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Programs

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Vegetable
Program

Specialty
Crops
Inspection
Division

Commodity Specification Frozen Vegetables

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I. General

A. U.S. Standards

Frozen vegetables (product/commodity) produced under this Commodity Specification must meet the requirements specified in the applicable United States Standards for Grades of Frozen Vegetables (U.S. Standards) effective on the date of the Solicitation/Invitation for Bid (IFB). The U.S. Standards are published separately and are incorporated herein and made a part of this Commodity Specification.

B. Exceptions to U.S. Standards

Exceptions to the U.S. Standards for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) frozen vegetables purchases are found in Section II, Individual Commodity Specifications, of this document. Additional exceptions may be specified in the applicable Solicitation/IFB. Any exceptions contained in the applicable Solicitation/IFB shall have precedence over the requirements contained herein, for that Solicitation/IFB only.

C. Product Origin

1. Commodities delivered pursuant to this Commodity Specification shall have originated from crops that have been 100 percent grown, processed, and packed in the United States, its territories or possessions, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, (hereinafter referred to as the United States). See Section I., F. of the Master Solicitation.
2. If the contractor handles any commodity originating from sources other than the United States, the contractor must have a written plan to segregate the commodity. This segregation plan will include an identification and record system for all commodities to ensure they are completely segregated and cannot be used to fulfill purchase orders awarded by USDA. Such segregation plan must be made available, within 10 days of purchase order award, to representatives of the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).
3. The contractor must maintain positive written documentation records evidencing 100 percent domestic origin to the grower level. Contractors must also ensure that the documentation provided by any subcontractors demonstrate the same level of traceability. The burden of proof of compliance is on the contractor.

Documentation may include load or warehouse storage receipts for raw product (i.e., bin tags), product blend (formulation) records, product coding explanations, finished product, warehousing records, shipping or payment records, or other documentation or evidence that clearly establishes the product's domestic origin.

4. Contractors must provide the domestic origin certification and supporting documentation records to representatives of the AMS Fruit and Vegetable Program, Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Division (USDA Inspector) when requesting inspection service. USDA Inspectors will select and review at least one

code for each purchase order or IDIQ contract to determine compliance with the Agency's domestic origin requirements.

5. Such records must be available for review by the Government in accordance with FAR 52.214-26. In the event of an audit, AMS auditors will examine as many codes as is necessary to verify compliance.
6. Self-certifications by contractors and subcontractors will not be accepted.
7. Failure to observe this requirement may lead to suspension or debarment, purchase order termination, and penalties at Title 18, Section 1001 of the U.S. Code concerning falsification of information.

D. Kosher Products

Occasionally, USDA solicits offers to sell KOSHER products. Such products are identified on the solicitation with the letter "K" incorporated into the WBSCM material descriptions. Vendors must comply with the applicable dietary (KOSHER) laws as established by the "613 COUNCIL OF KASHRUTH" in the production of these commodity products. Vendors must not bid on these purchase units unless they can be properly verified.

Vendors receiving purchase order items identified as "KOSHER" must contact the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York (BJENY) at telephone 646-427-5365 prior to manufacturing the commodity product to arrange for certification of compliance with the applicable dietary (kosher) laws.

E. Packing Season

All frozen vegetables must be from the current packing season/crop year, unless otherwise specified in the applicable Solicitation/IFB.

F. Shipment

Shipment of frozen vegetables must be at 0 degrees (plus or minus 10 degrees F).

G. Grade of Frozen Vegetables

All frozen vegetables must be U.S. Grade A (as defined in the U. S. Standards) unless otherwise specified in Section II, Individual Product Specifications, herein or the applicable Solicitation/IFB.

H. Fill of Container

1. Contractor must meet the net weight for the product as specified in the applicable U.S. Standards unless otherwise indicated herein.
 - a. Shipping cases for frozen product shall contain twelve 2 ½-pounds, six 5-pounds, or 30-pound bulk container.

2. The average net weight must meet the net weight as printed on the label and the Individual Commodity Specification Section II.

I. Packing, Labels and Packaging

Commercial Labels and Packaging

1. Primary Containers

- a. Vendors have the option to use commercial labeling and packaging which meets all applicable FDA requirements and contains a code which allows traceability of the product in the event of a recall or they may use USDA packaging and labeling as specified in the Master Solicitation.
- b. The processors' own commercially acceptable "brand" labels may be used on all Solicitations/IFBs unless prohibited by the Solicitation/IFB. Distributor's "brand" labels are not acceptable.
- c. All products must be packed in new, commercially acceptable primary containers (bags). Frozen vegetables shall be packed only in the container size and type specified in the applicable Solicitation/IFB. The bags must be suitably code marked so that the product can be identified with related inspection certificates.

2. Secondary Containers (case)

- a. Bags shall be further enclosed within new, corrugated fiberboard cartons (cases) acceptable by common or other carriers for safe transportation to destinations.
- b. Case flaps, gaps, and other openings may not exceed 1 inch and must be fully sealed with tape. Tape must be clear and of commercially acceptable width and strength. The tape must extend at least two inches down the sides or ends.
- c. Mixing and matching of USDA and commercial labeling methods will not be acceptable.
- d. Two or more different commercial labels will not be acceptable within a shipping unit (truck load).

USDA Label and Packaging

1. Primary Containers (bags)

All products must be packed in new, commercially acceptable primary containers. Frozen vegetables shall be packed only in the container size and type specified in the applicable Solicitation/IFB. The bags must be suitably code marked so that the product can be identified with related inspection certificates.

2. Secondary Containers (cases)

The construction of shipping cases shall be adequate to withstand normal refrigerated shipping and cold storage, and shall meet the following requirements:

Corrugated fiberboard construction, rated at a minimum of 275 pounds per square inch bursting strength for 30-pound cartons and 40 pound cases and 225 pounds PSI for 20 and 25 pound cases.

Cases must be marked in such a manner that they contain all of the symbols, statements and information contained in Exhibit 1, "Required Markings for Shipping Containers".

The net weight must be expressed in metric as well as avoirdupois units.

Cases may be marked by printing or stenciling or by preprinted self-adhesive stickers. Self-adhesive stickers must be affixed to the case in such a manner that they cannot be removed intact.

Exact arrangement and adherence to font size is not required. The case markings must be clearly marked, easily read, and substantially the same as specified in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 2 shows an alternative placard that may be applied to a new, corrugated fiberboard case acceptable by common or other carriers for safe transportation to destinations. This placard must be affixed to the case in such a manner that they cannot be removed intact.

Cases must have the recycling statement shown in Exhibit 4, "Please Recycle" Symbol and Statement or Exhibit 5, "Corrugated Recycles" Symbol and Statement.

Case flaps, gaps and other openings may not exceed 1 inch and must be fully sealed with tape. Tape must be clear and of commercially acceptable width and strength. The tape must extend at least two inches down the sides or ends.

Labels and Case Markings

The following statement must be clearly printed on the exterior for all frozen cases:

“Important – **Keep Frozen** – Exposure to air may cause product browning (oxidation), to minimize product browning, limit thawing time to 3 hours at room temperature.”

J. Universal Product Codes (UPC)

Contractor UPC's are acceptable for primary containers of product shipped utilizing commercial labels and/or secondary fiberboard cases enclosing commercially labeled product.

Primary label and shipping container Universal Product Codes for USDA products if applicable are listed in Exhibit 3. The Contractor's UPC is not acceptable. The shipping container UPC must be marked on the case as shown in Exhibit 2.

K. Palletization Requirements

1. Pallets

Products must be on 48 X 40 inch, non-reversible, flush stringer, and partial four-way entry. New pallets must be good quality wood. Used pallets must be No.1 hardwood or its equivalent in new softwood. **Broken or damaged pallets are unacceptable.** If pallet exchange is desired, the contractor shall arrange for pallet exchange with consignees. USDA is in no way responsible for arrangement of pallet exchange.

2. Unitization

Each delivery unit of frozen vegetables must be unitized. Shipping cases must be stacked and secured from top to bottom, so that each container and layer of containers becomes an integral part of the pallet. Either stretch wrapping with plastic film or "lock 'n pop" is acceptable. The palletized product must be loaded in the conveyance in such a way that will prevent shifting and damage to the containers of product.

L. Shipment and Delivery

1. Quantity Tolerance

Contractor will be allowed a tolerance on the final delivery of plus or minus 50 cases of **each product**, from **each shipping point** named in the purchase order.

II. Individual Commodity Specifications**A. Frozen, Asparagus****Cut Spears (Cuts & Tips)**

1. Grade – U.S. Grade A.
2. Sizes (Diameter) of spears and tips – medium size or No. 2 classification 3/8 inch or larger but less than 5/8 inch.
3. Length of cut – 1 inch, plus or minus ¼ inch.
4. Net Weight –
 - a. 30 pounds per case (6/5 pound bags.)
 - b. 30 pounds per case (12/2.5 pound bags.)

Whole Spears

1. Grade – U.S. Grade A.
2. Net Weight – 15 pounds per case (6/2.5 pound bags.)

B. Frozen, Whole Kernel Corn

1. Grade – U.S. Grade B or better.

2. Color Type – Golden (or yellow).
3. Variety – Frozen Super sweet Whole Kernel Corn may be used as long as it follows the guidelines – A-493.
4. Net Weight – 30 pounds per case.

C. Frozen, Peas

1. Grade – U.S. Grade B or better, with no additives except salt acquired during processing.
2. Net Weight – 30 pound per case.

D. Frozen, Green Beans

1. Grade – U.S. Grade B or better, except shall be U.S. Grade A for extraneous vegetable material.
2. Type – Round.
3. Color – Green.
4. Styles – Whole, cut (sliced lengthwise, or French style), provided that the cut style units are one inch in length or longer.
5. Net Weight – 30 pounds per case

NOTE: Compliance with “cut” style one inch or longer provisions will be determined using the criteria in the United States Standards for Grades of Frozen Green and Wax Beans”, except to change the definition of a minor defect in Table II for “cut” style to read: “Piece shorter than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in length.”

E. Frozen, Mixed Vegetables

1. Grade –U.S. Grade B or better.
2. Proportions of Ingredients –
 - a. Not more than 40 percent by weight carrots (diced style $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch cube).
 - b. Not more than 40 percent by weight corn (sweet, golden or yellow, whole kernel corn).
 - c. Not more than 40 percent by weight green peas.

F. Frozen, Carrots

1. Grade – U.S. Grade A.
2. Style –
 - a. Sliced (straight cut or crinkle cut).
 - b. Diced ($\frac{3}{8}$ inch to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch cube).

3. Net Weight – 30 pounds or 12/2.5 pound bags.

G. Frozen, Corn-on-the-Cob

1. Grade – U.S. Grade A (or U.S. Fancy).
2. Length – Short (3 inches to 3½ inches).
3. Color – Golden (or yellow).
4. Style – Trimmed.
5. Unit Size - 1,320 cases.
6. Pack Size – 96 ears per case.

H. Frozen, Mashed Sweet Potatoes

1. Grade – U.S. Grade A.
2. Color - Golden, Yellow, or Mixed.
3. Style – Mashed.
4. Net Weight – 30 pounds (6/5 pound bags.)

I. Frozen, Cut or Chunks Sweet Potatoes

1. Grade – U.S. Grade A.
2. Color – Golden, Yellow, or Mixed.
3. Style – Cut or Chunks.
4. Net Weight – 30 pounds (6/5 pound bags.)

J. Frozen Broccoli

1. Grade – U.S. Grade A.
2. Style – Short Spears or Florets.
3. Each short spear or floret must weigh more than **4 grams**.
4. Net Weight – 30 pounds (6/5 pound bags.)

K. Frozen IQF Spinach

1. Grade – U.S. Grade A.
2. Style – Chopped.
3. Package size – 12/2 pounds or 20 pounds.

L. Frozen, IQF Mushrooms

All vendors and/or suppliers providing fresh mushrooms shall undergo a “Mushroom Good Agricultural Practices Program” audit, 2010. The audit must be conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Fruit and Vegetable Program (FVP), Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Division or licensed Federal-State auditors providing services under a cooperative agreement with USDA oversight. The audit conducted must be the USDA, GAP & GHP Audit for mushroom production. The audit must cover all parts of the operation which are applicable to the commodity being purchased.

A copy of the audit standards and checklists are available on the USDA website at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/gapghp>, or from your local USDA or Federal-State inspection office. A listing of USDA and Federal-State inspection offices are also available on the website listed above.

1. Color – White or Cream; or Brown. Fairly good color may possess a grayish cast that does not seriously affect the overall color or appearance. The color of the gills of the diced units is not darker than tannish gray for white or cream, and may be dark brownish gray for brown. The contrast in color between the gills and surface of the diced units shall not seriously affect the overall color appearance of the product.
2. Style – Diced.
3. Size – 3/8 inch. Fairly uniform in size and shape, not more than 15 percent by weight of the units may be more than 3/8 inch.
4. Defects – Fairly free from defects. Not more than 10 percent by weight may contain discoloration due to brown spot or rust spots that extend into the flesh, or mechanical damage causing a ragged appearance. Mushrooms shall contain no more than an average of 1 piece per 100 ounces of harmless extraneous material (HEM) not limited to loose root material or small pieces of straw no longer than 1 inch in length. Shall contain no foreign material such as: grit, soil or compost; wood splinters; rot or decay; insects or insect fragments; or maggots. Foreign material may be detected upon visual examination during the regular grading process. An exception would be the presence of maggots, and then microscopic examination would be required.
5. Character – Fairly good character. Units shall be tender; may be slightly soft; with no more than 10 percent by weight excessively soft; fibrous, or rubbery. Mushrooms shall be free flowing and not have more than 10 percent by weight frozen clumps greater than 1 inch in size.
6. Flavor and Odor – Normal flavor and odor. Mushrooms shall have the odor of fresh, clean mushrooms free from objectionable flavors and objectionable odors of any kind.
7. Hydration – Mushrooms shall not be hydrated.
8. Net Weight – 40 pounds per case.

III. Inspection and Checkloading

A. Requirements

Representatives of the AMS, Fruit and Vegetable Program, Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Division (USDA Inspector) must perform the inspection and checkloading. See section X of the Master Solicitation. **The cost of inspection, samples taken for inspection, mailing of review samples submitted for evaluation, and any chemical analysis required for testing shall be for the account of the Contractor.**

Inspection of frozen products must be performed not more than 60 days prior to shipment. Whether each lot offered meets the product and container requirements of the purchase order must be determined on the basis of representative sample units. Representative sample units will be graded according to the Regulations Governing Inspection and Certification of Frozen Vegetables and Related Products (7 C.F.R. Part 52), and United States Standards for Condition of Food Containers (7 C.F.R. Part 42.140), effective on the date of the Solicitation/IFB.

Case stamping is not acceptable for frozen vegetables.

B. Certification

Subject to (See section X of the Master Solicitation) the acceptability of the quality, weight, packaging, and checkloading of the product must be evidenced by certificates issued by the USDA Inspector.

No product shall be shipped unless the USDA Inspector informs the Contractor that a designated lot is acceptable. Notice by the USDA Inspector that a designated lot scheduled for shipment does not meet requirements of the purchase order shall constitute rejection of such lot.

C. Procedures

The Contractor must give the USDA Inspector at least 7 days advance notice when scheduling inspection service. Prior to sampling, the Contractor must furnish the USDA Inspector with a list of codes and the approximate number of cases per code.

Contractors are encouraged to submit requests for inspection in writing with verifiable receipt notice, such as fax log, to alleviate possible miscommunication.

D. Laboratory Tests

The Contractor must allow 14 days after product sampling for laboratory tests (when required) to be completed and returned.

IV. Failure to Meet Specifications

Any lot which fails applicable specifications prescribed herein will be rejected as not acceptable for delivery. If any lot of frozen vegetables fails to meet the product or packaging requirement, the Contractor may request in writing that USDA accept delivery

of the lot. USDA may at its option, accept delivery, provided that the purchase price is the purchase order price less a discount, to be determined by the Contracting Officer.

V. Exhibits

**Exhibit 1
Required Markings for Non-Commercial Shipping Containers
ALL PRINTING TO BE IN BLACK INK**

BOTH SIDE PANELS	BOTH END PANELS
PRODUCT NAME 1/ 2/	PRODUCT NAME PURCHASE ORDER NO. 3/
USDA SYMBOL	4/
KEEP FROZEN	5/

Product name must be printed or stenciled on a separate line in letters at least three-fourths inch high, and all other information must be in letters less than three-fourths inch but at least three-eighths inch high. The USDA Food Symbol must be printed, stamped, or labeled and be of sufficient size to stand out prominently. Case markings must be limited to case codes and those contained in this Exhibit.

- 1/ Insert any additional product style, pack, packing media, or further definition as applicable.
- 2/ Insert the size and number of packages per case, i.e. 6 /No. 10 cans, 6/5 pound bags, 12/46 ounce cans, 1/25 pound bag.
- 3/ Insert the last five digits of the purchase order number.
- 4/ Insert name of Packer and Packer's Address - City, State, and Zip Code. This information can be placed on the end panels or the side panels.
- 5/ Insert Universal Product Code (see Exhibit "3").

Recycle symbols and statements can be placed on bottom panels (Exhibit "4" and "5").

Exhibit 2
Alternative Label for Shipping Containers
(Includes all Required Information)



Product Name

Style

Packing Media

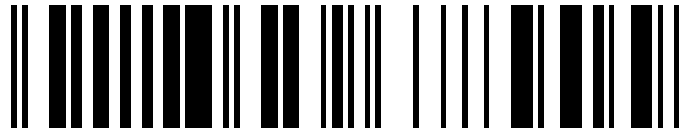
Size/Number per case

Purchase Order Number xxxxx

Packed by: ABC Growers

Any Town, CA 99999

KEEP FROZEN

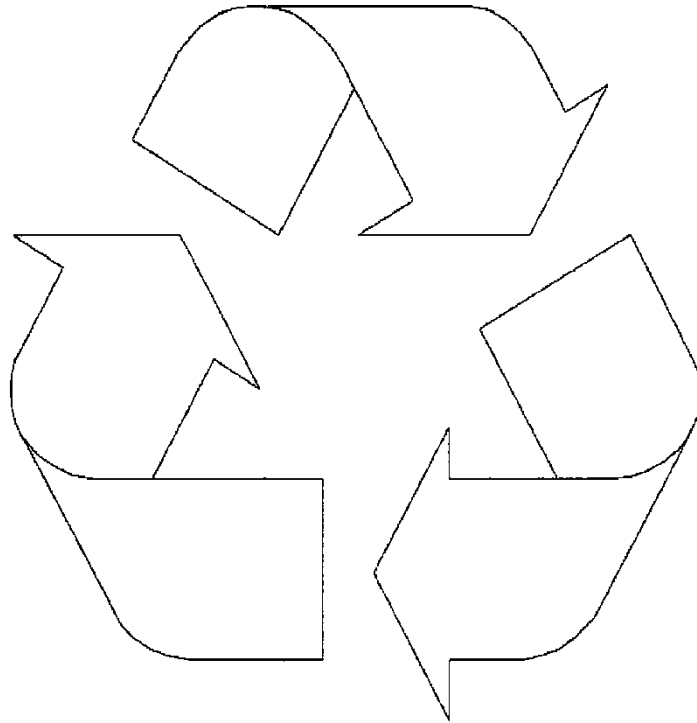


1234567891012345678910

Exhibit 3
Universal Product Codes

Frozen Vegetables	WBSCM Material	Primary Container	Secondary Container
Asparagus, Whole Spears (6/2.5 lb.)	100304	7 15001 00304 1	1 07 15001 00304 8
Asparagus (12/2.5 lb.)	100346		1 07 15001 00346 8
Broccoli FRZ PKG (6/5 lb.)	110282	7 15001 10282 9	1 07 15001 10282 6
Broccoli FRZ PKG (30 lb.) .	110473		1 07 15001 10473 2
Carrots Sliced (30 lb.)	100352		1 07 15001 00352 9
Carrots Sliced (30 lb.), Kosher	110064		1 07 15001 10064 8
Carrots Diced (30 lb.)	110480		1 07 15001 10480 4
Carrots Diced (12/2.5 lb.)	110481	7 15001 10481 4	1 07 15001 10481 7
Corn (30 lb.)	100348		1 07 15001 00348 2
Corn-on-the-cob (96 ears per case)	100349		1 07 15001 00349 9
Corn-on-the-cob (96 ears per case), Kosher	110061		1 07 15001 10061 7
Green Beans (30 lb.)	100351		1 07 15001 00351 2
Green Beans (30 lb.), Kosher	110063		1 07 15001 10063 1
Mashed Sweet Potatoes (6/5 lb.)	100354	7 15001 00354 6	1 07 15001 00354 3
Mushrooms Diced FRZ IQF-CTN (40lb.)	110421		1 07 15001 10421 8
Peas (30 lb.)	100350		1 07 15001 00350 5
Peas (30 lb.), Kosher	110062		1 07 15001 10062 4
Random Cut Sweet Potatoes (6/5 lb.)	100353	7 15001 00353 9	1 07 15001 00353 6
Spinach Chopped FRZ IQF-PKG (12/2 lb.)	110391	7 15001 10391 2	1 07 15001 10391 5
Spinach Chopped FRZ IQF-CTN (20 lb.)	110392	7 15001 10392 5	1 07 15001 10392 8

Exhibit 4
“Please Recycle” Symbol and Statement



**PLEASE
RECYCLE**

Exhibit 5
“Corrugated Recycles” Symbol and Statement



**Corrugated
Recycles**

Exhibit 6
USDA Symbol

