

## Overall Findings and Recommendations

- Customer satisfaction with FAS is slightly above the federal government average. The 2008 score (70) serves as a baseline measure for the Foreign Agricultural Service.
- Three of the overall objectives of FAS, creating a level playing field for international trade, expanding the global agricultural trading system, and reducing technical trade barriers and restrictive SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary) measures were found to have relatively low impact on customer satisfaction. This is not to conclude that these areas are not important to customers, but rather improvements in these areas will not directly yield a significant increase in customer satisfaction.
- In the area of creating a level playing field for international trade, customers thought that FAS was doing moderately well in the areas of eliminating barriers, enforcing trade agreements and building international support. However, with scores in the mid 60s for each of these areas, respondents indicated there was an opportunity to improve.
  - Among the items in creating a level playing field, customers thought the performance of FAS was best in representing U.S. agricultural interests in the WTO. Lowest marks were for reducing tariffs to allow for better international market access and implementing international dispute settlement decisions in a timely manner.
- With respect to the area of expanding the global agricultural trading system, customers thought that FAS was performing the best in facilitating U.S. commercial trade. Respondents felt that FAS was supporting agricultural export industry trade missions and trade teams and were knowledgeable about global commodity markets. Respondents felt that while FAS was doing relatively well to support international economic development, the bio-fuel initiative was not thought of as a significant contributor to international economic development.
- In the area of reducing technical trade barriers and restrictive SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary) measures, respondents rated FAS highest for development and adoption of science-based international standards. The role FAS has in monitoring and enforcing SPS rules and TBT agreement commitments was rated lowest.
  - While FAS did not receive particularly strong ratings for addressing SPS and technical trade barriers through bilateral discussions, respondents thought that FAS did well in maintaining strong relationships with foreign regulatory officials through overseas attachés.
- Management initiatives and in particular, Operational Excellence, were found to have a high impact on customer satisfaction. Operational Excellence was also the highest performing area as rated by customers. While the other survey areas addressed functions of FAS, since Operational Excellence measured an area that has a high degree of interaction with the customer, it follows that this area has the highest impact on satisfaction. The low impacts of the areas that address the function of FAS does not mean that they are unimportant to customer satisfaction, but rather improvements in those areas will not substantially drive satisfaction.
  - Respondents though the staff was accessible to them. They also found staff to be professional and courteous, and good with follow up.

- In order to improve customer satisfaction, it is recommended to focus on the high-impact and lower performing areas as a first priority. In the customer satisfaction model for FAS, the only area that has a sizeable impact on customer satisfaction, Operational Excellence, happens to be the highest performing area as well. However, with ratings in the 70s for most items in this area, there is opportunity to improve Operational Excellence.
  - While the staff is courteous, professional and accessible, the areas of staff knowledge (including industry and foreign markets), representing and promoting client business needs and facilitating with other U.S. Government offices present the best opportunities for improvement.
- Scores for Commodity Interest Stakeholders showed some significant differences between this group of respondents and those who were not.
  - Commodity Interest Stakeholders rated FAS higher for building international support for U.S. producers and exporters and also rated FAS higher for their overseas offices' ability to intervene and resolve trade disruptions. Commodity Interest Stakeholders rated FAS higher for Operational Excellence as well.
  - This group gave significantly higher ratings to the staff for professionalism, courtesy and follow up. Commodity Interest Stakeholders also thought FAS was more effective in facilitating interaction with other U.S. Government offices or representatives.
  - Lastly, Commodity Interest Stakeholders were more likely to return to FAS in the future than non-Stakeholders.
- For future surveys, if FAS desires to gain a better understanding of how results may vary by organization type, it is recommended to develop a few key categories to use for classifying respondents and provide additional sample by group wherever possible.