

EMERGING MARKETS PROGRAM CENTRAL FUND PROPOSAL

Full title of proposal: Establishment of U.S. Food Safety course at the University of Puerto Rico

Date of proposal submission: August 15, 2008

Name of organization(s) submitting proposal:
USDA Food Safety Inspection Service

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Target Markets: Training located in Puerto Rico with objective of targeting neighboring countries as well including Central American and Caribbean trading partners.

Description of Problem:
The Food Safety Inspection Service established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez (UPRM), signed April 14, 2008. To satisfy the responsibilities of this MOU and to extend the benefits of FSIS experts with other trading partners in the area, FSIS with the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) plans to develop an online course directed towards current and future government officials focused on international and U.S. food safety law and inspection.

Motivation behind the creation of the MOU is improved relations with the Central American and Caribbean Nations through outreach efforts via the UPRM. Too often inspectors and government officials in these areas have a less-than-thorough understanding of USDA FSIS inspection protocols and procedures. As a result of this lack of knowledge, shipments have a greater tendency to be rejected or detained at port resulting in loss for importers, exporters and government officials working to resolve the conflict.

Project Objectives:
This course will serve to benefit the United States in the long-term as course participants will walk away with a better understanding of the U.S. food safety regulatory system thus reducing avoidable discord between trading partners. Specifically, we hope to reach out to our Central

American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) trading partners, encouraging their participation in this program. Currently FSIS offers three, two-week annual training programs for government officials and inspectors. FSIS anticipates that participation in this online course may reduce the need to replace one of these courses thus freeing up the resources and would be committed to that program.

Proposed approach:

The requested funding will fund the establishment of the course in Puerto Rico including the development of the course website. Specifically, the funds will be used to pay for FSIS representative to travel to Puerto Rico twice during the Spring 2009 – once at the beginning of the semester and once at the end of the semester. During the initial time in Puerto Rico the FSIS representative will establish initial relationships with participants and introduce them to the goals and expectations of the course. At the end of the semester the FSIS representative will travel to Puerto Rico again to answer questions, conduct reviews and administer the final examinations. Course materials will include the Code of Federal Regulations, Codex information and other printed materials. Funding will also be used in the development of the course website. The website will have links to scientific and government websites, printouts of lectures and study materials and pre-recorded lectures from FSIS representatives (and others as need be).

Rationale for the Project Proposal:

In 2006, the United States exported over \$50 million worth of fresh, frozen and processed red meats and \$50 million worth of poultry products to the CAFTA-DR countries. During that same year the United States imported \$75 million worth of fresh, frozen and processed red meats from the CAFTA-DR countries. Training necessary government officials will improve the efficiency of the inspection process and trade should continue to improve. We anticipate that as inspectors have a better understanding of the FSIS inspection system rejections or shipment holdings will decrease as overall trade increases as individual U.S. companies will be more willing to export to these areas.

Performance Measures:

Overall success will be determined by a reduced number of shipments rejected or held at port. Also worth noting, FSIS does a remarkable amount of training in these areas; training of government officials, scientists and inspectors. Having a continually available, on-line resource to receive this training will reduce inefficiencies and costs on both ends.

Timeline for Activities:

The first course will take place in the spring of 2009 and continue throughout calendar year.

Demonstration of Benefits for U.S. Agriculture:

Providing a continuous outlet for government officials and inspectors to receive training on the FSIS inspection system will result in fewer shipments being rejected or held at port thus improving relations and saving time, energy and money for all parties involved.

Justification for Federal Funding:

Federal funding is necessary given that several competing companies currently export to the Central America and Caribbean markets. Improved understanding of FSIS inspection policies

will benefit all companies and individuals involved as well as the domestic populations of each country as they receive these U.S. goods.

Similar Activities Funded by USDA in Target Market:

None

BUDGET:

FSIS Travel	\$ 15,000
Website	<u>35,000</u>
TOTAL COSTS	\$50,000

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION:

Funding will cover two trips for FSIS staff, including airfare, hotel during the two weeks as well as certain course materials. The major expenses will be for development of a website that is based at the University.