

# Directive

1410.2

04-09-10

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## TECHNICAL REPORTS

### 1. PURPOSE

This directive establishes responsibilities and procedures for the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration's (GIPSA) Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) personnel to follow in the preparation, clearance, and maintenance of technical reports and publications.

### 2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This directive replaces FGIS Directive 1410.2, dated 7/8/92, and reflects changes in organizational structure and document handling processes.

### 3. BACKGROUND

The mission of GIPSA FGIS is "To facilitate the marketing of ... cereals, oilseeds, and related agricultural products ... for the overall benefit of consumers and American agriculture." Method Development (MD) is an essential function for achieving that mission. FGIS MD activities are generally (but not exclusively) "applied research" as distinct from the more basic research performed by the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) on FGIS's behalf.

### 4. POLICY

USDA's Departmental Regulation (DR 1410-001 11.a.) establishes basic policy regarding development and clearance of technical reports: "USDA employees may, during duty hours, prepare books, articles, and other materials for publication by nongovernmental organizations if such preparation is within the scope of their official duties and in accordance with applicable statutes and regulations. If the material treats a subject that interprets the policies of the USDA or deals with sensitive areas of any USDA program, the originating agency's information head must first submit the material to OC (Office of Communications) for review and clearance. Such materials should be submitted to OC at least 10 working days before they are offered to nongovernmental organizations for publication."

FGIS's MD projects are closely aligned with the Agency's mission and strategic objectives. Communicating new methods and significant progress toward new methods to the Agency's customers, other stakeholders, and the scientific community is an

important aspect of MD activities. Unlike in ARS, publication in peer-reviewed journals is not a mandatory performance requirement for FGIS scientific staff; however, such publication may be considered evidence of professional development and significant contributions to the Agency's mission. The Agency will encourage and allocate resources to develop technical reports, presentations, and peer-reviewed publications that advance the Agency's mission.

FGIS management will work closely with its scientific staff to determine whether, when, and how to communicate results from MD activities to advance the Agency's strategic objectives and make best use of its limited resources. Most of FGIS's MD results will be disseminated through handbooks, directives, and public meetings and conferences. The decision whether to allocate resources to perform research and report, present, and/or publish results in peer-reviewed journals may consider the following criteria:

- Do the results constitute significant new scientific information?
- Would such publication significantly enhance the credibility of FGIS's grain quality assessment methods or the U.S. grain marketing system?
- Is publication in a peer-reviewed journal necessary for unambiguous distribution of the results or wide acceptance of a developed method?
- Is there a compelling reason to publish the results in a peer-reviewed journal to establish the precedence of FGIS's research?

In all cases, technical reports and publications shall be subject to Agency clearance before distribution or submission to the external peer-review process.

## **5. PREPARATION OF TECHNICAL REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS**

### **a. External reports and publications**

- (a) Technical reports to be submitted for publication outside the Department of Agriculture shall conform to the formats prescribed by the journals to which the reports are to be submitted.
- (b) Reports and publications that refer to commercial entities or products shall contain the following disclaimer statement:

"The mention of firm names or trade products does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by the U. S. Department of Agriculture over other firms or similar products not mentioned."

### **b. USDA-internal reports and publications**

- (a) The US Government Printing Office Style Manual (current edition) shall be used as guidance for style and formatting of USDA-internal technical reports and publications.
  - (b) Reports shall contain a Title page (with Title, Authors, and Keywords, and Approving Officials); an Abstract (as defined below); an Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results and Discussion, and Conclusions and/or Recommendations sections as applicable.
- c. Authorship
- (1) Persons listed as authors are personally responsible for the technical integrity of published research results and shall have participated substantially in:
    - (a) Design of the research,
    - (b) Analysis of the results, and
    - (c) Preparation and review of the report.
  - (2) Authorship does not convey any rights to publish interpretations or opinions that are inconsistent (as determined during the clearance process) with USDA positions or policy.

d. Copyright

- (1) "Articles, papers, books, and other material prepared by USDA employees as part of their official duties and published in private publications are not copyrightable and may be reproduced at will. The fact that the private publication in which a USDA-produced article is to appear is itself copyrighted does not affect the non-copyrightability of a Government article. To avoid misunderstanding, agencies shall advise the private publisher of this restriction in advance. If manuscripts developed under USDA contracts with private individuals or organizations are subject to copyright, the copyright cannot restrict USDA from full use of those materials." (DR 1410-001 11.b.)

Recommended language for conveying this restriction follows: "The U.S. Copyright Act provides that federal government employees cannot copyright material prepared in the course of their employment. As an employee of USDA-GIPSA-FGIS, I have no copyright interest to assign, and I must decline to sign the copyright assignment. Although for the above reasons I am technically unable to assign any copyright to [publisher], I still request and authorize you to publish the submitted article in accordance with your standard editorial policies. I hope this letter will be sufficient authorization for your needs to enable you to consider it favorably." (<http://www.cendi.gov/publications/04-8copyright.html#315> Sec. 3.2.6)

- (2) "Articles prepared as part of an employee's official duties or while on Government time are the property of the Government. Authors must not accept payment for official articles published in nongovernmental journals, magazines, or newspapers." (DR 1410-001 11.a.)

e. Abstract

- (1) For purposes of internal review and clearance, a succinct abstract (or executive summary) shall be prepared for each technical report and publication and shall include (as applicable):
  - (a) Introduction (purpose and background);
  - (b) Materials and methods;
  - (c) Major results or findings; and
  - (d) Significant conclusions or recommendations
- (2) A target journal may have a maximum word count limit or specify different content than the above for the final abstract to be submitted for peer-review; such an abstract may need to be revised or expanded to suffice for the Request for Initial Clearance (6.a).
- (3) The designated first-level reviewing official (usually, but not necessarily, the primary/corresponding author's supervisor) shall (prior to submitting the abstract as part of a Request for Initial Clearance (6.a.)) review the abstract to ensure that it is an adequate and accurate representation of the work to permit others to assess the level of review required for the final document.

f. Keywords

- (1) Relevant keywords shall be identified to assist in cross-referencing reports.

## **6. CLEARANCE OF TECHNICAL REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS**

a. Request for Initial Clearance

- (1) At least two (2) weeks before final clearance is needed (preferably earlier), the primary/corresponding author shall prepare a Request for Initial Clearance for electronic submission to all managers in the primary/corresponding author's chain of command (up to and including the Agency Administrator) and to all other FGIS Division Directors. The purpose of this Request for Initial Clearance is to ascertain the extent of Agency review required—prior to

completion of the final document. The request should include:

- (a) The report or publication's author(s), identification of the primary/corresponding author (if there are co-authors), title, keywords, and Abstract (as defined in 5.e(1)).
  - (b) A request for identification of any potential sensitive issues in or related to the document. Any substantial sensitive issues require clearance by the USDA Office of Communications. (DR 1410-001 11.a.)
  - (c) An invitation to obtain the full document for review before distribution, publication, or submission for external peer-review.
  - (d) A due date (no less than 3 business days hence) after which "no response" by a recipient will be interpreted as "no review required by recipient."
- b. All listed authors shall review the document and make the necessary corrections before submitting it to the designated first-level reviewer (usually the primary/corresponding author's supervisor).
  - c. The designated first-level reviewer shall:
    - (a) Fully review the document, and
    - (2) Make recommendations for corrections (if any).
  - d. If necessary, the first-level reviewer shall return the document to the primary/corresponding author for revision.
  - e. If revisions are required, the primary/corresponding author shall address the recommended revisions and then return the marked copy, comments, and the revised version to the first-level reviewer for verification that any identified shortcomings were adequately addressed in the revision.
  - f. When the document is ready for further clearance (as determined by the first-level reviewer) the primary/corresponding author shall send the document to all persons who requested the opportunity to review it (according to 6.a.), collect all comments and requests for revision, and revise the document (including review by co-authors) to address all identified issues.
  - g. The primary/corresponding author will send the revised document and all comments that required revision back to the first-level reviewer for a full review of the document.
  - h. The first-level reviewer will assess the adequacy of the revisions and request further revisions or issue a recommendation to distribute or publish.

- i. Only after all significant revisions identified by internal clearance have been addressed may the document be released for publication, distribution, or external peer-review.
- j. The primary/corresponding author shall notify the first-level reviewer of any significant revisions required in the external peer-review process and shall initiate further Agency review if the first-level reviewer deems that necessary before publication.

**7. CLEARANCE OF DOCUMENTS WITH AGENCY-EXTERNAL CO-AUTHORS**

a. FGIS primary/corresponding author

- (1) The clearance process is the same as in Section 6.

b. Non-FGIS primary/corresponding author

- (1) If FGIS employee(s)' names are associated with a document, the document shall be cleared for conformance with Agency positions and policy.
- (2) A Request for Initial Clearance shall be issued as specified in Section 6.a.
- (3) Unless potentially sensitive issues are identified from responses to the Request for Initial Clearance, only the FGIS co-author(s) should need to review the final document. If detailed Agency review of the final document is requested by one or more persons (due to identification of potentially sensitive issues), such review must be completed and objections resolved before submission for publication with an Agency employee listed as a co-author.
- (4) If Agency objections cannot be resolved, no Agency employee shall be listed as a co-author of the document.

**8. MAINTENANCE OF TECHNICAL REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS**

Electronic copies of each technical report and publication shall be maintained in a report file in the Division of origin; and the Author(s), Title, Keywords, and (final) Abstract from each report shall be entered into an FGIS literature database for reference.

**9. RESPONSIBILITIES**

- a. The Director of the division of origin shall approve all technical reports and publications produced by the Division. This may involve approval of the Abstract with delegation of the full review to others. This does not preclude additional written approvals by other levels of management.

- b. The designated first-level reviewer (normally the primary/corresponding author's supervisor, but not a co-author) shall review the Abstract and original document and any subsequent revisions prior to the primary/corresponding author submitting them for further Agency review and final approval.
- c. The primary/corresponding author of the document shall:
  - (1) Develop the Abstract, submit it for initial review, and submit the Request for Initial Clearance.
  - (2) Develop and edit the document (in collaboration with co-authors, if any) to ensure technical and grammatical accuracy and stylistic adequacy before submitting it for review,
  - (3) Submit the document to the first-level reviewer and, after acceptance at that level, to others who requested the opportunity to review it.
  - (4) Track the clearance process,
  - (5) Ensure all revisions are complete before the document is distributed or submitted for peer-review or publication, and
  - (6) Convey an electronic copy of the document to the Administrative Assistant (or other designated person) of the Division of origin for archiving.
- d. The Administrative Assistant (or other designated person) of the Division of origin shall:
  - (1) Maintain electronic copies of the technical reports and publications submitted for approval or publication.
  - (2) Enter the author(s), title, keywords, and final abstracts of technical reports and publications into the FGIS literature database maintained at the FGIS National Grain Center in Kansas City, Missouri.

**/s/ Robert Lijewski**

Robert Lijewski, Director  
Field Management Division