

Agricultural Marketing Service / Farm Service Agency Domestic Electronic Bid Entry System

The Domestic Electronic Bid Entry System (DEBES) was developed to enhance the process of soliciting and receiving bids for the domestic distribution of food assistance. The Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) of the USDA annually procures more than 1.2 billion dollars worth of food commodities to be distributed through federal programs such as school lunches, supplements for Indian reservations, prisons, and the Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Food Feeding program. All processing was electronic with the exception of the solicitation and receipt of the bids. DEBES completes the automation by providing an electronic link between the USDA and commodity vendors reducing the time required for generating contracts. DEBES also provides a standard bidding process for vendors that work with both the AMS and FSA Domestic programs.

Scope

DEBES bridges the gap in the USDA's procurement process between the release of the invitation to the vendors and the evaluation of the bids. DEBES provides a secure, electronic method for entering and receiving vendor bids which:

- ▶ Supports the procurement for domestic distribution of food commodities for two USDA agencies, FSA and AMS.
- ▶ Provides a real-time, web based, interface for vendors to create and submit bids.
- ▶ Supports the purchase of a variety of products such as wheat flour, infant formula, processed meats, fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ Is used by over 200 vendors throughout the United States.

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service / Farm Service Agency
Domestic Electronic Bid Entry System
Invitation Selection | Certifications | Offer Form | Constraints | Help | Logout
Update | Submit | View | Withdraw | Authorize Change
Location: 0301 - 1008 Mill Street, Milwaukie, OR
Offer Form for LSSB022, Frozen Beef

Line Item	Pack Size	Destination	Shipping Period	Est. Qty	Price / Ctn	Trans Mode
001	36 LB CTN	Topeka, KS	07/01/1998-07/31/1998	39,600		Truck
002	36 LBS CTN	Topeka, KS	07/01/1998-07/31/1998	39,600		
003	36 LBS CTN	Salina, KS Nichita, KS	07/16/1998-07/31/1998	19,800 19,800		Truck
004	36 LBS CTN	Salina, KS	07/16/1998-07/31/1998	39,600		Rail

Features

DEBES is taking the USDA, via AMS and FSA, into the future with an innovative approach that includes the following features:

- ▶ Real-time access for the vendors to bid information right up to bid opening time.
- ▶ Immediate validation of data as the vendor enters their bid through JavaScript and CGI processing.
- ▶ State of the art web security with Secure Socket Layer protocol and the strength of the mainframe's ACF2 security.
- ▶ Easy access to on-line help which was developed to give a quick and thorough understanding of the application.
- ▶ Event driven, point-and-click navigation for a user-friendly interface.
- ▶ Formatted reporting for the vendor to print a hard copy of their bid.
- ▶ Full integration into the legacy invitation creation and bid evaluation system.
- ▶ Contingency plan that allows bids to be manually entered.

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Invitation Selection | Certifications | Offer Form | Constraints | Help | Logout
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Invitation Selection - Select the invitation...then select a Bid Panel or Bid Function.
== All times are for the Central time zone
== The Certifications, Offer Form, and Constraint pages must be completed before a bid can be submitted.

Select	Announcement Invitation	Description	Open Date/Time	Cert.	Offers by Location	Const.	Submit Date/Time	Comments
<input type="checkbox"/>	LSSB020	Frozen Beef	07/09/1998 03:30 pm	X	01X01, 02X01, 03X01	X	07/09/1998 10:36:42 am	*** Closed *** You need to authorize a change to your bid.
<input type="checkbox"/>	LSSB035	Frozen Pork	07/09/1998 03:30 pm					*** Closed ***
<input type="checkbox"/>	LSSB034	Frozen Pork	07/14/1998 02:30 pm					
<input type="checkbox"/>	LSSB022	Frozen Beef	07/10/1998 03:30 pm	X	01X01, 02X01, 03X01	X	07/09/1998 04:54:03 pm	Your bid has been modified since it was last submitted.

Business Process

The business process used in DEBES closely resembles the original manual process. This assists the vendors already familiar with the process, thus allowing them to quickly learn and use DEBES.

- 1. The USDA creates an invitation:** In the legacy system, an AMS or FSA marketing specialist creates an invitation for the solicitation of bids. This text document is made available to the public via an FTP site.
- 2. The USDA enhances the offer form:** Within DEBES, an AMS or FSA user adds comments to the offer form to clarify the request. They also create questions to gather information certifying that the vendor can support their offer.
- 3. The Vendor creates a bid:** During the bid period, the vendors can access the web site to create their bid. The bid is made up three parts: certification questions, offer form with prices, and optional constraints through which the vendor can limit their bid by supply location, delivery period, and product.
- 4. The Vendor submits a bid:** When the vendor completes a bid, they submit it to the USDA for consideration.
- 5. The Vendor can edit their bid:** With direct access to the data, the vendor can modify a bid and resubmit it as needed, to reflect up-to-the-minute market fluctuations right up until the bids are opened by the USDA.
- 6. The USDA opens the bids:** An AMS or FSA user can view the bids after the designated opening time. Prior to opening time, the AMS and FSA users are prevented from accessing the bids.
- 7. The USDA can request an authorization to change a bid:** After the bids are opened, the USDA will not accept any new bids. If clarification is needed, an AMS or FSA user will contact the vendor and ask them to submit written approval for the change. This authorization is submitted through DEBES and stored with the original bid.
- 8. The USDA reviews reports:** Several reports are available to the AMS and FSA users to help them review the bids before sending them to the existing legacy system for evaluation.
- 9. The USDA releases the bids to the legacy system:** After the bids are reviewed, an AMS or FSA user can send the bids to the legacy system where bid evaluation is performed and contracts are created.

DEBES Technologies

DEBES was developed with leading edge technologies and “old world” knowledge. DEBES is hosted on Information Builders’ WEB390 HTTP/HTTPS server with COBOL for MVS modules running on an IBM OS/390 mainframe. This combines the strength and security of a mainframe with the accessibility of the Internet, leverages the existing knowledge of COBOL, and allows direct access to the legacy data in IDMS and the robustness of DB2.

The advantages of developing DEBES on the mainframe include:

- ▶ The mainframe is the most powerful environment for hosting a web server.
- ▶ The technical staff that developed DEBES was already familiar with the mainframe environment, including configuration management.
- ▶ DEBES runs on the same platform as the data it uses, thus allowing quicker, easier access to the data.
- ▶ The mainframe has a long history as a secure environment using ACF2.

The web technology used with DEBES:

- ▶ HTML with Cascading Style Sheets
- ▶ JavaScript version 1.2
- ▶ Secure Socket Layer (SSL) using 128-bit keys
- ▶ COBOL CGI programs using WEB390 API calls

Contacts: For more information regarding DEBES, please contact the following:

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