

Agricultural Marketing Service

Creating Opportunities for American Farmers and Businesses

Audit Programs for Livestock, Meat, Poultry, and Egg Industries

The Quality Assessment Division (QAD), part of the AMS Livestock, Poultry and Seed (LPS) Program, provides a number of verification services and programs to assist in the marketing of agricultural products worldwide on a voluntary, user fee basis. In addition to the well-known grading services, retail symbols such as “USDA Certified Tender” beef and “USDA Process Verified” poultry are products of QAD verification services.

QAD’s verification activities include a wide range of domestic and export auditing services designed to assist companies in assuring customers of their ability to provide consistent quality products or services. They also allow small businesses to differentiate themselves from their competition. The company’s programs are verified through independent third-party audits conducted by the QAD. Each audit follows a documented procedure to maintain a uniform process.

QAD utilizes internationally recognized standards for evaluating program documentation to ensure reliable auditing practices and promote international recognition of audit results. Export verification programs often provide assurance that contractual agreements, foreign government requirements, and other requirements are met. The specified product requirements may be identified by the company or may be those outlined in a USDA Export Verification Program.

The majority of our audit programs fall under the broad category of Quality System Verification



Programs (QSVPs). Under the umbrella of QSVPs, there are two major program categories.

Process Verified Program



Built upon the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001 Quality Management Systems Standard, the Process Verified Program (PVP) involves a comprehensive quality management system review, which allow companies to market their products using the USDA PVP shield. The PVP allows companies to develop their own marketing claims, such as a feeding claim. PVP companies are required to develop a Quality Manual and AMS verifies the company’s adherence to those processes through routine audits. Labels require the approval of USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). For example, companies must have a quality policy, conduct internal audits, and continue to strengthen and improve their program. Because of this comprehensive quality management system, companies generally undergo fewer audits each year as compared to other AMS programs.

Quality System Assessment Program

The Quality Systems Assessment (QSA) Program uses the same requirements of the ISO 9001, but some requirements are excluded making programs less comprehensive. The QSA Program is designed to aid in the marketing of products that have specific claims, and are limited in scope to those specific

items associated with the product or process claim. Because there are fewer requirements for a comprehensive quality management program, companies operating under a QSA Program are audited at least twice per year. Export Verification (EV) Programs, which are designed to address specific requirements of foreign governments for international trade, are a common type of QSA.

Some major differences between traditional QSA programs and more comprehensive PVP are outlined below:

	Quality Systems Assessment Program	Process Verified Program
Audit Criteria	ISO 9001 Requirements for Quality Management Systems (for applicable product or process claims only (pre-determined))	ISO 9001 Requirements for Quality Management Systems (comprehensive with company determining claims or standards to use)
Approval Process	Submit quality manual (desk audit); on-site audit; bi-annual audit	Submit quality manual (desk audit); on-site audit; annual audit including companies associated with claim
Marketing	Official listing on QAD website No USDA shield available	Official listing on QAD PVP website USDA PVP shield is allowed for use on marketing materials with prior AMS approval.
Types of Claims (examples)	Non-hormone treated beef and pork for the European Union; age verification; removal of specified risk materials (for example, spinal cord); beta agonist free	Source verification of animals; genetic traceability; never fed or given hormones, antibiotics, or animal protein in feeds; animal raising claims; feeding claims
Specific Programs (examples)	Poultry, Egg, and Egg Product Export Verification Program; Less than 30 month old cattle (LT30) Program for export of products to the Pacific Rim	USDA Certified Tender/Very Tender; Never Fed Beta Agonists; service claims for livestock and poultry producers



The requirements for the PVP and the QSA Program are available online to ensure transparency. AMS also conducts other audit-related activities such as traditional third-party audits; contractual audits between suppliers and contractors for the National School Lunch Program; and the Grass Fed Program for Small and Very Small Producers.



Contact Us for Service

Phone: (202) 720-3271

Email: QAD.auditservice@ams.usda.gov

Find out more at:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing>