

Time, February 12, 2007, at one of the following addresses:

Hand Delivery (including FedEx, UPS, etc.): U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Program Policy Staff, Portals Office Building, Suite 400, 1250 Maryland Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20024.

U.S. Postal Delivery: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Program Policy Staff, STOP 1042, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-1042.

#### V. Application Review Information

1. *Criteria.* FAS will use the following criteria in evaluating proposals:

- The ability of the organization to provide an experienced staff with the requisite technical and trade experience to execute the proposal;
- The extent to which the proposal is targeted to a market in which the United States is generally competitive;
- The potential for expanding commercial sales in the proposed market;
- The nature of the specific market constraint or opportunity involved and how well it is addressed by the proposal;
- The extent to which the importer's contribution in terms of handling and processing enhances the potential outcome of the project;
- The amount of reimbursement requested and the organization's willingness to contribute resources, including cash and goods and services of the U.S. industry and foreign third parties; and
- How well the proposed technical assistance component assures that performance trials will effectively demonstrate the intended end-use benefit.

Highest priority for funding under this announcement will be given to meritorious proposals that target countries meeting either of the following criteria:

- Per capita income less than \$10,725 (the ceiling on upper middle income economies as determined by the World Bank [World Development Indicators; July 2006]); and population greater than 1 million. Proposals may address suitable regional groupings, for example, the islands of the Caribbean Basin; or
- U.S. market share of imports of the commodity identified in the proposal of 10 percent or less.

2. *Review and Selection Process.* Proposals will be evaluated by the applicable FAS Commodity Branches in the Market Development and Grants Management Division. The Commodity

Branches will review each proposal against the factors described above. The purpose of this review is to identify meritorious proposals, recommend an appropriate funding level for each proposal based upon these factors, and submit the proposals and funding recommendations to the Deputy Administrator, Office of Trade Programs.

3. *Anticipated Announcement Date.* Announcements of funding decisions for QSP are anticipated during May 2007.

#### VI. Award Administration Information

1. *Award Notices.* FAS will notify each applicant in writing of the final disposition of its application. FAS will send an approval letter and agreement to each approved applicant. The approval letter and agreement will specify the terms and conditions applicable to the project, including the levels of QSP funding and any cost-share contribution requirements.

2. *Administrative and National Policy Requirements.* The agreements will incorporate the details of each project as approved by FAS. Each agreement will identify terms and conditions pursuant to which CCC will reimburse certain costs of each project. Agreements will also outline the responsibilities of the participant, including, but not limited to, procurement (or arranging for procurement) of the commodity sample at a fair market price, arranging for transportation of the commodity sample within the time limit specified in the agreement (organizations should endeavor to ship commodities within 6 months of effective date of agreement), compliance with cargo preference requirements (shipment on United States flag vessels, as required), compliance with the Fly America Act requirements (shipment on United States air carriers, as required), timely and effective implementation of technical assistance, and submission of a written evaluation report within 90 days of expiration of the agreement.

QSP agreements are subject to review and verification by the FAS Compliance, Security and Emergency Planning Division. Upon request, a QSP participant shall provide to CCC the original documents which support the participant's reimbursement claims. CCC may deny a claim for reimbursement if the claim is not supported by adequate documentation.

3. *Reporting.* A written evaluation report must be submitted within 90 days of the expiration of each participant's QSP agreement. Evaluation reports should address all performance

measures that were presented in the proposal.

#### VII. Agency Contact(s)

For additional information and assistance, contact the Program Policy Staff, Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Portals Office Building, Suite 400, Stop 1042, 1250 Maryland Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20024, phone: (202) 720-4327, fax: (202) 720-9361, e-mail: [ppsadmin@fas.usda.gov](mailto:ppsadmin@fas.usda.gov).

Signed at Washington, DC on December 28, 2006.

**W. Kirk Miller,**

*Acting Administrator, Foreign Agricultural Service, and Vice President, Commodity Credit Corporation.*

[FR Doc. 07-57 Filed 1-10-07; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-10-M**

### DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

#### Commodity Credit Corporation

#### Notice of Funds Availability; Inviting Applications for the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops Program

*Announcement Type:* New.  
*Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:* 10.604.

**SUMMARY:** The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) announces the availability of funding for the 2007 Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) Program. The intended effect of this notice is to solicit applications from the private sector and from government agencies for participation in the FY 2007 TASC Program. The TASC Program is administered by personnel of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

**DATES:** See paragraph IV.3 below for a detailed description of relevant dates.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Entities wishing to apply for funding assistance should contact the Program Policy Staff, Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Portals Office Building, Suite 400, 1250 Maryland Avenue, Stop 1042, SW., Washington, DC 20024, phone: (202) 720-4327, fax: (202) 720-9361, e-mail: [ppsadmin@fas.usda.gov](mailto:ppsadmin@fas.usda.gov). Information is also available on the Foreign Agricultural Service Web site at <http://www.fas.usda.gov/mos/tasc.asp>.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### I. Funding Opportunity Description

*Authority:* The TASC Program is authorized by section 3205 of Pub. L. 107-171. TASC regulations appear at 7 CFR part 1487.

*Purpose:* The TASC program is designed to assist U.S. organizations by providing funding for projects that address sanitary, phytosanitary, and technical barriers that prohibit or threaten the export of U.S. specialty crops. U.S. specialty crops, for the purpose of the TASC Program, are defined to include all cultivated plants, or the products thereof, produced in the U.S., except wheat, feed grains, oilseeds, cotton, rice, peanuts, sugar, and tobacco.

As a general matter, TASC Program projects should be designed to accomplish the following goals:

- Projects should address a sanitary, phytosanitary, or related technical barrier that prohibits or threatens the export of U.S. specialty crops;
- Projects should demonstrably benefit the represented industry and not a specific company or brand; and,
- Projects must address barriers to U.S. specialty crops that are currently available on a commercial basis and for which barrier removal would predominately benefit U.S. exports.

Examples of expenses that the CCC may agree to reimburse under the TASC Program include, but are not limited to: Initial pre-clearance programs, export protocol and work plan support, seminars and workshops, study tours, field surveys, development of pest lists, pest and disease research, database development, reasonable logistical and administrative support, and travel and per diem expenses.

## II. Award Information

In general, all qualified proposals received before the specified application deadlines will compete for funding. The limited funds and the range of barriers affecting the exports of U.S. specialty crops worldwide preclude CCC from approving large budgets for individual projects. In prior years, the amount of funding per proposal has ranged from \$13,000 to \$250,000, the maximum allowed.

Applicants may submit multiple proposals, and applicants with previously approved TASC proposals may apply for additional funding. However, no TASC participant may have more than three approved projects underway at any given time.

FAS will consider providing either grant funds as direct assistance to U.S. organizations or providing technical assistance on behalf of U.S. organizations, provided that the organization submits timely and qualified proposals. FAS will review all proposals against the evaluation criteria contained in the program regulations.

Funding for successful proposals will be provided through specific

agreements. These agreements will incorporate the proposal as approved by FAS. FAS must approve in advance any subsequent changes to the project. FAS or another Federal agency may be involved in the implementation of approved projects.

## III. Eligibility Information

1. *Eligible Applicants:* Any United States organization, private or government, may apply to the program. Government organizations consist of federal, state, and local agencies. Private organizations include non-profit trade associations, universities, agricultural cooperatives, state regional trade groups, and private companies.

Foreign organizations, whether government or private, may participate as third parties in activities carried out by U.S. organizations, but are not eligible for funding assistance from the program.

2. *Cost Sharing or Matching:* Applicants are very strongly encouraged to provide matching funds or cost sharing support in this highly competitive program. Such support may be in the form of cash, goods, or in-kind services which are dedicated to the project by the organization that submitted the proposal, private industry entities, host governments, or foreign third parties.

## IV. Application and Submission Information

2. *Application through the UES:* Organizations are strongly encouraged to submit applications to FAS through the Unified Export Strategy (UES) application Internet Web site. Using the UES application process reduces paperwork and expedites FAS processing and review cycle. Applicants planning to use the UES Internet-based system must contact FAS Program Policy Staff on (202) 720-4327 to obtain site access information including a user ID and password. The UES Internet-based application, including a Help file containing step-by-step instructions for its use, may be found at the following URL address: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/cooperators.html>.

2. *Application through electronic and hard copies:* Applicants also have the option of submitting electronic versions in the UES format (along with two paper copies) of their applications to FAS on diskette. Applicants who choose to submit applications on diskette can obtain an application format at the following URL address: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/mos/tasc/proposals.html>.

3. *Content and Form of Application Submission:* All TASC proposals must

contain complete information about the proposed projects as described in § 1487.5(b) of the TASC Program regulations. In addition, in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's issuance of a final policy (68 FR 38402) regarding the use of a universal identifier for all Federal grants and cooperative agreements, all applicants must submit a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. An applicant may request a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS number request line on 1-866-705-5711. Incomplete applications and applications which do not otherwise conform to this announcement will not be accepted for review.

4. *Submission Dates and Times:* TASC funding is limited, and in order to assure sufficient resources are available to meet unanticipated needs during the fiscal year, TASC proposals will, generally, only be evaluated on a semi-annual basis. That is:

- Proposals received prior to, but not later than, 5 p.m. (local time Washington, DC) February 12, 2007, will be considered for funding with other proposals received by that date;

- Proposals not approved for funding during the review period will be reconsidered for funding after the review period only if the applicant specifically requests such reconsideration in writing, and only if funding remains available;

- Proposals received after 5 p.m. (local time, Washington, DC) February 12, 2007, will be considered for funding only if funding remains available.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, a proposal may be submitted for expedited consideration under the TASC Quick Response process if, in addition to meeting all requirements of the TASC program, a proposal clearly identifies a time-sensitive activity. In these cases, a proposal may be submitted at any time for an immediate evaluation.

FAS will track the time and date of receipt of all proposals.

5. *Funding Restrictions:* Proposals which request more than \$250,000 of CCC funding in a given year will not be considered. Proposals to fund projects that exceed three years in duration will not be considered. No TASC participant may have more than three approved projects underway at any given time. Although funded projects may take place in the United States, all eligible projects must specifically address sanitary, phytosanitary, or technical barriers to the export of U.S. specialty crops.

Certain types of expenses are not eligible for reimbursement by the program, including the costs of market research, advertising, or other promotional expenses. CCC will not reimburse unreasonable expenditures or any expenditure made prior to approval of a proposal.

6. *Other Submission Requirements:* All Internet-based applications must be properly submitted to 5 p.m. (local time in Washington, DC) on February 12, 2007, to be considered.

All applications on diskette (with two accompanying paper copies) and any other applications must be received by 5 p.m. (local time in Washington, DC) on February 12, 2007, at one of the following addresses:

Hand Delivery (including FedEx, DHL, UPS, etc.): U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Program Policy Staff, Portals Office Building, Suite 400, 1250 Maryland Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20024.

U.S. Postal Delivery: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Program Policy Staff, 1400 Independence Avenue, SE, Stop Code 1042 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1042.

#### V. Application Review Information

1. *Criteria:* FAS follows the evaluation criteria set forth in § 1487.6 of the TASC regulations.

2. *Review and Selection Process:* FAS will review proposals for eligibility and will evaluate each proposal against the factors described above. The purpose of this review is to identify meritorious proposals, recommend an appropriate funding level for each proposal based upon these factors, and submit the proposals and funding recommendations to the Deputy Administrator, Office of Trade Programs. FAS may, when appropriate, request the assistance of other U.S. government subject area experts in evaluating the merits of a proposal.

#### VI. Award Administration Information

1. *Award Notices:* FAS will notify each applicant in writing of the final disposition of its application. FAS will send an approval letter and agreement to each approved applicant. The approval letter and agreement will specify the terms and conditions applicable to the project, including levels of funding, timelines for implementation, and written evaluation requirements.

2. *Administrative and National Policy Requirements:* The agreements will incorporate the details of each project as approved by FAS. Each agreement will

identify terms and conditions pursuant to which CCC will reimburse certain costs of each project. Agreements will also outline the responsibilities of the participant. Interested parties should review the TASC Program regulations found at 7 CFR part 1487 in addition to this announcement.

3. *Reporting:* TASC participants are subject to the reporting and recordkeeping requirements described in 7 CFR part 3019. In addition, participants are required to submit a written report(s), on no less than an annual basis, and a final report, each of which evaluates their TASC project using the performance measures presented in the approved proposal.

#### VII. Agency Contact

For additional information or assistance, contact the Program Policy Staff, Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Portals Office Building, Suite 400, 1250 Maryland Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20024, phone: (202) 720-4327, fax: (202) 720-9361, e-mail: [ppsadmin@fas.usda.gov](mailto:ppsadmin@fas.usda.gov).

Signed at Washington, DC on December 28, 2006.

**W. Kirk Miller,**

*Administrator, Foreign Agricultural Service, and Vice President, Commodity Credit Corporation.*

[FR Doc. 07-58 Filed 1-10-07; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-10-M**

#### DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

##### Rural Utilities Service

##### Information Collection Activity; Comment Request

**AGENCY:** Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended), the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) invites comments on this information collection for which RUS intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received by March 12, 2007.

##### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Richard C. Annan, Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., STOP 1522, Room 5170 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 720-8818. FAX: (202) 720-4120.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) regulation (5 CFR 1320) implementing provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) requires that interested members of the public and affected agencies have an opportunity to comment on information collection and recordkeeping activities (see 5 CFR 1320.8(d)). This notice identifies an information collection that RUS is submitting to OMB for extension.

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the Agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to: Richard C. Annan, Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 1522, Room 5170 South Building, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-1522. FAX: (202)720-4120.

*Title:* Assistance to High Energy Cost Rural Communities.

*OMB Control Number:* 0572-0136.

*Type of Request:* Extension of a currently approved information collection.

*Abstract:* The Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (RE Act) (7 U.S.C. 901 *et seq.*) was amended in November 2000 to create a new program to help rural communities with extremely high energy costs (Pub. L. 106-472). Under this new section 19 of the RE Act (7 U.S.C. 918a), the Secretary of Agriculture, through the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), is authorized to provide financial assistance through the following three funding streams:

- *High Energy Cost Grants and Loans.* RUS may provide grants and loans for energy generation, transmission and distribution facilities serving communities with average home energy costs in excess of 275 percent of the national average. Many of these communities are in rural Alaska, but there are other eligible areas nationwide. Eligible applicants include persons, State agencies (including