

Implementation Action Plan

Structure and Leadership

Issue:

The management and leadership infrastructure supporting the agriculture mission from Customs and Border Protection (CBP) should be staffed and empowered at levels equivalent to other functional mission areas in CBP.

Recommended Response:

- Ensure that all levels of the CBP organization include management and leadership positions that elevate and accentuate the agriculture mission.
- Include agriculture supervisors in every level of CBP management.
- Fully empower agriculture managers to implement activities that meet the policies and guidelines that address agricultural policies and risks.

Correlation to Report Recommendation or Other Feedback:

The strongest and clearest of the stakeholder concerns was that the agricultural mission was being lost or subordinated to the primary mission of CBP. The stakeholders strongly urged a more robust chain of command with an agricultural presence at every management level. In fact one stakeholder felt an agriculture presence was needed at the subcabinet level within the Department of Homeland Security. The Office of the Inspector General made recommendations that CBP should have more supervisors with agriculture backgrounds.

Findings:

CBP was formed from three Departments in 2003. Agriculture was the only Agency that did not merge in its entirety. At the time of the transition there were insufficient numbers of agriculture managers transferred to CBP in proportion to the new workforce. Having an agricultural specialization at all levels of management ensures that there is adequate focus and motivation for the workforce to pursue the agricultural mission. This issue was noted by reviewers in both the Government Accountability Office and OIG as well as stakeholders. There was also a concern that the very limited agriculture career path in CBP today could be a contributing factor to the low morale and high turnover among agriculture specialists. Stakeholders have noted that the more senior CBP managers need an agricultural background. Additionally an agricultural background should be an expected requirement up to and including the highest level of DHS.

CBP is responsible for performing the complex regulatory agriculture mission involving scientific determinations of admissibility and risk. While CBP is

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responsible for enforcing the regulations for numerous agencies, CBP personnel are directly responsible for agricultural work activities.

Expected Outcome:

A changed organizational structure with the presence of agriculture managers at all levels of CBP field and headquarters, as appropriate, will provide leadership and authority to carry out an effective agriculture inspection program as set forth in a joint strategic plan. An established career path will improve morale, minimize turnover, and give a greater priority to the agriculture mission. Performance measures should improve with more experienced leadership in place. More effective inspections will result in improved sanitary and phytosanitary security. An enhanced managerial agriculture infrastructure combined with effective performance measures would result in improved efficiency of agricultural related inspections, more expedient response to agriculture-related issues, and, ultimately, an improvement in inspection programs and services.

Implementation Plan:

Tasks

- Develop an effective agriculture management structure that enhances and accentuates the agriculture mission throughout the organization and facilitates the agriculture inspection program. Tasks to be performed are:
 - Improve retention and enhance recruitment opportunities by using the classification series GS 0401 for the positions identified in the bullets below and in other agricultural positions within the organization.
 - Determine appropriate numbers and levels of supervisory and managerial deployment. Evaluate and implement a CBP agricultural management structure at ports of entry, including assistant port directors for agriculture at all major ports to direct and evaluate agricultural operations by FY09.
 - Hire sufficient first-line agriculture supervisors to carry out the assigned tasks during FY08.
 - Hire sufficient agriculture chiefs to carry out the assigned tasks during FY08.
 - Hire sufficient Assistant Port Directors, Agriculture, as appropriate, to carry out the assigned tasks during FY08.
 - Hire sufficient Assistant Directors, Field Operations, Agriculture to carry out the assigned tasks during FY08.

Evaluate the grade structure and responsibilities of the Agriculture Operational Specialists for consistency and for equivalence with other functional mission areas.

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Reclassify Program Managers within Agriculture Programs and Liaison to GS 0401 series to enhance recruitment opportunities.

Develop a succession plan by FY09.

- Determine the appropriate supervisory structure for small, medium, large, and super ports.

Communications Needs

- Communication of this final structure and management plan to the CBP workforce and organization is absolutely crucial and should involve the Secretary and the Executive Directors within CBP down through field offices.
- Secretaries of both departments should plan a meeting to discuss implementation APHIS and CBP should communicate the plan to employees, stakeholders, and Congressional staffs and arrange a joint follow-up meeting with the interested parties.
- Feedback on progress should be monthly between the Commissioner and the APHIS administrator.
- Problems in accomplishing any of these key points should be given to the next level in management to resolve.

Accountable Individual/Group

- The Secretaries of Homeland Security and Agriculture
- Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection and APHIS Administrator

Resources

Specific recruiting and hiring will have to be given priority. Resources will have to be developed to meet the staffing needs.

Commitment to provide and empower the resources needed to complete the action plan.

- Increasing the number of management positions may require internal restructuring of positions and strategic use of increasing user fee revenues resulting from increases in volumes of travel and trade.

Sequencing / Linkages

- Resources Action Plan
- Joint Agency Planning Action Plan
- Outreach / Communication Action Plan

Challenges to Implementation

Possible insufficient funding from user fees.

- There may be a perception that creating an agricultural management structure is “stovepiping” and contrary to the unified inspection concept. It will be difficult to do this quickly since there is no current career ladder,

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and there is a limited pool of agriculture specialists with management experience. A process to fill these slots would have to be developed and may involve long-term TDYs from USDA, which could lead to a management/leadership vacuum at USDA.

Review Block -- for the use of Agency/Department leadership in adopting, modifying, or rejecting the plan.

Structure and Leadership Implementation Action Plan adopted by both agencies on June 26, 2007, by:



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