A recent example of using evaluation as a means to discover opportunities for improvement is the Mycotoxin Proficiency Testing Training and licensing seminar held at the National Grain Center



Mycotoxin Proficiency Testing Training and licensing seminar

in Kansas City on November 14 – 16. The training, which focused on nine different quantitative aflatoxin test kits, was presented by six different test kit manufacturers and FGIS staff to forty Official Service Providers and FGIS field office staff. Members of the Risk Management Agency's Compliance Staff also attended the training to learn about FGIS approved procedures for conducting aflatoxin tests, a key crop insurance issue for the 2012 crop year. From all reports, the training was surely needed and a huge success. Much credit and thanks to all who had a role in the seminar and in particular **Carl Jackson, FMD**, who provided a presentation on "Certification and Other Issues," **Tom Weber, TSD**, who gave presentations on the



"We operate more effectively when leaders, at all levels of the organization starting at the top, set clear measurable goals aligned to achieving better outcomes."



FGIS Matters...!, from page 3

“Aflatoxin Check Sample Results” and on “Quantitative Measurements and Quality Assurance.” Also, TSD personnel **Joanne Nielsen, Ramaswamy Mani, Joe Barney, Ajit Ghosh, Jason Vanfossan, Tim Norden, Greg Giese, and Paul Wacker** provided training on quantitative measurement techniques and administered the practical exams for those who chose to take the licensing exam. **Ron Metz** and **Jeff L'Heureux** of FMD planned and provided the written test for the licensing exam. Thanks also go to **Roger Friedrich** and **Marsha Schwartz** for helping to organize the meeting and, as usual, making sure everything was just perfect.

Back to goal setting... the following is the list of initiatives as set forth by the FGIS Executive Management team and identification of the division that will champion the initiative:

Focus on Quality

1. Complete centralization within TSD of quality assurance activities for Domestic Inspection (TSD)
2. Develop and implement an integrated performance monitoring program for FGIS inspectors (QACD)
3. Evaluate discontinuing on-site quality audits as part of triennial re-designations of designated agencies (QACD)
4. Evaluate and enhance the Mycotoxin Quality Assurance Program (TSD)

Focus on Service Delivery

5. Formalize the Market Needs Assessment Process and integrate it into the FGIS Strategic Planning Process (DIIA)
6. Conduct Customer Satisfaction Survey (FMD)
7. Conduct an AMA fee review to ensure agency costs align with revenue (FMD)
8. Initiate a Gluten Analyzer Collaborative Study with ARS and other key wheat industry stakeholders (TSD)
9. Pilot test and assess industry support for NIRT Rice Surface Lipids measurements (TSD)
10. Assess the feasibility of using UGMA-Compatible Moisture Meters for measuring official Test Weight (TSD)
11. Develop and update automated computer imaging methods to assess Rice Broken (TSD)
12. Provide a documented service delivery vision, framework and roadmap for FGISonline to guide Information Technology projects and initiatives through 2020 (ODA)
13. Identify opportunities and assess feasibility for sharing inspection and service data among MRP agencies (ODA)
14. Expand current accessibility and discovery capabilities in FGISonline related to inspection and billing data (ODA)

Focus on Employees

15. Analyze and redefine performance standards and elements for Field Office ACG (FMD)
16. Update the Grain Inspection Distance Learning course in collaboration with the Grain Elevator and Processing Society (GEAPS) and Kansas State University (TSD)
17. Review and update field office and export lab safety and evacuation procedures (FMD)
18. Review OPM Employee Viewpoint Survey results and identify actions to address FGIS employee concerns and improve employee satisfaction (DIIA)

While this list is by no way inclusive of all of the work that is planned for this year, it provides a critical roadmap for the allocation of resources, both time and money. Together I am confident that we can achieve success for each of these very important initiatives.

I hope that each of you and your families will have very happy holidays and prosperous New Year. Until next time, keep up the good work and stay safe.



Names in the News

Retirements

William Perales, Supervisory Agricultural Commodity Grader, retired on November 3, 2012. William started working in 1979, in the New Orleans circuit as an Agricultural Commodity Aid, then as an Agricultural Commodity Technician. In 1988, he was reassigned as an Agricultural Commodity Grader. In 2005, William was reassigned to the Chicago, Illinois, duty point of the Toledo Field Office following Hurricane Katrina. He was promoted to Supervisory Agricultural Commodity Grader in 2006. First on his list for himself and his wife is to visit their old stomping ground (New Orleans) for 10 days to visit their children and their families, friends, and neighbors. Then, they will be traveling on a 10-day tour to Israel.

Larry Freese, Statistician, is retiring on December 31, 2012, with 36 years of federal service. Larry is from Kearney, Missouri. He graduated from Oklahoma State University in 1976 with an M.S. degree in statistics. Larry began his career with the Federal Government in 1976. He started his career as a statistician with the Food and Nutrition Service in Washington D.C. He joined the Agricultural Marketing Service in 1979. In 1980, he transferred to the FGIS facility in Grandview, Missouri. At the time, the FGIS unit was known as the Inspection Methods and Research Division. It is now the Technology and Science Division. In his retirement, Larry plans to catch up on home projects, travel, volunteer, and make up the rest as he goes.

Gary McBryde, Director of the Business and Economic Analysis Division, is retiring December 28, 2012. Gary started with P&SP on January 12, 2003. Gary will retire with 12 years government service.

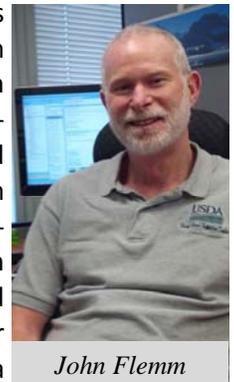
Alan Christian, Deputy Administrator of the Packers and Stockyards Program, is retiring on January 3, 2013, with 35 years of service.

Craig Klever, Industrial Specialist in the Portland Field Office is retiring on January 3, 2013, after 36 years of grain inspection service. Craig began his career with the Oregon State Department of Agriculture in 1976 as a sampler/weigher and later went to work for FGIS on February 28 1978. During his time at the Portland Field Office, Craig served as a Dispatcher, Inspector, Equip-

ment Specialist and in June of 2007, he was promoted to the position of Industrial Specialist. During his retirement, Craig plans on going on some fishing trips to Alaska, Cruising the Mediterranean and spending time with family.

Marsha Love, Senior Information Systems Specialist in the Portland Oregon field office, will retire on January 31, 2013, after nearly 31 years of Federal service. She began her Federal career with FGIS in February 1982, hiring on as an intermittent 3, and was promoted to Clerk Typist, then Administrative Clerk, and finally Office Services Supervisor. In 2000, she was selected as the Field IT specialist for the Portland Field Office. She has followed the field office around Portland as it moved three times in those years. Marsha plans to remain in Portland after retiring. She's going to spend more time in her garden and with her bassets.

John Flemm, Federal State Manager, is retiring after 35 years with FGIS. John will hit the door for the last time on February 1, 2013. John started his career with FGIS in the Baltimore Field Office in 1978 after graduating from "The Ohio State" with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural. John then transferred to the Kansas City Field Office in 1981 as a Shift Supervisor for one year before winning a position as a BAR member in 1982. Two years later, John went to the pacific northwest the QAS where he and his wife Lori put down permanent roots and raised their two sons Michael and Nicolas. John was promoted to Federal Manager in 1997 where he has remained an asset to our agency and industry. John is an avid golfer, passionate fisherman, and enthusiastic hunter besides being a dedicated family man. John will enjoy the opportunity to engage in activities that are dictated by his own accord and share time with his many friends in practicing these distractions. John has been a good friend to me (Scotto Cooley) and many others and I encourage you to send John an email or a quick call to wish him well on his departure and endeavor into his years of retirement.



John Flemm

A Shout-Out Goes to...

- ◆ A victorious shout-out goes to **Jody Boydston-Johnson** for winning the American Indian/Alaskan Native Trivia contest. She received a \$10 gift card to Dunkin Donuts. Congratulations to Jody!
- ◆ A big “authoritative” shout-out to retired Portland ACT **Barney Blalock** who just became a published author. His book “Portland’s Lost Waterfront - Tall ships, Steam Mills and Sailors’ Boardinghouses” is now available through Jordan.scarborough@historypress.net or at Amazon.com.

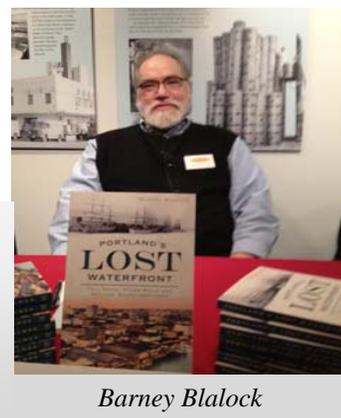
Portland’s Lost Waterfront

Kim Harper, Portland, OR

Although **Barney Blalock** retired in the fall of 2011 from the Portland, Oregon, FGIS Field Office after 33 years, he has been keeping himself busy by writing and getting published. It combines his interest in the history of Portland’s waterfront, longshoremen lore and his talent at telling stories. He has included many historical pictures, many that deal with the grain industry. Besides being a published author and blogger he also runs a small web management business. He was a featured author recently at the Oregon Historical Society’s Celebration of Oregon Authors. We’re all looking forward to his next book!

His pictorial web page devoted to the Portland waterfront can be found at: portlandwaterfront.org/index.html

“Today, Portland, Oregon, is a city of majestic bridges crisscrossing the deep swath of the Willamette River. A century ago, riverboat pilots would have witnessed a flurry of stevedores and longshoremen hurrying along the wharves...Drawing on primary source material, previously unpublished photographs and thirty-three years of waterfront work, local author Barney Blalock recalls the city’s vanished waterfront in these tales of sea dogs, salty days, and the river’s tides.”



Barney Blalock

Wanted: Your Ideas for the CCWG

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

Do you have an idea to promote work efficiency, make websites or the PAS system easier to operate, or know a way to boost employee morale? If you do, the Change Control Working Group (CCWG) is the place to submit your ideas and concerns.

The CCWG is always ready to hear your voice, your opinion, and ideas on how you would like to see things done. Whether it’s the PAS System, GIPSA website, employee morale, work instructions, standard operating procedures, efficiency in the work place, or any other ideas you want to be heard, let us know! Submitting a Change Request (CR) is an easy way to have your opinion and solutions put out there for consideration.

You can make a difference within the USDA! We want to hear from you!



USDA Pathways Programs Fact Sheet

Dawn Cowan, Washington, DC

On December 27, 2010, President Obama signed Executive Order (E.O.) 13562 establishing the Internship Program and

the Recent Graduates Program and revising and reinvigorating the Presidential Management Fellow (PMF) Program. These two new programs, along with the PMF Program, collectively form what the President called the Pathways Programs. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued the final rule for the Pathways Programs on May 11, 2012, (77 FR 28194). The Pathways Program requirements are found in part 362 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The appointing authorities for the Pathways Programs are found in 5 CFR 213.3402(a), (b), and (c).

- USDA/GIPSA will now utilize a newly created Schedule D Hiring Authority authorized by 5 CFR 213.3402 (a)(b)(c) excepted service to hire students and recent graduates.
- OPM reserves the right to suspend, revoke, or terminate the USDA/GIPSA Pathways Programs if USDA/GIPSA fails to adhere to the Memorandum of Understanding.
- The Pathways Programs has established the following requirements:
 - A Memorandum of Understanding between USDA/GIPSA and OPM
 - A public posting of all internship and recent graduate opportunities
 - A competitive and documented selection process as outlined in 5 CFR302
 - Adherence to Veterans Preference Laws
 - Career and Professional Development program requirements
 - A signed Pathways Agreement between the Agency (GIPSA) and the program participant
- USDA Student Coordinators and Recruiters may continue to participate in career fairs and recruitment events. The career fair must be posted publically on USAJobs as an ad and as a vacancy in the Student Application Portal.
- Resumes should not be collected at Career Fairs. Prospective applicants should be advised to apply online to all publically posted vacancies.
- Each Pathways participant must sign a USDA/GIPSA Pathways Participation Agreement.
- The Participation Agreement will include a description of the participant's duties, describe the work schedule, specify the length of the appointment and the termination date, define evaluation procedures and program requirements, and specify minimum eligibility requirements for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service.
- Interns may be extended in one year increments. USDA/GIPSA will place a cap on the number of allowed extensions.
- Agencies may terminate participants for misconduct, suitability, for poor performance, or at the end of the program period.
- There is no US citizenship requirement to participate in the USDA Pathways Programs.
- US Citizenship is required for conversion into the competitive service.
- The USDA Internship Program enables agencies to hire current students who are enrolled in an accredited educational institution at least part-time. The "student trainee" may be in a 2 or 4-year undergraduate or graduate school. This includes being enrolled in a community college. In addition, the "student trainee" may be in a vocational or technical school, trade school, home school, or obtaining a GED or 1 or more year certificate program. The "student trainee" must be at least 16 years of age.
- Student Trainees may be non-competitively converted to a career-conditional or career appointment after obtaining 640 hours of work experience.
- The USDA Pathways Programs replaced SCEP and STEP.

Continued, see Pathways Programs on page 8.



Pathway Programs, from page 7

- The USDA Pathways Programs refers to paid internships.
- The USDA Recent Graduates Program involves completing a successful career development and training program.
- Mentoring, rotational assignments, and shadowing experiences are required program components of the USDA/GIPSA Pathways Programs.
- Performance feedback and performance assessments are also required components of the USDA/GIPSA Pathways Programs.
- Executive Order 13652 requires agencies to provide OPM with a pass over request for adjudication if a veteran with a 30 percent or more disability is passed over for a job opportunity.
- The USDA Recent Graduates Program is open to recent graduates who have graduated from a qualifying educational institution within 2-years. Veterans have up to 6-years to apply to the USDA Recent Graduates Program.
- Recent Graduates may be non-competitively converted to a temporary, career-conditional, or permanent appointment after 1-year of successful job performance and program completion.
- Presidential Management Fellows who hold advanced degrees are eligible for the USDA Presidential Management Fellows Program.
- The USDA Presidential Management Fellows Program consists of a 2-year developmental component. Presidential Management Fellow's may be eligible for conversion after program requirements are met.
- USDA will recruit Presidential Management Fellow's from an OPM approved list of finalists.
- The USDA/GIPSA Student Application Portal will be utilized by HR Professionals only. The Pathways Programs regulation requires only HR Professionals to adjudicate the qualifications of applicants.
- Currently, there is a hold on recruiting and hiring students in all of USDA/GIPSA Scholarship Programs (1890 Scholars Program).
- Third party or contracted programs like the HACU and WIN Programs are not affected by the Pathways Programs.

Training Deadlines

- ⇒ **Cybersecurity—3/31/13**
- ⇒ **Civil Rights**
 - ⇒ **Pathways (All Supervisors and Managers) —2/5/13**
 - ⇒ **Workplace Harassment*—9/30/13**
 - ⇒ **Age Discrimination* (Look for this as assignment is TBD but due)—9/30/13 (Please see memo)**
- ⇒ **Ethics 2012 – Due 12/31/12 – NEW EMPLOYEES (Three courses or Ethics for New Employees) GIPSA IS FULLY COMPLETE**
- ⇒ **Ethics 2013 Will be assigned again January 1**
- ⇒ **No Fear Comprehensive Course Ongoing (All new employees are required to complete this)**

Interview Resource Tip

Here's an article on how to handle interviews using behavioral interview techniques: <http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2011/09/26/how-to-answer-behavioral-interview-questions>



What is Thermal Comfort?

Amber McDonald-Lake, Washington, DC

The term 'thermal comfort' describes a person's psychological state of mind and is usually referred to in terms of whether someone is feeling too hot or too cold.

Thermal comfort is very difficult to define because you need to take into account a range of environmental and personal factors when deciding what will make people feel comfortable. These factors make up what is known as the 'human thermal environment'.

The best that you can realistically hope to achieve is a thermal environment that satisfies the majority of people in the workplace, or put more simply, 'reasonable comfort'. Health and Safety Education HQ (HSE) considers 80 percent of occupants as a reasonable limit for the minimum number of people who should be thermally comfortable in an environment. Thermal comfort is not measured by air temperature; it is measured by the number of employees complaining of thermal discomfort. To better understand why air temperature alone is not a valid indicator of thermal comfort.

Environmental factors:

Air temperature
Radiant temperature
Air velocity
Humidity

Personal factors:

Clothing Insulation
Metabolic heat

Why is thermal comfort important?

People working in uncomfortably hot and cold environments are more likely to behave unsafely because their ability to make decisions and/or perform manual tasks deteriorates. For example; people may take short cuts to get out of cold environments, or workers might not wear personal protective equipment properly in hot environments increasing the risks, or the workers' ability to concentrate on a given task may start to drop off and increases the risk of errors occurring.

As an employer you should be aware of these risks and make sure the underlying reasons for these behaviors are understood and taken into account. Addressing the underlying reasons for these behaviors is also likely to improve morale and productivity as well as improving health and safety.

Adapting to the thermal environment

People employ adaptive strategies to cope with their thermal environment, e.g. donning or removing clothing, unconscious changes in posture, choice of heating, moving to cooler locations away from heat sources, etc.

The problems arise when this choice (to remove jacket, or move away from heat source) is removed, and people are no longer able to adapt. In many instances the environment within which people work is a product of the processes of the job they are doing, so they are unable to adapt to their environment. *Source: HSE.gov*

Issuance Report

Terri Henry, Washington, DC

- ◆ FGIS Directive 9070.2, "Management Control Program" dated October 23, 2012
- ◆ FGIS Policy Memorandum Reference No. 252, Probe Sampling AMA Commodities, dated October 30, 2012
- ◆ GIPSA Directive 1110.1, "Internal Control Program" dated November 15, 2011

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

(800) 222-0364

(888) 262-7848 (TTY)

<http://www.FOH4You.com>



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.

Have an idea?



Then fill out your change request available at *inGIPSA* and email it to: FGIS-CCWG@usda.gov

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 January 18, 2013



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