

FEDERAL NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY



AGRICULTURE

COMMENTS REQUESTED ON EXPORT SALES REPORTING FOR MEATS

■(WASHINGTON) The U.S. Department of Agriculture is requesting public comments on a proposal to begin collecting data on meat export sales. The proposal was first announced by Secretary Glickman in late July as one of a series of initiatives to improve competition in livestock markets.

Under the proposal, private firms involved in the export of U.S. meats and meat products, including poultry meats, could be required to report these sales to USDA on a weekly basis. USDA would compile and publish the aggregated data for individual meats, meat cuts, and export destinations.

"This proposed action," Glickman said, "responds to one of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Agricultural Concentration, which investigated concentration in the livestock, poultry, and rail sectors. Among its findings was a strong endorsement of the view that widely accessible, timely, and accurate information is vital to an efficient and competitive marketplace that best serves the interests of producers, processors, and consumers."

The advisory committee reported that increased concentration within the livestock and poultry sectors has contributed to gaps and inequities in information flows to producers. Among the gaps identified was the lack of timely data on meat exports.

The formal request for public comment identifies the existing Export Sales Reporting Program of USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service as one of the tools available for collecting the new information. Comments are invited on all aspects of the proposal and related issues, including the need for export sales data on meats, the benefits and costs of mandatory and voluntary reporting, and specific procedures regarding the frequency and content of the information to be collected and published. To be assured of consideration, comments on the proposal should be received within 60 days.

The complete Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking appears in Thursday's edition of the Federal Register (Nov. 14, 1996, Vol. 61, No. 221, page 58343). Copies of the Federal Register can be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S.

Government Printing Office (202-512-1800).

All comments on the proposal should be sent to: Export Sales Reporting Branch, Trade and Economic Analysis Division, Room 5959—Stop 1025, Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-1025. Written comments will be available for public inspection.

—U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
11/14/96

COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

■(WASHINGTON) This report presents initial lessons learned from the Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program (TIIAP) projects funded in 1994 and 1995. The report looks at the community impacts of TIIAP projects, and presents examples of how specific projects are using advanced telecommunications and information technologies to provide better services, strengthen community ties, and provide increased access to information for thousands of Americans.

Lessons learned to date include insights into project planning, selecting the appropriate technologies, developing and maintaining productive community partnerships, and securing long-term financial support.

Material for the report was gathered from a workshop and focus group sessions conducted with TIIAP project directors in June 1996, and a review of TIIAP project reports and documents. The report is intended for community-based organizations and government agencies wishing to incorporate new information technologies into services they provide the community, as well as those who seek to better understand the TIIAP program.

The TIIAP program is administered by the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). It is a competitive, merit-based grant program providing seed money for innovative, information infrastructure projects by state and local governments, schools and school districts, non-profit health care and community organizations, libraries, colleges, and public safety. In 1994 and 1995, TIIAP awarded 210 grants

in 48 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Approximately \$60 million in Federal grant funds were matched by \$100 million in non-federal funds. A significant amount went to rural areas generally underserved by information technologies; disadvantaged urban Americans also benefited from projects.

The Impact of TIIAP Projects

Two-thirds of the TIIAP projects are still underway, but in discussions with project directors and a review of project reports, significant impacts are beginning to emerge.

- **Innovations in Education.** Schools are using the Internet to provide teachers with new teaching tools and students with new educational opportunities.

- **Increased Access to Lifelong Learning Opportunities.** Rural public libraries are expanding services, schools are using networks to open doors to their communities, and adult learners are improving job skills by taking courses through distance learning networks.

- **More Responsive Public Institutions.** A number of government agencies, schools, libraries, and other community organizations that previously had limited means of reaching their constituencies now provide information over the Internet.

- **Enhanced Economic Development in Rural and Disadvantaged Areas.**

- **Increased Access to Health Care.**

- **Increased Sense of Community.** Workers in government agencies, students, health care providers and others are using e-mail and other electronic messaging to expand the network they reach, improve service delivery, and increase communication with others.

- **Replicable Models and Strategies for Introducing Information Infrastructure into the Public and Non-Profit Sectors.** TIIAP projects receive frequent inquiries from people all over the world interested in learning to implement similar projects.

Getting Started

Successful projects create a disciplined, business-like approach and foster communication with other groups, often leading to partnerships. TIIAP projects demonstrate how to plan the successful introduction of information technology into a public service setting.

In general, steps in the planning process include:

- **Gathering information about community needs, assets and resources, existing**

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