



Dairy



Remote Butter Grading Program

The Dairy Program Grading Branch (DGB) has been exploring alternative methods for providing butter grading services to the dairy industry. To this end, DGB has developed a remote butter grading program to help small processors access grading services.

To maintain product and USDA Grade AA shield integrity, AMS reviews an applicant's internal documentation and controls and conducts unannounced on-site visits to ensure program compliance. With the use of unannounced plant surveys, unannounced cursory inspections, and robust document reviews, DGB can continue to be a proactive partner in the manufacturing of quality butter while maintaining USDA requirements and enabling USDA to assess butter quality and assign USDA Grade AA from a remote location.

This voluntary service option will reduce cost and location barriers for participation in grading services.

Facility Requirements

1. Plant Inspections - Maintain a Section I status (in compliance) on plant inspections, with no critical or major deficiencies.
2. Sample Submission - Submit butter samples for grading to DGB using prescribed procedures.
3. Cursory Inspections - Unannounced cursory inspections shall find the facility in good condition.
4. Grading Quality - Demonstrate consistent product quality meeting the U.S. Grade AA standards.
5. Packaging Quality - Demonstrate consistent quality of butter packaging and coding.
6. Product Traceability - Demonstrate traceability of the product.
7. Verification Sampling - Verification sampling will be conducted by the DGB. These samples shall be consistent with the grading conducted on the original samples submitted to DGB.

Samples

- Sample Control Plan - Shall be in place.
- Churn/Lot/Sublot Size - Limited to 10,000 lbs. of product.
- Sample Size - Minimum of two random samples selected and submitted to DGB for each churn/lot/sublot.

Cost of Grading Service

- Grading – Cost will be determined by sample numbers, with the number of total daily samples being capped at 50.
 - 1-10 samples - 1 hour
 - 11-20 samples - 2 hours
 - 21-30 samples - 3 hours
 - 31-40 samples - 4 hours
 - 41-50 samples - 5 hours
- Shipping of Samples - Labels will be provided by DGB. Facility shall reimburse DGB shipping cost at the time of grading.
- Certificate - Issuance of certificate will be a half-hour charge.
- Review of Records - Review of production, shipping, and sample plan records shall be reviewed quarterly, and an hourly rate (a minimum of a half hour and not to exceed 4 hours) shall be charged.
- Verification Sampling - To be conducted during unannounced cursory inspection visit; cost included with cursory inspection.
- Cursory Inspections - To be conducted each quarter during unannounced visit; estimated 4-to-8-hour charge.

Product that Does Not Meet the USDA Grade AA

For products that does not meet USDA grade standards and does not pose any food safety concerns, the plant shall isolate, tag, and provide documentation that the product has been reworked, sent to butteroil, or disposed of in a manner acceptable to the DGB. Product that is determined to present any food safety concerns will be addressed at the plant by DGB, at the regular non-resident fee grading rate.

USDA, AMS, Dairy Program

Grading Branch

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