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[Notices]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

Implementation of a New Official Moisture Meter

AGENCY: Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) is announcing the selection of a new official moisture meter; i.e., a device approved by GIPSA for determining the moisture content of grain inspected under the United States Grain Standards Act. Specifically, the Grain Analysis Computer Model 2100 (GAC 2100), manufactured by Dickey-john Corporation, Auburn, Illinois, has been selected by GIPSA to replace the Motomco Model 919 Moisture Meter. The new moisture meter is expected to improve the ease, speed, and reliability of official moisture measurement and to allow automated measurements and electronic transmission of results.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steven N. Tanner, Director, Technical Services Division, GIPSA, USDA, 10383 N. Executive Hills Boulevard, Kansas City, Missouri 64153; telephone (816) 891-0401; fax (816) 891-0478.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), acting through the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, issued a solicitation on May 15, 1997, for the purpose of selecting and procuring new official moisture meters. GIPSA uses a single technology for all official moisture measurements because research has demonstrated that the use of multiple technologies would result in significant uncorrectable differences between official inspection points. This is true even if the different technologies have comparable accuracy with respect to the USDA air oven reference method. Therefore, the moisture meter selected from this solicitation will replace the current official moisture meter model, the Motomco Model 919.

GIPSA evaluated the received proposals according to the criteria specified in the solicitation. The criteria included potential range of grain types for which the instrument could be used; the range of moisture over which it exhibited acceptable accuracy; its potential to be used for measurement of other grading factors; its ability to operate in the temperature, vibrational, and electromagnetic environment typical of a grain inspection point; time and sample size required for measurements; ease of use; instrument self-checking capabilities; manufacturer's quality control plan and error analysis; degree of expected variation between measurements from different instruments of the same model; proposed procedures for checking the performance of field instruments against a master instrument (check-testing); and cost to the government. GIPSA surveyed current users of the instruments and conducted field tests of existing instruments at several different locations.

Implementation of the new instruments for official measurements of

grains, oilseeds, and processed commodities will be phased in, product by product, over a period of at least 2 years. For any given product, all official moisture measurements will be performed using the Motomco Model 919 until the transition date for that product; the GAC 2100 will be used exclusively thereafter. The transition date for each product will be announced by GIPSA through a Notice in the Federal Register prior to the transition. Transition dates for each product will be selected to minimize the impact of the changes on the value of carry-over stocks and will be announced in advance. Tentative transition dates are as follows: August 1, 1998--corn, soybeans, and sunflower seeds; May 1, 1999--barley, oats, rough rices, sorghum, and all wheats. Transition dates for peas, beans, lentils, and other commodities may lie beyond 1999.

The GAC 2100 uses separate calibration equations for each grain type to achieve optimum accuracy. GIPSA routinely reviews the accuracy of official calibrations and revises calibration equations to optimize accuracy with respect to the USDA air oven method. All GAC 2100 calibration equations will be carefully reviewed for accuracy based on several years' crop data. Where accuracy can be improved, calibrations will be adjusted prior to issuing them as official calibrations.

Both the Motomco Model 919 and the GAC 2100 are calibrated to the USDA air oven method. Therefore, the overall average change in moisture results between the instruments should be quite small. The substantial differences in measurement methods between the two instrument types will, however, cause moisture measurements to differ for the two instruments on specific samples. It is impossible to predict exactly what the differences between Motomco Model 919 and GAC 2100 results will be for a given grain sample. Most results should agree within plus or minus 0.5 percent moisture, but some differences will exceed plus or minus 1.0 percent moisture.

GIPSA is currently reviewing Part 801 of the regulations, ``Official Performance Requirements For Grain Inspection Equipment''. Changes to the regulations will be published as appropriate and necessary.

GIPSA anticipates several important benefits from the new moisture meter. The new instrument's speed and ease of operation will help to hold down inspection costs. The instrument will increase confidence in official moisture results by eliminating most of the operator interactions in the moisture measurement process. Electronic transmission of results and adaptability to automated operation will contribute to improving the timeliness and value of official inspections. The instrument's newer technology and built-in system checks will improve reliability, reduce down-time, and automatically notify the operator of potential performance problems.

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GIPSA's decision to approve and adopt the GAC 2100 as the new official moisture meter does not mean that the Agency endorses or recommends this instrument for unofficial purposes over other similar instruments that are not approved for the official system. The Agency's selection of this instrument was based on GIPSA's unique operational needs. Other instrument models may be as suitable or more suitable for a commercial entity's needs.

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

Dated: April 2, 1998.
David R. Shipman,

Acting Administrator.
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