

Directive

1410.2

01/14/14

TECHNICAL REPORTS

1. PURPOSE

This directive establishes responsibilities and procedures Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration's (GIPSA) Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) personnel must follow to prepare, clear, and maintain technical reports and publications.

2. SCOPE

This directive applies to all technical reports and publications that list FGIS employees as either primary/corresponding authors or co-authors.

3. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This directive replaces FGIS Directive 1410.2, dated 4/9/2010, reflects changes in organizational structure and document handling processes, and implements provisions of USDA's Departmental Regulation (DR 1074-001) Scientific Integrity, dated May 10, 2013.

4. BACKGROUND

The mission of GIPSA FGIS is "To facilitate the marketing of ... cereals, oilseeds, and related agricultural products ... for the overall benefit of consumers and American agriculture." Method Development (MD) is an essential function for achieving that mission. FGIS MD activities are generally (but not exclusively) "applied research" as distinct from the more basic research performed by the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) on FGIS's behalf.

5. POLICY

USDA's Departmental Regulation (DR 1410-001 11.a.) Publications Review/Clearance Policy, dated February 7, 2003, establishes basic policy regarding development and clearance of technical reports: "USDA employees may, during duty hours, prepare books, articles, and other materials for publication by nongovernmental organizations if such preparation is within the scope of their official duties and in accordance with applicable statutes and regulations. If the material treats a subject that interprets the policies of the USDA or deals with sensitive areas of any USDA program, the originating agency's information head must first submit the material to OC (Office of Communications) for review and clearance. Such materials should be submitted to OC at least 10 working days before they are offered to nongovernmental organizations for publication."

USDA's Departmental Regulation (DR 1074-001) Scientific Integrity, dated May 10, 2013, establishes basic policy regarding scientific integrity that includes a commitment to ensuring technical reports and publications are appropriately authored and cleared through Agency and Department procedures. Appendix A of the DR contains a Code of Scientific Ethics that is applicable to this Directive.

FGIS's MD projects are closely aligned with the Agency's mission and strategic objectives. Communicating new methods and significant progress toward new methods to the Agency's customers, other stakeholders, and the scientific community is an important aspect of MD activities. Publication in peer-reviewed journals is not a mandatory performance requirement for FGIS scientific staff; however, such publication may be considered evidence of professional development and significant contributions to the Agency's mission. The Agency will encourage and allocate resources to develop technical reports, presentations, and peer-reviewed publications that advance the Agency's mission.

FGIS management will work closely with its scientific staff to determine whether, when, and how to communicate results from MD activities to advance the Agency's strategic objectives and make best use of its limited resources. Most of FGIS's MD results will be disseminated through handbooks, directives, and public meetings and conferences. The decision whether to allocate resources to perform research and report, present, and/or publish results in peer-reviewed journals may consider the following criteria:

- Do the results constitute significant new scientific information?
- Would such publication significantly enhance the credibility of FGIS's grain quality assessment methods or the U.S. grain marketing system?
- Is publication in a peer-reviewed journal necessary for unambiguous distribution of the results or wide acceptance of a developed method?
- Is there a compelling reason to publish the results in a peer-reviewed journal to establish the precedence of FGIS's research?

In all cases, technical reports and publications that list FGIS employees as an author, whether primary or contributing, shall be subject to Agency and, as necessary, Departmental clearance before distribution or submission to the external peer-review process.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The Director of the Division of origin shall designate a first-level approver for each technical report or publication produced by the Division, including approval of the Abstract, Request for Initial Clearance and final manuscript.

- b. The designated first-level reviewer, normally the primary/corresponding author's supervisor, but not a co-author, shall coordinate all communication between the initiating Division and other Agency personnel involved in reviewing and approving publication of the final manuscript.
- (1) The first-level reviewer shall;
 - (a) Review and approve the Abstract and manuscript for consideration through the Agency clearance process;
 - (b) Submit the Request for Initial Clearance through the appropriate Division Director to Agency officials involved in the Agency clearance process;
 - (c) Communicate with the primary author to ensure that all recommended revisions are made and any sensitive issues are addressed or removed while keeping the primary author fully aware of the progress of the document through the clearance process; and
 - (d) Communicate with non-FGIS authors to apprise them of the clearance process and progress therein.
- c. The primary/corresponding author of the proposed publication shall:
- (1) Secure the appropriate Agency approval to initiate work on the project;
 - (2) Develop the Abstract for initial review by the designated first-level reviewer and address any revisions needed;
 - (3) Prepare and present a briefing to Agency personnel involved in the Agency Clearance process;
 - (4) Develop the Request for Initial Clearance for initial review by the designated first-level reviewer;
 - (5) Develop and edit the document (in collaboration with co-authors, if any) to ensure technical and grammatical accuracy and stylistic adequacy before submitting it for review;
 - (6) Maintain records of all modifications and edits to any document submitted for publication. The records will include all edits made to the document and disposition/action taken on the edits;
 - (7) Submit the document to the first-level reviewer;

- (8) Track the clearance process via communication with the first-level reviewer;
- (9) Ensure all revisions are complete before the document is distributed or submitted for peer-review or publication, and;
- (10) Convey an electronic copy of the document to the Administrative Assistant (or other designated person) of the Division of origin for archiving.

7. PREPARATION OF TECHNICAL REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS

a. External reports and publications.

- (1) Technical reports to be submitted for publication outside the Department of Agriculture shall conform to the formats prescribed by the journals to which the reports are to be submitted.
- (2) Reports and publications that refer to commercial entities or products shall contain the following disclaimer statement:

"The mention of firm names or trade products does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by the U. S. Department of Agriculture over other firms or similar products not mentioned."

b. USDA-internal reports and publications.

- (1) The US Government Printing Office Style Manual (current edition) shall be used as guidance for style and formatting of USDA-internal technical reports and publications.
- (2) Reports shall contain a Title page (with Title, Authors, and Keywords, and Approving Officials); an Abstract (as defined below); an Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results and Discussion, and Conclusions and/or Recommendations sections as applicable.

c. Authorship.

- (1) USDA policy on attributing authorship of publications is defined in DR 1074-001, Appendix A—Code of Scientific Ethics.
 - (a) "I will claim authorship for a research product only if I am willing to be held responsible for both the interpretation of the data and the conclusions as presented.

(b) "I will claim authorship for a research product only if I have made major intellectual contribution (as part of conception, design, data collection, data analysis, or interpretation) and made significant contributions to its preparation (written, reviewed, or edited)."

(2) Authorship does not convey any rights to publish interpretations, opinions, or recommendations that are inconsistent with USDA positions or policy. Consistency with USDA positions or policy will be determined during the clearance process.

d. Copyright.

(1) "Articles, papers, books, and other material prepared by USDA employees as part of their official duties and published in private publications are not copyrightable and may be reproduced at will. The fact that the private publication in which a USDA-produced article is to appear is itself copyrighted does not affect the non-copyrightability of a Government article. To avoid misunderstanding, agencies shall advise the private publisher of this restriction in advance. If manuscripts developed under USDA contracts with private individuals or organizations are subject to copyright, the copyright cannot restrict USDA from full use of those materials." (DR 1410-001 11.b.) Recommended language for conveying this restriction follows: "The U.S. Copyright Act provides that federal government employees cannot copyright material prepared in the course of their employment. As an employee of USDA-GIPSA-FGIS, I have no copyright interest to assign, and I must decline to sign the copyright assignment. Although for the above reasons I am technically unable to assign any copyright to [publisher], I still request and authorize you to publish the submitted article in accordance with your standard editorial policies. I hope this letter will be sufficient authorization for your needs to enable you to consider it favorably."

(<http://www.cendi.gov/publications/04-8copyright.html#315> Sec. 3.2.6)

(2) "Articles prepared as part of an employee's official duties or while on Government time are the property of the Government. Authors must not accept payment for official articles published in nongovernmental journals, magazines, or newspapers." (DR 1410-001 11.a.)

e. Abstract.

The target journal may require an abstract to accompany the proposed publication and specify requirements for length and content. Any abstract required for publication is in addition to the Abstract that the primary/corresponding author must submit through the Agency clearance process, as outlined below.

f. Keywords.

Relevant keywords shall be identified to assist in cross-referencing reports.

8. CLEARANCE OF TECHNICAL REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS

a. Request for Initial Clearance.

All documents proposed for publication must be cleared through the Agency, and in some cases, the Department's external publication clearance process. The topic of the proposed publication may be broad enough that other Agency officials outside the formal Agency clearance process may need to be aware of the proposed publication and involved in the clearance process. In order to ensure that all appropriate Agency components are aware of the proposed publication, a Request for Initial Clearance must be submitted and approved.

- (1) At least one (1) month before initiating the formal Agency clearance process, the primary/corresponding author shall prepare a Request for Initial Clearance for review and approval by the designated first-level reviewer. The Request for Initial Clearance shall include:
 - (a) The report or publication's author(s), identification of the primary/corresponding author (if there are co-authors), title, keywords, and Abstract.
 - (b) An Abstract reviewed and approved by the designated first-level reviewer as an adequate and accurate representation of the work to permit others to assess the level of review required for the final document that includes (as applicable):
 - (1) Introduction (purpose and background);
 - (2) Materials and methods;
 - (3) Major results or findings; and
 - (4) Significant conclusions or recommendations.
 - (c) Identification of any potentially sensitive issues in or related to the document, and a request to reviewers for identification of any potentially sensitive issues not identified by the primary/corresponding author. Any substantial sensitive issues require clearance by the USDA Office of Communications. (DR 1410-001 11.a.)
 - (d) Recommended review officials outside the formal Agency clearance process.

- (e) An invitation to obtain the full document for review before distribution, publication, or submission for external peer-review.
 - (f) A due date (no less than 5 business days hence) after which “no response” by a recipient will be interpreted as “no review required by recipient.”
- (2) All listed authors shall review the document and make the necessary corrections before submitting it to the designated first-level reviewer.
 - (3) The designated first-level reviewer shall:
 - (a) Review and approve the Request for Clearance, including the required Abstract;
 - (b) Return the document to the primary/corresponding author as necessary for revision. The primary/corresponding author shall address the recommended revisions and return the marked copy, comments, and the revised version to the first-level reviewer for verification that all identified issues were adequately addressed in the revision.
 - (c) Submit the Request for Initial Clearance through the originating author’s Division Director to all other FGIS Division Directors and/or other Agency personnel.
- b. Final Agency Clearance.
- (1) The primary/corresponding author will submit the proposed manuscript for publication and/or external peer review to the designated first-level reviewer for approval and initiation of Final Agency Clearance. The designated first level reviewer shall submit the proposed manuscript for final Agency clearance. All proposed manuscripts for external publication or peer review require review and approval by the following:
 - (a) Chief Scientist, GIPSA;
 - (b) Director, Department Initiatives and International Affairs, FGIS;
 - (c) Deputy Administrator, FGIS;
 - (d) Assistant to the Administrator; and
 - (e) Administrator.

The designated first-level reviewer will also submit the proposed manuscript to any Agency officials who requested the opportunity to review it during the Request for Initial Review.

- (2) All comments and requests for revision by Agency reviewers will be returned to the designated first-level reviewer. The first-level reviewer will then return all requested revisions and comments to the primary author for appropriate revisions to the proposed manuscript.
- (3) The primary/corresponding author will summarize and address all comments and concerns raised during the Agency review process. The primary/corresponding author shall return the document to the first-level reviewer for approval and concurrence that all identified issues have been adequately addressed.
- (4) The first-level reviewer will assess the adequacy of the revisions and recommend further action on the proposed publication and/or external peer review. The recommendation will be to:
 - (a) Disapprove the proposed publication for any further action;
 - (b) Approve the proposed publication for external publication and/or external peer review, or
 - (c) Forward the proposed publication as necessary for Departmental clearance.
- (5) The primary/corresponding author shall notify the first-level reviewer of any revisions required in the external peer-review process. The first level reviewer shall initiate an additional internal Agency review using the procedures identified in this Directive and/or Departmental clearance if the first-level reviewer determines that to be necessary before publication.

/s/Robert Lijewski

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