

Department has been requested by both State agencies and retailers to establish policy in this area.

Requested Information

In light of the discussions that continue to take place, the Department is interested in obtaining information. Interoperability is recognized as being good for recipients and good for retailers, but it would appear to raise costs. We want to learn more about these costs: the nature of these costs and to what degree they will appear. Towards that end, the Department wishes to obtain input regarding the anticipated frequency of interoperable food stamp transactions, the relative costs to provide interoperability, and who might best bear the costs. More formally stated:

(1) How many interstate transactions are expected to occur and how often will they occur?

(2) Should interoperability between State EBT systems be required?

(3) What are the interstate costs and the factors that make up those costs?

Comments are encouraged on these specific issues proposed for consideration as well as any additional issues that should be considered within the scope of this review. Comments will assist the Department in determining whether policy changes are appropriate.

Dated: March 11, 1997.

William E. Ludwig,

Administrator, Food and Consumer Service.

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Foreign Agricultural Service

Notice of a Request for Extension and Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Department's intention to request an extension for, and amendment to, a currently approved information collection in support of the Dairy Tariff-Rate Import Quota Licensing program.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received on or before April 21, 1997 to be assured of consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS: Contact Richard P. Warsack, Dairy Import Quota Manager, STOP 1021, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW,

Washington, D.C. 20250-1021, or telephone (202) 720-2916. All comments received will be available for public inspection in room 5541-S at the above address.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Dairy Import Tariff-Rate Quota Import Licensing Program.

OMB Number: 0551-0001.

Expiration Date of Approval: June 30, 1997.

Type of Request: Extension and revision of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: The currently approved information collection supports Import Regulation 1, Revision 8 (Revision 8) (7 CFR 6.20-6.36) which was published in the **Federal Register** on October 9, 1996 (61 FR 53002), and governs the administration of the import licensing system for certain dairy products subject to tariff-rate quotas (TRQs). The TRQs were established in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) as a result of entry into force of certain provisions in the Uruguay Round Agreement. Imports of nearly all cheese made from cow's milk (except soft-ripened cheeses such as Brie) and certain noncheese dairy products are subject to TRQs and the licensing provisions of Revision 8. Import licenses are issued each quota year to eligible licensees and are valid for 12 months (January 1 through December 31). Holders of such licenses may enter dairy articles at the lower in-quota tariff rates. Importers who do not hold licenses may enter dairy articles at the higher over-quota tariff rates. Under Revision 8, there are three types of licenses: (1) historical licenses (listed in Appendix 1); (2) nonhistorical licenses (listed in Appendix 2); and (3) designated licenses under which U.S. importers are designated by the government of a foreign country to import certain cheese articles from that country (listed in Appendix 3).

For each quota year, all applicants must submit form FAS 923 (Rev. 7-96). This form requests applicants to: (1) identify whether they are applying for a license as an importer, designated importer, manufacturer, or exporter of certain dairy products; and (2) certify they meet the eligibility requirements of § 6.23 of the Import Regulation (7 CFR 6.23). Importers or exporters must attach documentation required by § 6.23 and § 6.24 as proof of eligibility for import licenses. Applicants for nonhistorical licenses for cheese and/or noncheese dairy products must also submit form FAS-923A and/or FAS-923B (Rev. 7-96). This form requires applicants identify requests for licenses listed on the form in descending rank-order.

After licenses are issued, § 6.26 requires licensees to surrender by October 1 any license amount that a licensee does not intend to enter that year. To the extent practicable, the Licensing Authority reallocates these amounts to existing licensees for the remainder of that year. The information collection is being amended to include: (1) form FAS-924A, License Surrender Form, and (2) form FAS-924B, Application for Additional License Amounts. Form FAS-924A will require licensees to complete a table listing the license number and surrender amount for each license being surrendered. Form FAS-924B will accompany a Notice to Importers which identifies license amounts available for reallocation. Form FAS-924B will require licensees to complete a table listing (1) the additional amounts being requested for specific dairy articles and the supplying country, and (2) the existing license to which the additional amount should be added, if applicable. The Department is currently developing an automated scanning system to expedite the surrender and reallocation process which will require uniform submission of such information.

The estimated total annual burden in the OMB inventory for the currently approved information collection is 375 hours. The estimated burden will be reduced by 105 hours to 270 hours. The estimated reduction is based on a reduction in the number of respondents which has mainly resulted from the strengthened eligibility requirements and increased disciplines of Revision 8, and recent widespread consolidation of firms among licensees. The estimated public reporting burden for the 1997 quota year and each quota year thereafter is set forth in the table below.

Estimates	FAS-923, 923A, 923B (Rev. 7-96) (one form)	FAS-924A, 924B (one form)
Est. number of respondents ...	340.00	100.00
Est. responses per respondent	1.00	1.00
Est. hours per response	0.75	0.15
Est. total annual burden in hours	255.00	15.00
Aggregate total ..	270.00 estimated annual burden in hours	

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Valerie Countiss, the Agency Information Collection Coordinator, at (202) 720-6713.

The Department requests comments regarding the accuracy of the burden

estimate, ways to minimize the burden, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology, or any other aspect of the collection of information.

Comments should be submitted in accordance with the Dates and Additional Information or Comments sections above. All comments will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval, and will also become a matter of public record.

Signed at Washington, D.C., March 14, 1997.

August Schumacher, Jr.,

Administrator, Foreign Agricultural Service.

[FR Doc. 97-7388 Filed 3-24-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-10-M

FY 1997 Emerging Markets Program and Solicitation of Proposals

AGENCY: Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of FY 1997 Emerging Markets Program and solicitation of proposals.

SUMMARY: The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) invites proposals to promote the export of, and improve the market access for, U.S. agricultural products to emerging markets in fiscal year (FY) 1997 under the Emerging Markets Program (the Program). The Program is authorized by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, as amended (the Act). Proposals will be considered from any agricultural or agribusiness organization, with certain restrictions as indicated below. Program funds available for FY 1997 under this notice are approximately \$4 million. All agricultural products are eligible for consideration.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Additional information, including Program guidelines, may be obtained from and applications submitted to: Emerging Markets Office, Foreign Agricultural Service, Room 6506 South Building, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250-1032, Fax: (202) 690-4369.

INTENT OF THE PROGRAM: The premise of the Program is that emerging markets can benefit from U.S. governmental assistance as the private sector moves to develop these markets through normal corporate or trade promotional activities.

The Act defines an emerging market as any country that the Secretary of Agriculture determines:

(1) Is taking steps toward a market-oriented economy through the food,

agriculture, or rural business sectors of the economy of the country; and

(2) Has the potential to provide a significant market for United States agricultural commodities or products of United States agricultural commodities.

There is no set list of emerging market countries; however, the following administrative criteria will be used to determine whether a particular country will be considered an emerging market:

(1) Per capita income less than \$8355;
(2) Population is greater than 1 million; and

(3) Positive economic growth factors. The Program provides technical assistance and is not intended for projects targeted at end-user consumers. Ineligible activities include in-store promotions, restaurant promotions, advertising, and branded promotions. Funding is on a project-by-project basis. The Program complements the efforts of other FAS marketing programs. The emphasis is on market access opportunities. Once a market access issue has been addressed by this Program, further market development activities may be considered under other programs such as GSM-102 or GSM-103 credit programs, the Market Access Program (MAP), or the Foreign Market Development Program (FMD).

Preference will be given to proposals based upon (1) clear demonstration of the degree to which the private agribusiness is willing to commit its own funds to seek export business in an emerging market (leveraged funds), and (2) the immediacy and volume of U.S. agricultural exports which will result from the completion of the proposal.

Additional criteria considered in approving proposal are outlined in the "Applications" section below.

ACTIVITIES: The Program includes but is not limited to the following types of activities: (1) Projects that facilitate the collection and use of market information that benefit both U.S. exporters and the recipient country; (2) Projects to develop free trade policies that benefit both U.S. exporters and the recipient country; (3) Short-term training in agriculture and agribusiness that will benefit U.S. exporters; (4) Projects that specifically address various constraints to U.S. food, fish, and forestry product exports, including sanitary and phytosanitary issues and other non-tariff barriers, such as infrastructure-related issues; (5) Projects that directly assist U.S. exporters through the funding of feasibility studies, markets research, orientation visits, specialized training, business workshops, and other forms of technical assistance; and (6) Projects and

assessments to improve overseas country-wide food and business systems, to reduce trade barriers, to increase prospects for U.S. trade and investment in emerging markets, and to determine the potential for export credit guarantees for commodities, facilities and services. In making proposals, applicants may want to address market access opportunities such as inadequate distribution, infrastructure (including government infrastructure) impediments, insufficient information, sanitary and phytosanitary concerns, quality issues, lack of financing options or resources, need for establishing trade contacts, or lack of familiarity with U.S. products.

ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS: Any U.S. agricultural or agribusiness organization may apply to the Program. U.S. participants in the FMD and MAP programs, however, are eligible only for specific types of activities such as quick response marketing initiatives, food safety and regulation issues, and sectorial assessments for trade and investment, not funded under FMD and MAP. They may, however, participate in export-oriented projects with another agricultural organization which has primary responsibility for the project(s).

DATES: Proposals for FY 1997 funding must be received not later than April 30, 1997. Funding decisions are anticipated, but cannot be guaranteed, within 45 days of this deadline.

APPLICATIONS: To assist FAS in making determinations under the Program, FAS recommends that all applications contain complete information about the proposed project and the applicant(s) and be not longer than ten (10) pages in length. This information may include: name of the person/organization submitting proposal; date of proposal; company/organization affiliation and address (as applicable); telephone and fax numbers; full title of proposal; precis of the proposal, including objectives, proposed activities, benefits to U.S. agricultural exports, target country/countries for proposed activities, projected starting date for project, and funding amount requested; summary and detailed description of proposed project; specific trade constraint addressed; benefits to U.S. agricultural exports; agricultural trade data for target country/countries, including U.S. market share; time line(s); detailed project budget, including other sources of funding for the project and contributions from participating organizations; whether similar activities are or have previously been funded in target country/countries (i.e., under MAP and/or FMD programs);