

# Directive

9010.1

February 25, 1999

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## RESOLVING CUSTOMER CONCERNS

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## 1. PURPOSE

This directive establishes the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) policies and procedures for resolving customer concerns regarding inspection or weighing and service received. Customers are defined as those persons who receive official services, other interested parties in transactions involving official services, and persons that inquire about any official service or program.

For purposes of this directive, a request for a reinspection, retest, review of weighing, appeal or Board appeal inspection service, or formal foreign complaint, will not be considered as a concern. All apparent violations of the United States Grain Standards Act (USGSA), as amended, or the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (AMA), as amended, must be reported to the Compliance Division in accordance with FGIS Directive 9070.6, rather than with the procedures outlined in this directive. Additionally, all official agency concerns regarding other official agencies should be directed to the Compliance Division.

## 2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This directive supersedes FGIS Directive 9010.1, dated 5-1-97. This directive is updated to reflect FGIS's policy of resolving customer concerns at the local level by the service provider, and to simplify the response and reporting requirements.

## 3. POLICY

It is FGIS's policy to empower service providers at the lowest organizational level to resolve customer concerns. Solving customer concerns at this level reduces the time a customer must wait for a response to their concerns, and allows the persons most knowledgeable about the situation to respond, which should ensure that the best resolution results. FGIS's goal is to maximize customer satisfaction through efficient and judicious answers to their concerns.

## 4. PROCEDURES

The directors of the Field Management Division and Technical Services Division are responsible for administering this program and ensuring that customer concerns are adequately addressed.

Customer concerns can vary, such as written and oral, and the range of issues are broad, from individual inspection and weighing results to intermarket differences, service, and costs.

### a. Gathering Information.

When a customer registers a concern, the person receiving the concern should obtain as much factual information as possible. The attachment provides information that may be appropriate when discussing a complaint with a customer and subsequently reporting the concern if necessary.

If the concern is being presented to someone above the original service provider, the customer should be asked whether they have expressed their concerns to the original service provider. If they have not, they should be asked to do so. When concerns cannot be addressed at the local level because they are outside of the local manager's control, they should be reported further up the organizational structure for resolution.

b. Reporting Concerns.

- (1) FGIS expects complaints to be addressed at the level where the service is provided, and there is no reporting requirement for concerns addressed to and resolved by the service provider. That is, if the official agency manager, field office manager, the Assistant Chairman of the Board of Appeals and Review, or Analytical Services Group lab manager providing inspection service receives and resolves the complaint, no further reporting is required.
- (2) Reporting of concerns to the Director, Field Management Division is required only when:
  - (a) The concern involves an intermarket dispute that crosses agency and field office boundaries.
  - (b) The original service provider's response does not satisfy the customer, and the customer raises the issue to the next higher organizational level, that is the field office for official agencies, and headquarters for a field office.
  - (c) Reoccurring concerns that, even though initially resolved, continually reappear.
  - (d) The concern is not at the discretion of the original service provider, such as an inspection or weighing requirement imposed by instructions or regulations, and the customer is not satisfied with the local explanation of the need for such a requirement.
- (3) Reporting of concerns to the Director, Technical Services Division is required only when:
  - (a) The original service provider's response does not satisfy the customer, and the customer raises the issue to the appropriate Branch Chief within the Technical Services Division.
  - (b) Reoccurring concerns that, even though initially resolved, continually reappear.

- (c) The concern is not at the discretion of the service provider, such as an inspection or testing requirement imposed by instructions or regulations, and the customer is not satisfied with the explanation of the need for such a requirement.
- (4) Reports can be sent in writing or verbally reported to the Director, Field Management Division or the Director, Technical Services Division, as appropriate. The director's office may request additional information, if necessary, and may request that oral reports be placed in writing.

c. Responses to Concerns.

Responses to customer concerns may be made verbally or in writing and may be provided by the director or the field office manager. The director will designate the appropriate party to research and prepare the response.

d. Recording Concerns and Responses.

- (1) Original service providers are not required to record customer concerns and responses when the concern is resolved at the local level.
- (2) Field Management Division will database all reported concerns and actions taken to resolve these concerns, including those generated with the Technical Services Division. Report and database specifications are developed and maintained by the Field Management Division.
- (3) Field Management Division and Technical Services Division will provide other offices the findings of complaints that could affect those offices, so as to prevent them from researching previously addressed issues.

Attachment

**Information To Gather When Receiving and Reporting Customer Concerns**

Customer's name, position, and phone number.

Names, positions, and phone numbers of other parties involved.

Description of the nature of the complaint. Include as many facts as possible, such as locations, dates, times, carrier identifications, and certificate numbers.