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[Notices]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

Pilot Programs

AGENCY: **Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA).**

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: GIPSA is currently running three pilot programs; timely service, open season, and barge, under one of the 1993 amendments to the United States Grain Standards Act, as amended (Act). This amendment provides that GIPSA may conduct pilot programs allowing more than one official agency to provide official services within a single geographic area. These pilot programs are scheduled to end October 31, 1999. Participation in the pilot programs has been light, especially during the first 2 years, and GIPSA believes it needs additional time to collect information. Accordingly, GIPSA is extending the pilot programs to September 30, 2000, the end of fiscal year 1999.

EFFECTIVE DATE: November 1, 1998.

ADDRESSES: USDA, GIPSA, Neil E. Porter, Director, Compliance Division, STOP 3604, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-3604. Internet and GroupWise users may respond to nporter@gipsadc.usda.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Neil E. Porter, telephone 202-720-8262.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Sections 7(f) and 7A of the Act was amended by the U.S. Grain Standards Act Amendments of 1993 (Pub. L. 103-156) on November 24, 1993, to authorize GIPSA'S Administrator to conduct pilot programs allowing more than one official agency to provide official services within a single geographic area without undermining the declared policy of the Act. The purpose of the pilot programs is to evaluate the impact of allowing more than one official agency to provide official services within a single geographic area.

GIPSA considered several possible pilot programs as announced in the March 14, 1994, Federal Register (59 FR 11759) and the March 10, 1995, Federal Register (60 FR 13113). In the September 27, 1995, Federal Register (60 FR 49828) GIPSA announced the

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following two pilot programs starting on November 1, 1995, and ending on October 31, 1996.

1. Timely Service. This pilot program allows official agencies to provide official services to facilities outside their assigned geographic area on a case-by-case basis when these official services cannot be provided in a timely manner by the official agency designated to serve that area.

2. Open Season. This pilot program allows official agencies to offer their services to facilities outside their assigned geographic area where no official sample-lot or official weighing services have

been provided in the previous 6 months.

In the October 3, 1996, Federal Register (61 FR 51674) GIPSA extended the pilot programs to October 31, 1999.

In the January 15, 1998, Federal Register (63 FR 2360) GIPSA announced a pilot program allowing barges on all rivers to be sampled by probe by any official agency effective March 1, 1998, and ending October 31, 1999, concurrently with the two existing pilot programs.

GIPSA has evaluated these three pilot programs and believes that they have not had an adverse impact on the official system. However, participation in the pilot programs has been light, especially during the first 2 years. Participation in the third year of the pilot programs is already greater than the total of the first 2 years combined. GIPSA is still collecting and analyzing information to determine if exclusive boundaries should be maintained as they are, eliminated, or modified. GIPSA believes that it needs additional time to evaluate the impact of allowing more than one official inspection agency to operate in a geographic area. Accordingly, GIPSA is extending the pilot programs to September 30, 2000, the end of the 1999 fiscal year.

The three pilot program provisions will remain the same as announced in the September 27, 1995, and January 15, 1998, Federal Register's.

GIPSA will continue to monitor and evaluate the pilot programs. If, at any time, GIPSA determines that any pilot program is having a negative impact on the official system or is not working as intended, the program may be modified or discontinued.

Authority: Pub. L. 94-582, 90 Stat. 2867, as amended (7 U.S.C. 71 et seq.).

Dated: September 22, 1998.

Neil E. Porter,

Director, Compliance Division.

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