



United States Department of Agriculture

Marketing and
Regulatory
Programs

Agricultural
Marketing
Service

Specialty
Crops
Program

Commodity Specification for Fresh Vegetables

May 2019

Commodity Specification for Fresh Vegetables
Table of Contents

GENERAL.....	1
U.S. Standards.....	1
Exceptions to U.S. Standards.....	1
Product Origin.....	1
Packing Season	2
LABELS and PACKAGING	2
Primary Containers (Cartons, Crates, RPCs, Bags, Sacks).....	2
Palletization Requirements	2
Pallets.....	3
Unitization.....	3
Shipment and Delivery.....	3
Quantity Tolerance.....	3
Prerequisites.....	3
INDIVIDUAL COMMODITY SPECIFICATIONS	3
Corn (Husked).....	4
Onions.....	4
Potatoes.....	4
Sweet Potatoes	5
Tomatoes.....	5
INSPECTION AND CHECK-LOADING	6
Requirements	6
Procedures.....	6
FAILURE TO MEET SPECIFICATIONS	6

GENERAL

U.S. Standards

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

Exceptions to U.S. Standards

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.

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 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 demonstrates 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 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.

Packing Season

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

LABELS AND PACKAGING

Primary Containers (Cartons, Crates, RPCs, Bags, Sacks)

1. 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 non-commercial packaging and labeling as specified in the Master Solicitation.
 - a. All products shall be packed in new, good, clean primary containers so constructed as to ensure acceptance by common carrier or other carrier for safe storage and transportation for domestic shipment.
 - b. If a specific variety, size, and/or color are required per the solicitation, that variety, size, and/or color shall also be listed on the primary container.

2. Secondary Containers (Bags)

- a. Vendors shall use commercially acceptable secondary containers which meet all applicable FDA requirements and contain a code which allows traceability of the product in the event of a recall.
- b. In addition to any commercial markings, each secondary container shall show the grower or shipper name(s) and address. If a specific variety, size, and/or color are required per the solicitation, that variety, size, and/or color shall also be listed on the secondary container.
- c. Two or more different commercial labels will not be acceptable within a shipping unit (truck load).

PALLETIZATION REQUIREMENTS

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.

Unitization

Each delivery unit of canned fruit 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.

Shipment and Delivery

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 in the purchase order.

Prerequisites

1. All vendors and/or suppliers providing fresh vegetables shall undergo a good agricultural practices and good handling practices audit of their operations. The audit must be conducted by the USDA, AMS, Specialty Crops Program, SCI Division or licensed Federal-State auditors providing services under a cooperative agreement with USDA oversight. The audit conducted may be either the USDA Good Agricultural Practices & Good Handling Practices (GAP&GHP) audit, the Produce GAPs Harmonized Food Safety Audit, or the Tomato Audit Protocol audit, whichever is applicable to the commodity being purchased.
2. The audit must cover all parts of the operation which are applicable to the commodity being purchased. For example, a tomato purchase would require an audit of the fields, packing house, and storage facilities.
3. A copy of the three acceptable audit standards is available on the USDA website at www.ams.usda.gov/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.

INDIVIDUAL COMMODITY SPECIFICATIONS

All inspection to be performed at destination unless otherwise specified in the applicable Solicitation/IFB. It is the contractor's responsibility to arrange for the inspection.

Corn (Husked)

1. Grade - U.S. No. 1, Husked.
2. Cartons – packing shall be at least fairly tight or fairly well filled.
3. Size – 4 inch minimum unless otherwise specified; Per Pallet – 80
4. Net weight – 24 pounds; Gross weight – 26 pounds.
5. Top ice is required on all shipments.
6. Refrigerated shipment at 34° to 36° F.

Onions

1. Grade – U.S. No. 1 or better (en route or at destination tolerances apply).
2. Size - Repacker/Prepacker (minimum diameter 1 ¾ inches and maximum diameter 3 inches) with at least 60 percent 2 inches or larger in diameter.
3. Onions in each offer unit ordered delivered by USDA shall contain product of not more than three (3) adjacent sizes. Each size shall be segregated in the shipment with a minimum of intermingling of the sizes. If shipment is by truck, the contractor shall note the location and count of each size in the truck (front, center and tail) on the shipping manifest.
4. Types of Pack - bags – **10/5lb.** Mesh sacks to a shipping container.
5. Must be yellow or white color only.

Potatoes

1. Grade - U.S. No. 1.
2. Washed.
3. Pack Size Requirement –
 - a. 50 pounds cartons, size 100 or 110
 - b. 50-pound paper bags, size A except, 2 inch minimum or 4 ounce minimum and contain at least 40 percent which are 2 ½ inches in diameter or larger or 6 ounces in weight or more

- c. 10/5-pound bags, size A except, 2 inch minimum or 4 ounce minimum and contain at least 40 percent which are 2 ½ inches in diameter or larger or 6 ounces in weight or more.
- 4. Packing shall be at least fairly tight or fairly well filled.
- 5. Types of varieties –

Container Size	Types of Varieties	Material Code
50-pound carton or bag	Russet	100340
10/5-pound bag	Russet	101017
10/5-pound bag	Round White Skin	101019
10/5-pound bag	Red Skin	110990
10/5-pound bag	As specified in the Solicitation/IFB. For possible variety types see below.	111151
50-pound carton	As specified in the Solicitation/IFB. For possible variety types see below.	111160

Types of varieties that may be specified in the Solicitation/IFB material code 111151 and 111160 are:

- a. Russet, Baking
- b. Round, White Skin
- c. Red Skin
- d. Yellow Flesh

Vendor must supply product and packaging type that is specified in the Solicitation/IFB and the individual line items.

- 6. The grade requirements referred herein are defined in the United States Standards for Grades of Potatoes, effective on the date of the Solicitation/IFB.

Sweet Potatoes

- 1. Grade – U.S. No.1
- 2. Washed
- 3. Pack Requirement – 40 lb. Carton

Tomatoes

- 1. Grade – U.S. Combination Grade, with at least 85% U.S. No. 1 Quality.

2. The tomatoes shall be 5x6 (Florida size). In instances where the tomatoes were not packed to an “official” size, a minimum diameter of 2 25/32 inches will be required.
3. A minimum of 80% of the tomatoes in the lot must be either Turning or Pink.

INSPECTION AND CHECK-LOADING

Requirements

1. Representatives of the AMS, Specialty Crops Program, SCI Division (USDA Inspector) must perform the inspection and check-loading (see 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.
2. USDA inspection of fresh vegetables must be performed at destination unless otherwise specified in the applicable Solicitation/IFB. The count (number) of packages shall be certified by Federal or Federal-State Inspection Service (see the Master Solicitation). The acceptability of the quality and packing of the product must be evidenced by certificates issued by the USDA Inspector.
3. Representative sample units will be graded according to the Regulations Governing Inspection and Certification of Fresh Vegetables and Related Products (7 C.F.R. part 51), and United States Standards for Condition of Food Containers (7 C.F.R. part 42.140), effective on the date of the Solicitation/IFB.

Procedures

The Contractor must give the USDA Inspector at least 72 hours advance notice when scheduling inspection service. Contractors are encouraged to submit requests for inspection in writing with verifiable receipt notice, such as fax log, to alleviate possible miscommunication.

FAILURE TO MEET SPECIFICATIONS

Any lot which fails applicable specifications prescribed herein will be rejected as not acceptable for delivery. If any lot of fresh 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.