

Federal Inspection Marks for Fishery Products

NATIONAL FISHERY PRODUCTS INSPECTION PROGRAM. The U.S. Department of Commerce (USDC), National Marine Fisheries Service, a part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, conducts a voluntary seafood inspection program on a fee-for-service basis. A HACCP-based service is also available. Services provided by the program include vessel and plant sanitation, product inspection and grading, label reviews, product specification reviews, laboratory analyses, training, education and information. Inspection and certification services are available nationwide and in U.S. territories for all interested parties. Consultative services are provided in foreign countries. Inspection and certification services are also provided for imported and exported products. The USDC Seafood Inspection Division also provides HACCP training, plan development, implementation assistance, and verification service to industry (domestic and foreign) for the purpose of demonstrating compliance with FDA's HACCP rule (21 CFR Parts 123 and 1240) regarding "Procedures for the Safe and Sanitary Processing and Importing of Fish and Fishery Products" which was implemented December 18, 1997.

USERS OF INSPECTION SERVICES. The users of the voluntary seafood inspection service include vessel owners, processors, distributors, brokers, retailers, food service operators, exporters, importers, and those who have a financial interest in buying and selling seafood products. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends that USDC inspected products be purchased for its food feeding programs. The **USDC APPROVED LIST OF FISH ESTABLISHMENTS AND PRODUCTS**, published bi-annually, provides a listing of products and participants who contract with USDC.

USDC INSPECTION MARKS. These marks designate the level and the type of inspection performed by the federal inspector. The marks can be used in advertising and labeling under the guidelines provided by the Seafood Inspection Division and in accordance with federal and state regulations regarding advertising and labeling. Products bearing the USDC official marks have been certified as being safe, wholesome, and properly labeled.

"US GRADE A" MARK. The U.S. GRADE A mark signifies that a product has been processed under federal inspection in an approved facility and meets the established level of quality of an existing U.S. grade standard. The U.S. Grade A mark indicates that the product is of high quality, uniform in size, practically free from blemishes and defects, in excellent condition and possessing good flavor and odor.

"PROCESSED UNDER FEDERAL INSPECTION" MARK. The PUFIM mark or statement signifies that the product has been inspected in an approved facility and was found to be safe, wholesome and properly labeled according to approved specifications or criteria. The language within the PUFIM mark has been amended to "Processed Under Federal Inspection" to reflect actual inspection procedures and the regulatory requirements for use of the mark.

"LOT INSPECTED" MARK. A new USDC Lot Inspected mark was created to replace the "Officially Sampled" and "Accepted Per Specifications" lot inspection marks used on retail labels. The latter marks were no longer allowed/accepted after September 30, 1997. The use of the new mark meets the needs of both industry and consumers by conveying that the products bearing the mark have been examined by the USDC Program.

"RETAIL" MARK. In response to requests made by industry, a new mark has been created for retail or food service establishments. Participants qualify for use of the "Retail Mark" by receiving the USDC HACCP-based service or being under contract for sanitation services and associated product evaluation. Usage of such a mark will give the retail industry the opportunity to advertise on their banners, logos, or menus that their facility has been recognized by USDC for proper sanitation and handling of fishery products.



USDC HACCP MARK. The USDC HACCP-based service is available to all interested parties on a fee-for-service basis. Label approval, record keeping and analytical testing are program requirements. An industry USDC-certified employee trained in HACCP principles is also required for each facility/site in the program. Compliance ratings determine frequency of official visits. Benefits to participants include increased controls through a more scientific approach, use of established marks, increased efficiency of federal inspection personnel, and enhanced consumer confidence. The USDC has made available a HACCP mark and a "banner" to distinguish products that have been produced under the HACCP-based program. The HACCP banner must be used as an attachment to existing inspection grade marks. Establishments meeting HACCP program requirements may use these marks in conjunction with promotional material, packaging, point-of-sale notices, and menus.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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