

MARKETING AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS (MRP)
ADMINISTRATIVE GRIEVANCE SYSTEM

1. PURPOSE

This Directive establishes the procedures for considering employees' unresolved workplace concerns and issues that cannot be pursued in other administrative complaint or appeal procedures/systems such as the Merit Systems Protection Board or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. This Directive applies to all agencies and employees within MRP: the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS); Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS); and Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), unless the issue grieved is specifically excluded in Section A of the Human Resources Desk Guide, Subchapter 4771, Administrative Grievance System.

2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This Directive replaces:

- a. AMS Directive 346.1, dated 10/13/89;
- b. APHIS Directive 460.5, dated 7/11/89; and
- c. GIPSA Directive 460.5, dated 12/03/91.

3. AUTHORITIES/REFERENCES

- a. Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations §771.101;
- b. Departmental Regulation 4710-001, Alternative Dispute Resolution, dated 7/20/01;
- c. Title 5 United States Code, Part 2302(b)(9); and
- d. 3 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM), Section 660.

4. BACKGROUND

Employees are an agency's greatest resource. Therefore, it is very important that any grievances they have relating to workplace issues or concerns are resolved as promptly as possible. Grievances, if handled appropriately, benefit the agency by providing employees an effective process to resolve their issues and concerns efficiently and fairly. They also promote a better understanding of agency policies, directives, regulations, and procedures.

5. POLICY

- a. It is MRP policy that no action will be taken against, or benefit withheld from, employees or their representatives as reprisal for filing or considering the filing of a grievance. Reprisal, intimidation, coercion, restraint, or discrimination because of grievance activity or contemplated grievance activity is a prohibited personnel practice. Those engaging in such practices are subject to disciplinary action. Employees who provide information concerning grievance issues will be free from reprisal, intimidation, coercion, restraint, or discrimination.
- b. Employees and supervisors will have a choice to engage in an alternative dispute resolution process such as mediation or facilitation at the initial grievance stage. In some instances, such processes may also be allowed at subsequent stages of the grievance process.
- c. The AGS is designed to foster better communication and understanding between employees and their supervisors, resulting in prompt resolutions. Accordingly, informal grievances will be initially filed with an employee's first line supervisor.

6. OPERATING GUIDELINES

- a. Specific information regarding the Administrative Grievance System procedures may be found in the Human Resources Desk Guide (HRDG), Subchapter 4771, Administrative Grievance System.
- b. This Directive and HRDG Chapter are available on the MRPHR home page at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/index.shtml> the APHIS library at www.aphis.usda.gov/library and the AMS Issuances home page at www.ams.usda.gov/issuances AMS employees can also access the AMS intranet. That website is <http://agnis>

7. INQUIRIES

Further inquiries regarding this Directive or the AGS may be referred to the employee's servicing Human Resources Employee Relations Specialist at

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/hrd_er_aphis.shtml

/s/

William J. Hudnall

Deputy Administrator

MRP Business Services