Proposed Rules

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains notices to the public of the proposed issuance of rules and regulations. The purpose of these notices is to give interested persons an opportunity to participate in the rule making prior to the adoption of the final rules.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

7 CFR Part 800

[Docket No. FGIS-2001-001a]

RIN 0580-AA75

Fees for Official Inspection and Official Weighing Services

AGENCY: Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) is proposing an increase in fees of approximately 6.1 percent. Contract and noncontract hourly rates, certain unit rates, and the administrative tonnage fee will be increased. These fees apply to official inspection and weighing services performed in the United States under the United States Grain Standards Act (USGSA), as amended. This proposed fee increase of 6.1 percent is based on the cost-of-living increases utilizing an average of the locality pay adjustments and actual cost of performing official inspection services of 2.4 percent and 3.7 percent in FY 2000 and FY 2001, respectively. GIPSA anticipates the proposed increase in the user fees will generate approximately \$575,000 in additional revenue.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before May 4, 2001.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit written comments concerning this proposal. Written comments must be submitted to Sharon Vassiliades, GIPSA, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 1647–S, Washington, DC 20250–3604, or faxed to (202) 690–2755. Comments may also be sent by E-mail to: comments@gipsadc.usd.gov. Please state that your comments refer to Docket No. FGIS 2001–001a. Comments will be

available for public inspection in the above office during regular business hours (7 CFR 1.27 (b)).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

David Orr, Director, Field Management Division, at his E-mail address: *Dorr@gipsadc.usda.gov*, or telephone him at (202) 720–0228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Executive Order 12866, Regulatory Flexibility Act, and the Paperwork Reduction Act

This rule has been determined to be nonsignificant for the purpose of Executive Order 12866 and, therefore, has not been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget.

Also, pursuant to the requirements set forth in the Regulatory Flexibility Act, it has been determined that this proposed rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities as defined in the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C.

601 et seq.).

GIPSA regularly reviews its user-feefinanced programs to determine if the fees are adequate. GIPSA has and will continue to seek out cost saving opportunities and implement appropriate changes to reduce costs. Such actions can provide alternatives to fee increases. However, even with these efforts, GIPSA's existing fee schedule will not generate sufficient revenues to cover program costs while maintaining an adequate reserve balance. In FY 1999, GIPSA's operating costs were \$23,176,643 with revenue of \$22,971,204, resulting in a negative margin of \$205,440. In FY 2000, GIPSA's operating costs were \$24,146,428 with revenue of \$23,150,188 that resulted in a negative margin of \$996,240 and a negative reserve balance of \$938,147. As of December 31, 2000, GIPSA's FY 2001 operating costs were \$6,274,097 with revenue of \$6,066,322 that resulted in a positive margin of \$52,486. The current reserve negative balance of \$792,794 is well below the desired 3-month reserve of approximately \$3 million.

Employee salaries and benefits are major program costs that account for approximately 84 percent of FGIS's total operating budget. Effective May 1, 2000, GIPSA increased fees as published March 30, 2000, in the **Federal Register** (65 FR 16783), by 2.4 percent. The average Federal salary increase effective

January 2000 was 4.8 percent. GIPSA had anticipated that savings could offset the remaining 2.4 percent of the Federal salary increase. GIPSA had anticipated an increase in metric tons inspected and/or weighed which in conjunction with a projected decrease in the number of paid hours could have offset the remaining half of the Federal salary increase. However, there was a 7 percent decrease in metric tons FGIS inspected in FY 2000. This decrease caused a reduction in hours billed. FGIS also experienced a shift from noncontracted service hours to contracted service hours, which caused an increase in nonrevenue productive hours in some locations. These factors were not enough to offset the remaining 2.4 percent Federal salary increases. The salary increase that became effective January 2001 averages 3.7 percent for FGIS employees. Overall, program costs are estimated to increase by approximately \$575,000.

We have reviewed the financial position of our inspection and weighing program based on the increased salary and benefit costs, along with the projected FY 2001 workload of 82 million metric tons. Based on the review, we have concluded that a 6.1 percent increase will have to be recovered through increases in fees.

The fee increase primarily applies to entities engaged in the export of grain. Under the provisions of the USGSA, grain exported from the United States must be officially inspected and weighed. Mandatory inspection and weighing services are provided by GIPSA on a fee basis at 37 export facilities. All of these facilities are owned and managed by multi-national corporations, large cooperatives, or public entities that do not meet the criteria for small entities established by the Small Business Administration.

Some entities that request nonmandatory official inspection and weighing services at other than export locations could be considered small entities. The impact on these small businesses is similar to any other business; that is, an average 6.1 percent increase in the cost of official inspection and weighing services. This increase should not significantly affect any business requesting official inspection and weighing services. Furthermore, any of these small businesses that wish to avoid the fee increase may elect to do

so by using an alternative source for inspection and weighing services. Such a decision should not prevent the business from marketing its products.

There would be no additional reporting or recordkeeping requirements imposed by this action. In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35), the information collection and recordkeeping requirements in Part 800 have been previously approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 0580–0013. GIPSA has not identified any other Federal rules which may duplicate, overlap, or conflict with this proposed rule.

Executive Order 12988

This proposed rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12988, Civil Justice Reform. This action is not intended to have a retroactive effect. The USGSA provides in § 87g that no subdivision may require or impose any requirements or restrictions concerning the inspection, weighing, or description of grain under the Act. Otherwise, this proposed rule will not preempt any State or local laws, regulations, or policies unless they present irreconcilable conflict with this proposed rule. There are no administrative procedures that must be exhausted prior to any judicial challenge to the provisions of this proposed rule.

Proposed Action

The USGSA (7 U.S.C. 71 *et seq.*) authorizes GIPSA to provide official

grain inspection and weighing services and to charge and collect reasonable fees for performing these services. The fees collected are to cover, as nearly as practicable, GIPSA's costs for performing these services, including related administrative and supervisory costs. The current USGSA fees were published in the **Federal Register** on March 30, 2000 (65 FR 16783), and became effective on May 1, 2000.

GIPSA regularly reviews its user-feefinanced programs to determine if the fees are adequate. GIPSA has and will continue to seek out cost saving opportunities and implement appropriate changes to reduce costs. Such actions can provide alternatives to fee increases. However, even with these efforts, GIPSA's existing fee schedule will not generate sufficient revenues to cover program costs while maintaining an adequate reserve balance. In FY 1999, GIPSA's operating costs were \$23,176,643 with revenue of \$22,971,204, resulting in a negative margin of \$205,440. In FY 2000, GIPSA's operating costs were \$24,146,428 with revenue of \$23,150,188 that resulted in a negative margin of \$996,240 and a negative reserve balance of \$938,147. As of December 31, 2000, GIPSA's FY 2001 operating costs were \$6,274,097 with revenue of \$6,066,322 that resulted in a positive margin of \$52,468. The current reserve negative balance of 4792,794 is well below the desired 3-month reserve of approximately \$3 million.

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approximately 84 percent of GIPSA's total operating budget. Effective May 1, 2000, GIPSA increased fees as published March 30, 2000, in the Federal Register (65 FR 16783), by 2.4 percent. The average Federal salary increase that became effective January 2000 was 4.8 percent. GIPSA had anticipated that savings could offset the remaining 2.4 percent of the Federal salary increase. GIPSA had anticipated an increase in metric tons inspected and/or weighed which in conjunction with a projected decrease in the number of paid hours could have offset the remaining half of the Federal salary increase. However, there was a 7 percent decrease in metric tons FGIS inspected in FY 2000. This decrease caused a reduction in hours billed. FGIS also experienced a shift from noncontracted service hours to contracted service hours, which caused an increase in nonrevenue productive hours in some locations. These factors were not enough to offset the remaining 2.4 percent Federal salary increases. The salary increase that became effective January 2001 averages 3.7 percent for FGIS employees. Overall, program costs are estimated to increase by approximately \$575,000.

We have reviewed the financial position of our inspection and weighing program based on the increased salary and benefit costs, along with the projected FY 2001 workload of 82 million metric tons. Based on the review, we have concluded that a 6.1 percent increase will have to be recovered through increases in fees.

The current hourly fees are:

	Monday to Friday (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.	Monday to Friday (6 p.m. to 6 a.m.)	Saturday, Sunday, and overtime	Holidays
1-year contract 6-month contract 3-month contract Noncontract	\$25.80	\$28.00	\$36.40	\$43.60
	28.40	30.20	38.60	50.60
	32.40	33.40	42.00	52.20
	37.60	39.60	48.00	59.00

GIPSA has also identified certain unit fees, for services not performed at an applicant's facility, that contain direct labor costs and would require a fee increase. Further, GIPSA has identified those costs associated with salaries and benefits that are covered by the administrative metric tonnage fee. The 6.1 percent cost-of-living increase to salaries and benefits covered by the administrative tonnage fee results in an overall increase of an average of 6.1 percent to the administrative tonnage fee. Accordingly, GIPSA is proposing a 6.1 percent increase to certain hourly rates, certain unit rates, and increase

and change the administrative tonnage fee in 7 CFR 800.71, Table 1—Fees for Official Services Performed at an Applicant's Facility in an Onsite FGIS Laboratory; Table 2—Services Performed at Other Than an Applicant's Facility in an FGIS Laboratory; and Table 3, Miscellaneous Services.

This proposed rule provides a 30-day period for interested persons to comment. This comment period is deemed appropriate because grain export volume and associated requests for official services for such grain are projected to further decrease in the coming months due to seasonal and

other adjustments. Accordingly, given the current level of the operating reserve, it would be necessary to implement any fee increase that may result from this rulemaking as soon as possible.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 800

Administrative practice and procedure; Grain.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 7 CFR Part 800 is proposed to be amended as follows:

PART 800—GENERAL REGULATIONS

1. The authority citation for part 800

continues to read as follows:

Authority: Pub. L. 94-582, 90 Stat. 2867, as amended (7 U.S.C. 71 et seq.)

2. Section 800.71 is amended by revising Schedule A in paragraph (a) to read as follows:

§ 800.71 Fees assessed by the Service.

(a) * * *

Schedule A.—Fees for Official Inspection and Weighing Services Performed in the United States

(1) Inspection and Weighing Services Hourly Rates (per service representative).

	Monday to Friday (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.)	Monday to Friday (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.)	Saturday, Sunday, and overtime ²	Holidays
1-year contract	\$27.40 30.20 34.40 40.00	\$29.80 32.00 35.60 42.00	\$38.60 41.00 44.60 51.00	\$46.40 53.60 55.40 62.60
(2) Additional Tests (cost per test, assessed in addition to the h	nourly rate). ³			
(ii) Aflatoxin (other than Thin Layer Chromatography) (iii) Aflatoxin (Thin Layer Chromatography method) (iii) Corn oil, protein, and starch (one or any combination) (iv) Soybean protein and oil (one or both) (v) Wheat protein (per test) (vi) Sunflower oil (per test) (vii) Vomitoxin (qualitative) (viii) Vomitoxin (quantitative) (ix) Waxy corn (per test) (x) Fees for other tests not listed above will be based on the lowest noncontra (xi) Other services: (a) Class Y Weighing (per carrier)				\$8.50 20.00 1.50 1.50 1.50 1.50 12.50 18.50
(1) Truck/container	licable fees, on			.30 1.25 2.50 be assessed
when inspection and weighing services are performed on the same (i) All outbound carriers (per-metric-ton): 4				
(a) 1–1,000,000				\$0.1101 0.1005 0.0543 0.0402 0.022 0.0100

20 Overtime rates will be assessed for all hours in excess of 8 consecutive hours that result from an applicant scheduling or requesting service beyond 8 hours, or if requests for additional shifts exceed existing staffing.

3 Appeal and reinspection services will be assessed the same fee as the original inspection service.

4 The administrative fee is assessed on an accumulated basis beginning at the start of the Service's fiscal year (October 1 each year).

TABLE 2.—SERVICES PERFORMED AT OTHER THAN AN APPLICANT'S FACILITY IN AN FGIS LABORATORY 1,2

(1) Original Inspection and Weighing (Class X) Services: (i) Sampling only (use hourly rates from Table 1)	
(iii) Stationary lots (sampling, grade/factor, & checkloading)	
(a) Truck/trailer/container (per carrier)	\$19.00
(b) Railcar (per carrier)	28.60
(c) Barge (per carrier)	181.00
(d) Sacked grain (per hour per service representative plus an administrative fee per hundredweight) (CWT)	0.02
(iii) Lots sampled online during loading (sampling charge under (i) above, plus)	
(a) Truck/trailer container (per carrier)	9.85
(b) Railcar (per carrier)	19.10
(c) Barge (per carrier)	108.10
(d) Sacked grain (per hour per service representative plus an administrative fee per hundredweight) (CWT)	0.02
(iv) Other services	
(a) Submitted sample (per sample—grade and factor)	11.20
(b) Warehouseman inspection (per sample)	19.00
(c) Factor only (per factor—maximum 2 factors)	5.00

TABLE 2.—SERVICES PERFORMED AT OTHER THAN AN APPLICANT'S FACILITY IN AN FGIS LABORATORY 1, 2—Continued

(d) Checkloading/condition examination (use hourly rates from Table 1, plus an administrative fee per hundredweight if	
not previously assessed) (CWT)	0.02
(e) Reinspection (grade and factor only. Sampling service additional, item (i) above)	12.40
(f) Class X Weighing (per hour per service representative)	52.50
(v) Additional tests (excludes sampling)	
(a) Aflatoxin (per test—other than TLC method)	28.00
(b) Aflatoxin (per test—TLC method)	106.00
(c) Corn oil, protein, and starch (one or any combination)	8.60
(d) Soybean protein and oil (one or both)	8.60
(e) Wheat protein (per test)	8.60
(f) Sunflower oil (per test)	8.60
(g) Vomitoxin (qualitative)	29.50
(h) Vomitoxin (quantitative)	36.50
(i) Waxy corn (per test)	9.85
(j) Canola (per test—00 dip test)	9.85
(k) Pesticide Residue Testing ³	
(1) Routine Compounds (per sample)	207.00
(2) Special Compounds (per service representative)	106.00
(I) Fees for other tests not listed above will be based on the lowest noncontract hourly rate from Table 1.	
(2) Appeal inspection and review of weighing service: 4	
(i) Board Appeals and Appeals (grade and factor)	79.00
(a) Factor only (per factor—max 2 factors)	41.50
(b) Sampling service for Appeals additional (hourly rates from Table 1).	
(ii) Additional tests (assessed in addition to all other applicable fees)	
(a) Aflatoxin (per test, other than TLC)	27.50
(b) Aflatoxin (TLC)	115.00
(c) Corn oil, protein, and starch (one or any combination)	16.50
(d) Soybean protein and oil (one or both)	16.50
(e) Wheat protein (per test)	16.50
(f) Sunflower oil (per test)	16.50
(g) Vomitoxin (per test—qualitative)	39.00
(h) Vomitoxin (per test—quantitative)	44.00
(i) Vomitoxin (per test—HPLC Board Appeal)	134.00
(j) Pesticide Residue Testing ³ .	
(1) Routine Compounds (per sample)	207.00
(2) Special Compounds (per service representative)	106.00
(k) Fees for other tests not listed above will be based on the lowest noncontract hourly rate from Table 1.	
(iii) Review of weighing (per hour per service representative)	75.80
(3) Stowage examination (service-on-request): ³	
(i) Ship (per stowage space) (minimum \$252.50 per ship)	51.00
(ii) Subsequent ship examinations (same as original) (minimum \$151.50 per ship)	
(iii) Barge (per examination)	41.00
(iv) All other carriers (per examination)	16.00
. ,	

¹Fees apply to original inspection and weighing, reinspection, and appeal inspection service and include, but are not limited to, sampling, grading, weighing, prior to loading stowage examinations, and certifying results performed within 25 miles of an employee's assigned duty station. Travel and related expenses will be charged for service outside 25 miles as found in §800.72 (a).

²An additional charge will be assessed when the revenue from the services in Schedule A, Table 2, does not cover what would have been collected at the applicable hourly rate as provided in §800.72 (b).

TABLE 3.—MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES 1

(1) Grain grading seminars (per hour per service representative) 2	
(i) Scale testing and certification 52.50	0
(i) Scale testing and certification	0
(iii) NTEP Prototype evaluation (other than Railroad Track Scales)	0
(iv) NTEP Prototype evaluation of Railroad Track Scales (plus usage fee per day for test car)	0
110.00	0
(v) Mass standards calibration and reverification 52.50	0
(vi) Special projects 52.5(Ō
(v) Mass standards calibration and reverification52.50(vi) Special projects52.50(4) Foreign travel (per day per service representative)475.00	Ō
(5) Online customized data EGIS service:	•
(i) One data file per week for 1 year	n
(ii) One data file per month for 1 year	-
(6) Samples provided to interested parties (per sample)	-
(7) Divided-lot certificates (per certificate)	-
(8) Extra copies of certificates (per certificate)	-
(8) Extra copies of certificates (per certificate) 1.50 (9) Faxing (per page) 1.50	-
(10) Special mailing (actual cost)	U

³ If performed outside of normal business, 1½ times the applicable unit fee will be charged.
⁴ If, at the request of the Service, a file sample is located and forwarded by the Agency for an official agency, the Agency may, upon request, be reimbursed at the rate of \$2.50 per sample by the Service.

TABLE 3.—MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES 1—Continued

(11) Preparing certificates onsite or during other than normal business hours (use hourly rates from Table 1)

¹ Any requested service that is not listed will be performed at \$52.50 per hour.

² Regular business hours-Monday through Friday-service provided at other than regular hours charged at the applicable overtime hourly rate.

Dated: March 28, 2001.

David R. Shipman,

Acting Administrator, Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration. [FR Doc. 01–8145 Filed 4–3–01; 8:45 am] BILLING CODE 3410–EN–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Office of the Comptroller of the Currency

12 CFR Part 8

[Docket No. 01-05]

RIN 1557-AB90

Assessment of Fees; National Banks; District of Columbia Banks

AGENCY: Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, Treasury.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking.

SUMMARY: The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) proposes to amend the formula it uses to assess independent credit card banks. A national bank is considered independent for purposes of this proposal if it engages primarily in credit card operations and is not affiliated with a full-service national bank. Under the revised assessment structure, all credit card banks would continue to be assessed based on balance sheet assets. Independent credit card banks would pay an additional assessment component based on the "receivables attributable" to credit card accounts owned by the bank. This additional assessment is intended to result in payment by these banks of a more appropriate share of the OCC's expenses than under the current book-asset assessment structure.

The OCC also proposes to raise the surcharge for all institutions with composite ratings of 3, 4, or 5 under the Uniform Financial Institutions Rating System (UFIRS) (also referred to as the CAMELS rating) and for Federal branches and agencies of foreign banks that receive a composite rating of 3, 4, or 5 under the ROCA rating system. This amendment will enable the OCC to allocate more equitably the expenses we incur in supervising institutions that are experiencing significant problems, which necessitate more extensive utilization of OCC resources. The

ratings-based surcharge will apply to both the asset-based assessments and the independent credit card bank assessments. The proposal also applies the ratings-based surcharge to the independent trust bank assessment.

DATES: Comments must be received by May 4, 2001.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be directed to, and may be inspected and copied at: Communications Division, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, 250 E Street, SW., Mailstop 1–5, Washington, DC 20219, Attention: Docket No. 01–05. In addition, comments may be sent via facsimile at (202) 874–4448 or via Internet at regs.comments@occ.treas.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mitchell E. Plave, Senior Attorney, Legislative and Regulatory Activities Division, (202) 874–5090; or Daniel L. Pearson, National Bank Examiner, Credit Risk, (202) 874–5170.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

The OCC charters, regulates, and supervises approximately 2,200 national banks and 58 Federal branches and agencies of foreign banks in the United States, accounting for nearly 60 percent of the nation's banking assets. Our mission is to ensure a safe, sound, and competitive national banking system that supports the citizens, communities, and economy of the United States.

The OCC funds the activities it undertakes to carry out this mission predominantly through assessments on institutions we regulate. The National Bank Act authorizes the OCC to collect assessments, fees, or other charges as necessary or appropriate to carry out the responsibilities of the OCC. 12 U.S.C. 482 (Supp. 1999). The statute requires that our charges be set to meet the Comptroller's expenses in carrying out authorized activities. Id. The OCC, under part 8, currently assesses national banks and Federal branches and agencies according to a formula based on factors such as a bank's size and condition and whether it is the "lead" bank or "non-lead" bank among national banks in a holding company.1

The OCC also imposes an additional assessment on independent trust banks based on the amount of trust assets they manage.²

Independent Credit Card Banks

The OCC's assessment regulations do not currently distinguish independent credit card banks chartered by the OCC from other national banks. As a result, independent credit card banks pay assessments according to the same formula that applies to full-service national banks. That formula is comprised of a fixed component based solely on a bank's asset size plus a variable component derived by multiplying asset amounts in excess of certain thresholds by a series of declining marginal rates.3 The assessment amount that results from this computation may then be adjusted based on a bank's condition and on whether it is a "lead bank" or a "nonlead bank." The amount of assets on a bank's balance sheet is, however, the most significant component of the current assessment computation.

The magnitude and complexity of the business of independent credit card banks is not fully reflected by the volume of assets reported on their balance sheets as of a particular date. For example, in order to comply with restrictions governing affiliate transactions, most private label credit card banks sell their receivables within twenty-four hours of their production. Other independent credit card banks regularly securitize substantial amounts of their receivables. A credit card bank's balance sheet, therefore, is not, by itself, a useful measure of the resources the OCC must expend to supervise this type of bank, nor is it a fair measure of the

Condition (Including Domestic and Foreign Subsidiaries) (Call Report). 12 CFR 8.2(a)(6)(ii)(A).

¹A "lead bank" is the largest national bank controlled by a company, based on a comparison of the total assets held by each national bank controlled by that company as reported in each bank's most recent Consolidated Report of

² 65 FR 75859 (December 5, 2000), to be codified at 12 CFR 8.6(c). An "independent trust bank" for purposes of § 8.6 is a national bank that (a) has trust powers, (b) does not primarily offer full-service banking, and (c) is not affiliated with a full-service national bank. A bank will be considered as not primarily offering full-service banking if it derives more than 50 percent of its interest and non-interest income from credit card operations or trust activities, or the terms of the bank's charter restrict its ability to engage in a full range of permissible banking activities.

³ The assessment formula is set out at 12 CFR 8.2. The elements of the formula, including the marginal rates, may change from year to year and are announced in the OCC's annual "Notice of Comptroller of the Currency Fees" (Notice of Fees). See 12 CFR 8.8.