United States Department of Agriculture
Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration
Federal Grain Inspection Service

Directive

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REMOTE ISSUANCE OF OFFICIAL CERTIFICATES

Contents

1. PURPOSE 2

2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS 2

3. GENERAL INFORMATION 2

4. REQUIREMENTS 2

5. RESPONSIBILITIES 3
6. FURTHER INFORMATION 3

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1. PURPOSE

This directive establishes guidelines for using computer technology to issue official inspection and weight certificates for export and domestic locations other than official service points. This directive applies to certificates issued under the United States Grain Standards Act (USGSA), as amended, and the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (AMA).

2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This directive replaces Program Directive 9000.5, dated March 11, 1999. This directive was revised to include provisions for facsimile signatures for export shipments and to establish an updated filing policy when official agencies and Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) field offices do not issue or produce hard copies of certificates.

3. GENERAL INFORMATION

FGIS is committed to the policy of adapting computer automation and Internet technology into its national inspection and weighing programs as a means to improve marketing efficiency and to reduce administrative costs.

Official certificates are important documents used in grain and commodity marketing. To expedite receipt of official certificates, customers have expressed interest in using special computer software to prepare and print a hard copy certificate at a location other than the inspection office. One technology that is available transmits encrypted data from the inspection location to another location where associated software de-encrypts and generates official certificates. Remote certification improves operating efficiency by reducing the time it takes for businesses to get official certificates into proper channels.

FGIS will evaluate plans regarding the installation and use of remote certification systems for inspection and weighing services. Approvals are contingent on operating plans that demonstrate the control of all official information and official documentation by official personnel.

4. REQUIREMENTS

a. Remote certification is available for any service. Official personnel may use electronic facsimile signatures in lieu of handwritten signatures for export certificates when this is acceptable to the applicant. Export ship certificates require mechanical embossing by official personnel unless it is not required by the applicant or interested parties.

b. All grain certificates shall show the information and statements required under sections 800.160 through 800.165 of the regulations. All AMA service certificates shall show the information and statements required under section 868.70 through 868.75 of the regulations.

c. Official personnel must demonstrate how certificates will conform to official requirements regarding color, format, and required statements.

d. Remote certification programs must have physical or electronic security features which control unauthorized access to data to prevent manipulation or have audit procedures or trails to monitor certificate issuance for deceptive or fraudulent use.
e. An accountability and verification system is required to ensure the proper issuance of official certificates. Electronically generated certificate numbers must be computer generated with only initial user intervention to initiate the sequence at the time of program startup.

f. Official personnel are not required to maintain a hard copy certificate for the official file if the certificate is printed at a remote location. However, the originating office must maintain an electronic file and have processes in place to assure the proper retention and storage of the electronic information for the appropriate retention period. A hard copy certificate is required for the official file only when the certificate is printed at the office or laboratory of the official service provider.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Applicants for service:

(1) Notify the field office or agency manager of interest in remote certificate issuance.

(2) Develop a protocol with the service provider describing how they will receive and dispose of electronic files.

c. FGIS Field Offices Managers:

(1) Provide oversight.

(2) Review official agency's detailed description and recommendation of the project. Accept, amend, or reject proposal.

(3) Monitor the issuance process during a trial period established by the field office.

(4) Provide final approval or disapproval of the plan after the trial.

d. Director, Field Management Division:

(1) Provide support and advice to field offices and official agencies.

(2) Provide evaluation of encryption and security systems.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about remote certification, contact the Policies and Procedures Branch at (202) 720-0252.

/s/ David Orr
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