



Federal Purchase Program Specification

Chicken Strips: June 2023

I. Purpose

This document provides the procedures USDA, AMS graders (graders) will utilize with the certification of chicken strips to the [June 2023 Federal Purchase Program Specification \(FPPS\)](#). The grader must read this procedure carefully and note what items must be observed during formulation, sampling, packaging and packing, labeling, loading and shipping, and the preparation of worksheets and certificates. The grader will not proceed until their supervisor has reviewed the [QAD 620: USDA FPPS – Poultry General Requirements](#) and this procedure with them.

Chicken Strips, Fully Cooked, Frozen (100462) must be processed and packed as outlined in the specification. The commodity must not be processed or packaged more than 90 days prior to the first day of the delivery period for each sales order. The chilled commodity must be processed, packaged, packed, and placed in a freezer within 7 calendar days after the date of harvest.

Under the [Supplement for Chicken Products Distributed for Federal Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs](#) the contractor is able to select Option A: Grading-Based Monitoring and Certification or Option B: Audit Based Verification for contract compliance and certification of the commodity. Regardless of which option is chosen, all raw material must be graded or certified by the USDA, AMS grader. For all processing steps following raw material collection, the contractor may request the use of either option. These procedures apply for contractors selecting Option A.

II. Procedures

A. Processing & Fabrication

1. Meat and Skin Requirements

Chicken strips must be prepared from boneless, skinless white and dark chicken meat in proportion of no less than 70% white meat and no more than 30% dark meat freshly harvested broiler/fryer chickens or parts, or all white meat. Frozen meat may be utilized if it meets criteria in Section 542 of the FPPS. Mechanically separated chicken (comminuted), finely ground, flaked, finely chopped, or size reduced chicken meat are unacceptable for use.

2. Certification Requirements

Prior to marination, graders must check 30 pieces for defects to determine compliance with the FPPS requirements (see FPPS Table 1) using the sampling frequency and acceptance criteria found in SPL-1. Results must be recorded on the LP-232L1. Bones, skin, and excess fat must be removed from the meat before use. Regardless of the kind and number of defects found, any sample with bone or hard bone-like material will be cause for the rejection of the meat the sample represents.



3. White/Dark Meat Ratio

When the product is formulated using white and dark meat it must have a minimum of 70 percent white meat and a maximum of 30 percent dark meat. A two-pound sample must be examined to determine compliance with this requirement. Separate the white meat from the dark meat totaling the weights separately. Calculate the percentage of white meat/dark meat and record the results (*Satisfactory "S" or Unsatisfactory "U"*) on the LP-232L2 reverse side. Product represented by a sample not having at least 70 percent white meat must be retained. If graders are verifying batch weights of white and dark meat prior to slicing, it is not necessary to examine the product after slicing.

4. Product Formulation Verification

Graders must personally observe the formulation of the marinating solution ingredients to certify compliance with the requirements at the frequency stated in [QAD 604: Formulation Certification](#). Results of the formulation verification must be documented on the LP-232L2. Formulations found that do not meet requirements in Section 562 of the FPPS cannot be used and will necessitate additional verification checks.

5. Marination

Determine the percentage of marinade pickup according to the procedures outlined in [QAD 606: Percent Gain Marinated-Sauce Products](#). Retain the product representing any sampling interval that exceeds the applicable FPPS maximum of 15%. The marinating, pressing, cooking, cutting into strips, and individual freezing of the commodity will be a continuous and sequential process as described in Section II. J. Processing Sequence of [QAD 620: USDA FPPS Poultry General Requirements](#).

B. Fully Cooked Product checks

1. Cooked Temperature

Graders must follow the procedures for temperature verification in [QAD 608: Cooking Temperature Certification](#). The temperature must be checked on a sampling interval basis or more frequently if conditions warrant. All products must be fully cooked in accordance with USDA, FSIS Regulations.

2. Appearance and Dimensions

Chicken strips must be uniformly sliced with a minimum width of .50 inches and length ranging from 1.0 – 4.0 inches. Cuts must provide strips of whole muscle chicken meat with reasonably smooth outer surfaces with no tears on the cut edges. Compliance with minimum width will be based on measurement of the slicing equipment at the start of each production shift. Other measurement procedures may be approved by the QAD supervisor when necessary.

Parallel grill markings are required on one side of the surface of the meat strip. Ten chicken strips must be examined for the presence of grill markings on one side. Incomplete or partial grill markings



are acceptable. Results (*Satisfactory “S” or Unsatisfactory “U”*) must be documented on the LP-232L2 reverse side.

3. Organoleptic Examination

The ready to cook chicken must be examined on a continuous basis in accordance with [QAD 614: Organoleptic Examination](#) and FPPS requirements stated in Section 550.

The fully cooked product will be sampled and examined for organoleptic defects to determine compliance with FPPS requirements (see FPPS Table 2). Online sampling will be performed on randomly selected product after the cooking operation and prior to freezing. Results (*Satisfactory “S” or Unsatisfactory “U”*) must be recorded on the LP-232L2 reverse side.

The fully cooked product will be examined for organoleptic defects by visual examination and smelling for each sampling interval product is produced. This examination must include checking for defects such as overcooked, scorched, undercooked, and areas of dehydration. If such defects are found in the sample, the lot or product the sample represents must be retained. Sample size will be 10 strips for the above criteria.

4. Freezing Requirement

The chilled commodity must be processed, packaged, packed and placed in a freezer within 7 calendar days after the date of harvest. All cooked product must be frozen in a manner to bring the internal temperature of the product at the center of the package to 10°F, or below within 24 hours from the time the individually frozen strips are packaged. Specific guidelines on freezing and holding temperature requirements are outlined in [QAD 613: Frozen Product Examination](#).

C. Finished Product Checks

1. Metal Detection

All finished product must be examined by a metal detection device. Procedures and sensitivity levels are outlined in [QAD 609: Metal Detection](#). Results (*Satisfactory “S” or Unsatisfactory “U”*) must be recorded on the LP-232L2 reverse side.

2. Net Weight

Online sampling procedures found in [QAD 611: Net Weight Examination](#) can be used to ensure each finished shipping container weighs at least 30 pounds. Each delivery unit must consist of 1300 shipping containers weighing 30 pounds each with a total net weight of 39,000 pounds. Six 5-pound or three 10-pound bags will be packed in each shipping container in accordance with the FPPS.



3. Packaging and Packing/Tamper Evident

To meet the requirements of the FPPS, the packaging and packing material must be “tamper-evident.” Tamper-evident is defined as packaging or packing materials with one or more indicators or barriers to entry, which, if breached or missing, can reasonably be expected to provide visible evidence that tampering has occurred. Examples include damage to the box from tape being removed, or a hole in the plastic bag from it being torn or cut open, that would be obvious to a person inspecting the product. Determination of whether the material meets these requirements may be made by the supervisor. At time of shipment, each lot will undergo an examination for packaging and packing defects per [QAD 617: Packaging and Packing](#).

At time of shipment, observe the condition of the strips in 18 bags of fished product (one bag per case) selected from the sample cases. Strips must not stick together in hardened clumps or lumps that do not readily separate. If four or more of the samples examined at time of shipment contain the above-described condition, the delivery unit will be rejected. Record results of the condition examination on the LP-211. Product rejected for clumping is not eligible for reworking. Product that easily separates with manipulation is not considered clumping.

4. Labeling

Contractors have the option to use commercial or USDA labeling. Labeling must meet all requirements in Section 700 of the FPPS. Child Nutrition (CN) labeling information or a Product Formulation Statement demonstrating product contribution to the National School Lunch Program meal pattern requirements is required. Each shipping container must be identified with a USDA Contract Compliance stamp with the applicable certificate number or production date. An AMS grader or other authorized personnel under the supervision of the AMS grader must stamp one end of each shipping container at the origin facility. If there is inadequate space available on either end of the shipping container, the stamp may be applied to a side of the container. As an alternative to stamping, the contractor may preprint the stamp on the shipping container or label. Prior approval by the Poultry National Office is required before using this alternative method.

The sodium content of the cooked commodity should be no more than 250 mg per 100 gram basis as evidenced by nutritional labeling.

D. Certification and Delivery

1. Temperature Requirement

At time of shipment, product must be 2°F or below. In lieu of drilling into the product, it is acceptable to sandwich the temperature probe between two unopened bags of product until the temperature stabilizes. Product with internal temperatures exceeding 2°F and up to 5°F will be tentatively rejected. Tentatively rejected product may be returned to the freezer and re-offered for shipment one time only. Product exceeding 5°F, or product that was tentatively rejected and exceeds 2°F when reoffered, must



be rejected. Sampling levels will be according to the processors current freezing history. As an option to checking product at time of shipment, and upon review and approval by the supervisor, plants may use the alternate verification procedures as described in [QAD 613: Frozen Product Examination](#).

2. Certification

Any product not meeting the outlined criteria, or any other specified requirement must be retained. An LP-210P: *USDA Poultry Products Grading Certificate* must accompany each shipment. The Purchase Order number, Sales Order number, Sales Order Item number, and Seal number must be stated. See attached certificate example.

3. Contractor Checkloading

Contractors have the option to utilize Contractor Checkloading as described in Section R of [QAD 620: General Donated Commodity Instructions](#).

Exhibit:

Exhibit 1 - LP-210P Chicken Strips Certificate Example

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

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