

USDA AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

SOLICITATION FOR PURCHASE OF FRESH APPLES IN BAGS AND
CARTONS UNDER SECTION 32

Solicitation: 12-3J14-24-B-0600/2000010311

Important Dates:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) invites offers to sell fresh apples pursuant to the AMS Master Solicitation for use in the National School Lunch Program and other Federal Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs. Acceptances will be announced by midnight, September 18, 2024. Deliveries are to be made between October 14, 2024 and February 26, 2025.

Questions:

Questions on this solicitation must be submitted to the contract specialist and contracting officer identified below; no later than, August 26, 2024 1:00 pm CT. Questions received after the deadline will not be addressed. Answers to questions submitted will be answered via an amendment by August 30, 2024.

Bids are to be submitted by September 4, 2024 at 1:00 pm CT through WBSCM. If you may have trouble submitting your bid, please reach out to the WBSCM help desk at WBSCM.servicedesk@caci.com or call 877-927-2648.

Contact Information:

The Contract Specialist handling this purchase will be Nick Wiber at Nick.Wiber@usda.gov. The Contact Officer handling this purchase will be Samantha Klagenberg at Samantha.Klagenberg@usda.gov. Please contact the specialist first.

Note:

*****Bidders are responsible for understanding if suppliers listed on their required USDA GAP-GHP verification form meet GAP-GHP scope requirements for this solicitation prior to bid open. A misunderstanding of requirements will not be an allowance for a change to the verification form. Bidders are urged to check what scopes their suppliers meet on the following website prior to submitting their bid: <https://apps.ams.usda.gov/GAPGHP/reportG01.aspx>

Required Scopes:

GAP - Farm Review AND Field Harvesting & Field Packing Activities

GHP - House Packing Facility AND Storage & Transportation*****

Small Business Set Asides for NAICS code 311991 with a size standard of 700 employees or less are as follows:

Set-asides:

(110151) - APPLES FRESH VARIOUS TYPE CTN-37-40 LB

100% Small Business set aside.

5% Service Disabled Veteran Owned set-aside.

(110561) - APPLES FRESH PKG-12/3 LB

100% Small Business set aside.

5% Service Disabled Veteran Owned set-aside.

Additional requirements to the Commodity specification:

****Please be advised that the material for this solicitation must be from the 2024 crop year.****

Vendors or subcontractors who are supplying fresh fruit crops to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) must ensure that each of their suppliers/subcontractors who grow, harvest, pack, hold, and handle product have approved and current SCI food safety verification audits PRIOR to the bid opening date of this solicitation. SCI Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) scopes which are necessary to meet the minimum requirement to be deemed responsive are as follows: (see below).

All apples must be inspected and certified by SCI Federal or Federal/State inspectors. Inspections under the Partners in Quality (PIQ) and Customer Assisted Inspection Program (CAIP) programs are not accepted for USDA Commodity Procurement purchases.

Inspection and certification must take place at shipping point, during or after the final packaging but, prior to shipping. Positive Lot Identification (PLI) will be applied in accordance with SCI procedures once the product has met solicitation requirements.

If SCI inspection/certification at shipping point/origin meets all requirements of this specification and solicitation, it does not guarantee acceptance at destination. Product at destination must still meet all applicable specification and solicitation requirements with no additional tolerances allowed. Failure to meet these requirements may result in rejection of the load at destination. It is the vendor's responsibility to ensure the delivery of acceptable product and the replacement of any failed deliveries with acceptable product.

Apples purchased must meet all relevant requirements of the Commodity Specification for Fresh Fruit July 2019, including the following requirements:

Grade: Apples must meet the requirements of U.S. Fancy (State grades will be acceptable provided the apples meet the requirements of the U.S. Fancy Grade) as stated in the United States Standards for Grades of Apples Effective October 31, 2019. Apples shall also meet the United States Condition Standards for Export.

Intermingling of the varieties in the truckload is permitted but not on the pallet.

Apples in each offer unit ordered delivered by USDA shall contain product of not more than three (3) adjacent sizes nor be in more than three locations at the time of inspection. Each size shall be segregated in the shipment with a minimum of intermingling of the sizes. If shipment is by truck, the location and count of each size in the truck (front, center, and tail) shall be noted on the shipping manifest by the contractor.

(110561) - APPLES FRESH PKG-12/3 LB

Size: Minimum size 2 1/8 inches in diameter, maximum size 3 1/2 inches in diameter. Consumer units shall be 12/3-pound poly film bags packed in Master cartons.

Varieties: Empire, Fuji, Gala, Red Delicious, Cripps Pink, and Granny Smith.

(110151) - APPLES FRESH VARIOUS TYPE CTN-37-40 LB

Size: Minimum size 150; maximum size 88.

Varieties: Gala, Red Delicious, Fuji, Golden Delicious, Jonagold, Granny Smith, Honeycrisp, Ambrosia, Empire, Cripps Pink, and Braeburn.

All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.

Every bidder must include a letter of support with their bid from all current and approved supplier(s). The templates for the letter of support are attached to the solicitation with the required elements. Each letter of support is only good for one

solicitation. A new letter of support will be required for every solicitation, from every supplier. The supplier must include the quantity in cases they are committing to the bidder. USDA will not award a quantity that exceeds the sum of all supplier's committed quantities to a particular bidder.

For a new-to-USDA contractor and existing contractors who are bidding on new products, a probationary period may be implemented in which awards are limited to 10 truckloads per product. Contractor must demonstrate successful delivery of at least five (5) truckloads of product in order to be removed from probationary status on future solicitations. For the purposes of this rule, successful delivery is defined as product delivered on-time and in acceptable condition according to the terms and conditions of the contract. Any delivery problems directly attributable to the Government will not be held against the contractor.

Vendors or subcontractors who are supplying fresh fruit crops to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) must ensure that each of their suppliers/subcontractors who grow, harvest, pack, hold, and handle product have approved and current food safety verification audits PRIOR to the bid opening date of this solicitation. Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) scopes which are necessary to meet the minimum requirement to be deemed responsive are as follows:

GAP - Farm Review AND Field Harvesting & Field Packing Activities

GHP - House Packing Facility AND Storage & Transportation

All these requirements shall be met PRIOR to the bid opening date.

Brokers are exempt from the USDA GAP/GHP requirements themselves, HOWEVER suppliers/subcontractors performing under the contract shall have the applicable USDA GAP/GHP certification(s).

Verification audits shall be performed by the USDA, AMS, SCP-SCID representatives only.

In order to be found responsive the contractor and/or its subcontractors/suppliers must be in compliance with USDA GAP/GHP certification. Offerors must include in their bid the GAP and GHP Audit Verification attachment, which is found in the attachments section of this solicitation. Offerors who do not complete this form in its entirety, do not include the form as an attachment to their bid, or are missing the required USDA GAP/GHP scopes listed above shall be deemed nonresponsive.

All audits are valid for one year after the date the audit was conducted. More information on USDA GAP/GHP audits can be found here: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/gap-ghp> or by reaching out to scaudits@usda.gov.

Awardees may ship and supply from any location found here: <https://apps.ams.usda.gov/GAPGHP/reportG01.aspx>

If USDA/AMS finds that suppliers used by the contractor are not in compliance with AMS GAP/GHP certification requirements after the product is delivered, the following courses of action will apply:

1. A cure notice shall be issued informing the contractor of their failure to comply with the required elements of this solicitation. The USDA will then deduct a 50% discount from the invoice for all noncompliant deliveries shipped or invoiced prior to the date listed on the cure notice.
2. If the contractor ships noncompliant product after the date of the cure notice:
 - a. USDA/AMS will deduct a 50% discount from the invoice for all noncompliant deliveries;
 - b. The contract will be terminated for cause; and
 - c. The contractor will be suspended from participating in all future USDA/AMS fresh fruit and vegetable solicitations for a period of one year from the date of contract termination.

This solicitation may show multiple stops on some line items; however, the number of stops will be limited to a maximum of three. To determine the number of destinations, review the "Instructions to offors/Tendering Text" for the lot, which

will indicate the City and State for each stop. Bidders may submit different prices for each stop. However, a price is required on all line items within the lot.

For offshore destinations (Puerto Rico, Hawaii, etc.), offerors have the option to choose to enter their bids direct to the offshore destination or to the port. Purchases will be made on an f.o.b. destination basis to cities on this solicitation. Destination quantities listed are estimates and subject to adjustment based on offerings, changes in recipient needs, market conditions, and program operations.

All prime vendors are reminded that they are prohibited from subcontracting with companies or individuals that have been suspended or debarred.

Offers must be submitted electronically via the Web-Based Supply Chain Management System (WBSCM). Offers submitted by any means other than WBSCM will be deemed nonresponsive. Offerors must be active in WBSCM and have the required bidder roles in order to submit offers under this solicitation. Once connected, follow the online procedures. A "HELP" button provides detailed instructions or call (202) 720-4517 for assistance.

Offerors are cautioned to bid only quantities they can reasonably expect to produce and deliver. Inquiries about the Master Solicitation dated November 2023; The Commodity Specification for Fresh Fruit; or this solicitation should be directed to the Contracting Officer; USDA, AMS, Room 3522-South; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-0239. Telephone: (202) 720-4517. FAX: (202) 720-2782.

The USDA prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.) To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), or (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).