

COMPOSITE SAMPLE ANALYSIS FOR COMBINED LAND CARRIER INSPECTIONS

1. PURPOSE

This directive transmits enhanced guidelines for compositing samples from multiple land carriers (e.g., railcars, containers) into a single sample for inspection analysis when requested. Official personnel may combine samples from a maximum of five railcars, fifteen trucks, or an unlimited number of containers (except shipments to Mexico which are limited to 15 containers per current protocol) of bulk shipments of grain or pulses (beans, peas, or lentils) into one sample for a combined lot analysis.

2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This directive revises the existing directive of the same number and name, dated 1/20/98, and incorporates FGIS Policy Bulletin Board Memo #210, "Composite Sample Analysis", dated, 9/29/06.

3. BACKGROUND

Composite sample analysis for railcars (maximum five cars per sample) was permitted for aflatoxin determinations in 1990. In response to market demands for grain exports to Mexico, FGIS Program Bulletin 95.7, dated 5/17/95, provided for the combining of five export railcars maximum, or fifteen export trucklots maximum, into one composite sample for single certification of all requested quality information. In response to additional interior market needs, the provisions of Program Bulletin 95.7 were expanded to domestic shipments via FGIS Policy Bulletin Board Announcement #164 in September 1997.

The recent surge in containerized cargo shipments has changed marketing strategies for U.S. shippers and has led to increased "bookings" (i.e., a grouping of containers in a contract) sizes for containerized shipments. In an effort to accommodate the contractual requirements between the shippers and receivers of containerized shipments we have relaxed the policy for the maximum number of containers that can be combined to form a single sample for analysis on a "booking" of containers. Official personnel may combine any number of containers (as specified by the shipper in the load order), to form a composite sample for inspection analysis. This is not applicable for shipments to Mexico.

4. POLICY

Upon request by the applicant for service, official personnel may combine samples from a maximum of five railcars or fifteen trucks or an unlimited number of containers into one sample for analysis. Unlike the CuSum plan, it is not necessary to sample the carriers comprising the requested composite sample in the order they were loaded.

To form a composite sample from multiple carriers, official personnel must sample each individual carrier and examine the sample for odor, insects, and condition. Samples that represent carriers that contain grain that has an odor, or is out of condition, may not be composited with other samples to form a composite sample.

Samples representing individual carriers that contain insects, but are not “infested” by definition in the U.S. Standards for Grain, may be composited with other samples that are “OK” for odor and condition to form a composite sample of the lot. For individual carriers that meet the definition of “infested”, the shipper has the following options:

- a. Remove the “infested” carrier from the unit (e.g., unit train, booking);
- b. Include the “infested” carrier in the composite lot and fumigate the “infested” carrier; or
- c. Include the “infested” carrier in the composite lot, elect not to fumigate the “infested” carrier, and receive a grade certificated for the composite lot with the special grade “infested”.

If official personnel are recording phytosanitary information on the FGIS 921-2, “Insects in Grain Report”, concerning the number and type of insects found in carriers, they must indicate on the form if a carrier was fumigated, and provide fumigation information (as supplied by the fumigator) in the appropriate section of the form.

Since the checks for odor, insects, and condition are made on the basis of individual sample analysis, composite type samples should not be downgraded or designated with the special grade “infested”, except as stated in “item c” above, due to any one of these factors. If an insect or insects are found in a composite sample do not count them towards the infested criteria.

Certificate the results for each group on a single certificate that includes the identity of each carrier represented by the composite sample.

Each carrier is considered a unit when recoding inspection volumes or applying unit fees for billing purposes.

5. QUESTIONS

Direct any questions concerning this policy to Bob Lijewski, Chief, Policies and Procedures Branch, at (202) 720-0224, or email to robert.s.lijewski@usda.gov

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