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# Terminal Market Inspection Training Manual

November 2020

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## INTRODUCTION

This manual is designed to provide guidance to Specialty Crops Inspection Division and Federal-State personnel of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in terminal market inspection training of Agricultural Commodity Graders and Federal-State market licensees. If needed, contact your immediate supervisor for any situation not addressed in this manual.

Compliance with the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) guidelines does not excuse failure to comply with the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act or any other applicable Federal or State laws or regulations. SCI Division of the Specialty Crops Programs (SC), AMS is responsible for grading/inspecting, audits and standardization programs of fresh and/or processed fruits and vegetables and related products. The legal authority for grading, auditing and standardization activities are the Agricultural Marketing Acts of 1936 and 1946, as amended.

## GUIDE FOR ELECTRONIC USAGE

The AIM system of instructional manuals is available electronically in Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format (PDF) at the following intranet address:

<https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/ams/AMS-SCI/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

When accessed electronically, AIM materials have hyperlinks and hypertext (visible as underlined [blue text](#)) available to the PDF user. Clicking on a hyperlink takes the reader to a web site with information relating to the subject. Hypertext links the reader to a different page within the current manual, or a different manual, with information relating to the subject. For example, the hypertext in the Table of Contents allows a reader to go directly to the section of interest in the manual by clicking on the section title.

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## PURPOSE

Within this document Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Division Agricultural Commodity Graders (ACGs) and Federal-State Cooperative Market (Fed-State) Inspectors will be collectively known as “ACGs” unless otherwise designated.

This policy is intended for fulltime/non-seasonal SCI ACGs providing TMI services and fulltime/non-seasonal Fed-State ACGs seeking restricted or unrestricted market licensee status. For terminal market training policy regarding non-fulltime/seasonal ACGs contact SCI National Program Mission Support or a Federal-State Federal Program Manager.

The Market Inspector Training (MIT) Program being developed for 2021 will provide developing ACGs fundamental and comprehensive technical and professional skills training to ensure mission critical performance. Within the MIT critical areas of terminal market inspection are divided in four courses of progressive development. The first course, Fundamentals of Market Inspection (FoMI), is being made available as a standalone course to be used in conjunction with the already established On-the-Job Training Timetable for New Terminal Market Inspection Agricultural Commodity Graders. Until such time the MIT becomes operational this course and Timetable will be utilized to complete training for TMI ACGs. The Timetable is listed within this document for reference.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Student**

The student is the focal point of all training and must make every effort to become qualified to perform in their duties. The success of student training greatly depends on the relationship between the supervisor and student. Student responsibilities include:

- Actively participate in all scopes of the training.
- Comprehend the applicable task requirements.
- Obtain and maintain knowledge and appropriate skill level within all training courses.
- Budget duty time to complete assigned tasks within established time limits.
- Request assistance from the supervisor when having difficulty with any part of training.

### **Qualified Training Provider**

While the supervisor is responsible for ensuring the student is fully trained in the performance of their assigned duties, they may utilize qualified training providers to instruct and provide on-the-job training, review documentation and provide instructional feedback on student performance

Qualified Training Providers include:

- GS-9 or Unrestricted Terminal Market ACG
- Training Officer
- SCI Training Branch Training Specialist
- Inspector-in-Charge
- Federal Program Manager

Providers are qualified that are fully trained in all aspects of terminal market inspection and maintain a fully successfully performance rating. While these qualified training providers assist

in training, ultimately the supervisor will determine the student's competency and ability in performing duties. Qualified Training Providers responsibilities include:

- Advise and assist supervisor in executing their training responsibilities.
- Conduct training as assigned by supervisor in support of FoMI course requirements.
- Review student training documentation and provide instructional feedback on student performance.
- Brief supervisors on the status of each student and provide training updates and recommend training improvements.
- Assist supervisor in coordination and documentation of correction actions.
- Identify training resources in support of training activities.

### **Supervisor**

Supervisors have the single greatest impact on mission accomplishment. They must share their experiences and expertise to meet mission requirements and provide a quality training environment to qualified training providers and the student.

While the supervisor is responsible for ensuring the student is fully trained in the performance of their assigned duties, they may utilize qualified training providers to provide on-the-job training, review documentation and provide instructional feedback on student performance. While these qualified training providers assist in training, ultimately the supervisor will determine the student's competency and ability in performing duties. Supervisor responsibilities include:

- Evaluate training results and documentation to ensure student is fully prepared for their mission responsibilities.
- Ensure student performance deficiencies are addressed via effective corrective actions.
- Ensure student training duties do not detract from primary duties.
- Ensure training is planned and scheduled accordingly to meet office needs.
- Ensure qualified training providers are aware of the training requirements in support of the overall mission.
- Budget and allocate resources to support training requirements, including training time and training providers.
- For probationary students, ensure Division required evaluations include a review of previously certified tasks to ensure the student met duty position requirements.

### **TRAINING DOCUMENTATION**

Keeping documented records of the training provided, including critical milestone dates, is essential in maintaining the integrity of the training program. All documentation pertaining to an ACG's terminal market inspection training may be kept electronically (i.e. Blackboard, computer server shared files, supervisor's hard drive, etc.) or hard copy (i.e. written exams and exercises). All records will include the name of the ACG, and where applicable; dates, market office, scope and supervisor signature. Training documentation will fall under the general records retention policy and will be transferred accordingly during ACG duty location transfers.

### **SC-340 TMI Probationary Evaluation Form**

The [SC-340 TMI Probationary Evaluation Form](#) is to be used to document the performance of probationary SCI ACGs performing Terminal Market Inspections (TMI). SC-340 is not required for ACGs who are not in probationary status or for Fed-State ACGs. The Probationary Evaluation form needs to be completed until the ACG completes their first-year probation period.

The evaluation needs to be completed bi-weekly, starting on first day on duty until ACG is cleared to inspect one commodity without direct supervision and has no unacceptable or deficient elements noted. Begin to incorporate performance into the schedule as outlined in the [Supervisory Reviews of Agricultural Commodity Graders](#) policy and reduce SC-340 completion to once per month for duration of probationary period. If at any time during the once per month period the ACG's performance becomes unacceptable or deficient, the frequency would revert to bi-weekly for duration of probationary period.

The SC-340 TMI Probationary Evaluation Form is available on the AMS Forms Catalog at the following intranet link: <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/ams/AMSFormsCatalog/SC-340.pdf>

### **On-the-Job (OJT) Checklist**

ACG training progress will be tracked via the [OJT Checklist \(Appendix D\)](#). It is intended to record the progress of fundamental training, commodity training and other inspection related tasks. Once the training for that task or commodity is satisfactorily completed the supervisor will confirm that the employee is qualified to perform that task or inspect that commodity without direct supervision.

The OJT Checklist can also be referenced by a dispatcher to quickly identify the ACGs abilities when assigning terminal market inspection requests. The OJT Checklist will be maintained until the completion of the On-the-Job Training Timetable for New Terminal Market Inspection Agricultural Commodity Graders.

### **FUNDAMENTALS OF MARKET INSPECTION (FOMI) COURSE**

The FoMI course is required for all ACGs hired since June 1, 2020 that perform terminal market inspections. ACGs hired after the effective date of this policy will be required to successfully complete the FoMI course prior to continuation of the established On-the-Job Training Timetable for New Terminal Market Inspection Agricultural Commodity Graders.

The FoMI course is a balanced delivery approach utilizing the Blackboard online learning system for remote virtual learning and on-the-job training activities, within an actual terminal market environment, to reinforce critical TMI procedures. A Certificate of Completion is issued with the successful completion of all FoMI requirements. Once the FoMI is successfully completed, commodity training according to the Timetable can commence.

## Pre-enrollment

Prior to enrollment the student will be assigned inspection equipment as outlined in the General Market Manual and Inspector Grading Equipment Inventory Sheet.

The supervisor will provide a hard copy of the current General Market Manual and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Certificate (FV-300) Manual and provide sufficient time for the student to read the sections as indicated below:

- A. General Market Manual:
  - Authority
  - Relationship with Industry
  - Prohibited Activities
  - Requesting Inspections
  - Inspection Equipment
  - Carrier, Load, Lot
  - Determining Type of Inspection
  - Performing the Inspection
  - Federal Marketing Orders and Section 8e Requirements
  - Certificate
  - Fees
  - Reinspections and Appeals
  - PACA
  
- B. Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Certificate (FV-300) Manual:
  - General Instructions
  - Identifying the Inspection
  - Describing the Product

## Enrollment

The FoMI course is required for all ACGs hired since June 1, 2020 that perform terminal market inspections. ACGs hired after the effective date of this policy will be required to successfully complete the FoMI course prior to continuation of the established On-the-Job Training Timetable for New Terminal Market Inspection Agricultural Commodity Graders.

- A. SCI

The front-line supervisor will submit an enrollment request email to their respective Regional Branch Chief (RBC) or Assistant Regional Branch Chief (ARBC) that provides:

- Student name and USDA email address
- Front-line supervisor name and USDA email address
- Officer-in-Charge and Assistant Officer-in-Charge name and USDA email address

- Market office or inspection point name
- Name of course to be enrolled in
- Acknowledgment that all pre-enrollment requirements have been met.

The RBC or ARBC will review the request and if approved forward the email to the SCI Training Branch via [SCITrainingBranch@usda.gov](mailto:SCITrainingBranch@usda.gov) stating that the request to enroll is approved. RBC or ARBC will contact the SCI Associate Director of Inspection Operations for additional guidance if approval is denied.

The Training Branch will respond with further enrollment information and instructions.

#### B. Fed-State

The Fed-State front-line supervisor will submit an enrollment request email to their respective Federal Program Manager (FPM) that provides:

- Student name and State government email address
- Fed-State front-line supervisor name and State government email address
- Market office or inspection point name
- Name of course to be enrolled in
- Acknowledgment that all pre-enrollment requirements have been met.

The FPM will review the request and if approved forward the email to the SCI Training Branch via [SCITrainingBranch@usda.gov](mailto:SCITrainingBranch@usda.gov) stating that the request to enroll is approved. FPM will contact the Federal State Inspection Management (FSIM) Branch Chief for additional guidance if approval is denied.

The Training Branch will respond with further enrollment information and instructions.

### **Goal**

Knowledge and comprehension of General Market Manual (GMM) concepts covering basic inspection procedures, U.S. Grade Standards and the SC-300 market certificate.

### **Method**

Combination of Blackboard modules, exams, desktop and live inspection activities completed within the local office or at another market location if sufficient live inspection availability is not feasible.

### **Structure**

Course consists of 21 Blackboard modules, 21 knowledge check exams, and eight on-the-job activities. Modules and activities do not need to be taken all at one sitting and it is encouraged that the supervisor has the student accompany qualified training providers during live inspections to break up sittings and provide exposure relevant to learning topics whenever practical.

### **Approximate Course Length**

Average expected time to complete all requirements of the course is 32 hours (12 hours of Blackboard virtual training and testing, 20 hours of activities). As many activities require the student to accompany a live inspection, local workload and staffing may impact the time it takes to complete live on-site activities.

FoMI must be successfully completed within six (6) weeks of beginning the course.

### **Required Office Resources**

- Hard copy of the current General Market Manual and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Certificate (FV-300) Manual.
- Access to a computer with internet availability.
- Computer access to a printer within the local office.
- FV-300N notesheets
- Pen
- Notepad
- Calculator

### **Testing**

Each module has a knowledge check exam requiring a minimum score of 70% to advance to the next module. Mandatory activities require supervisor acknowledgement of successful completion.

#### Knowledge Check Exam

If an exam score is less than 70% on the first attempt the student will have an additional attempt to successfully pass the exam. If, after two attempts, the student has not successfully passed the exam:

Student will:

- Notify their supervisor that they have exceeded their allowable attempts.

Supervisor will:

- Request a copy of the student's incorrect exam questions and answers from the Training and Development Branch via email at [SCITrainingBranch@usda.gov](mailto:SCITrainingBranch@usda.gov).
- Review or assign review to a qualified training provider, the incorrect questions and answers with the student for understanding of the nature and subject matter of the question.
- Forward a request for a third attempt to the Training and Development Branch via email at [SCITrainingBranch@usda.gov](mailto:SCITrainingBranch@usda.gov) detailing that the review is complete, and that the student is prepared for the third attempt to successfully complete the exam.

Exam will be rereleased to the student to complete the third attempt. If the student does not successfully complete the exam on the third attempt:

Supervisor will:

- Act via additional localized mitigation training and subject matter review to ensure the student has retained the appropriate knowledge and demonstrates the relative ability. Qualified training providers may be utilized to provide mitigation training.
- Ensure all mitigation training provided is documented via the student's local training record.
- Contact the Chief of the Training and Development Branch for further instruction when mitigation training is completed.

### Activities

Activities are taken once the module is successfully completed. Many activities require the student to accompany a qualified training provider for on-the-job exposure to live inspections. While more than one activity may be completed during a single live inspection, it is recommended that supervisors provide as much exposure to the live TMI environment as possible by utilizing multiple live inspections in completion of activities. Further guidance per activity is listed within each activity worksheet in Blackboard.

Activity worksheets require qualified training provider or supervisor review for accurate student responses. Answer keys will be provided for efficient and uniform reviews. Activity worksheets must be complete, accurate, legible and be in accordance with established Division policy and instructions. Errors must be addressed, and effective corrective actions noted.

Once an activity worksheet is reviewed and necessary corrective actions are complete, the supervisor will:

- Sign the activity worksheet acknowledging that student responses are successfully completed and are in accordance with established Division policy and instructions.
- Complete the FoMI activity attestation record in Blackboard once all FoMI activities are successfully completed.
- Keep completed activity worksheets in the student's local training file.

### **Training Progress**

Student training progress can be accessed in Blackboard by the designated supervisor, Officer-in-Charge/Assistant Officer-in-Charge, Federal Program Manager, Regional Branch Chief or Assistant Regional Branch Chief as indicated on the FoMI enrollment email.

### **Successful Completion of Course**

When all modules have been viewed, all knowledge check exams passed, and activity completion is attested to by the supervisor in Blackboard, the course is successfully completed and a certificate of completion will be issued to the student.

## CONTINUATION OF TMI TRAINING

Until such time the MIT Program is established, and commodity specific courses developed, students will continue to follow SCI guidance and timetables for TMI commodity training as indicated in the On-the-Job Training Timetable for New Terminal Market Inspection Agricultural Commodity Graders. Commodity specific training is not authorized without successfully completing the Fundamentals of Market Inspection (FoMI) course.

## ON-THE-JOB (OJT) TRAINING TIMETABLE FOR NEW TERMINAL MARKET INSPECTION (TMI) AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY GRADERS (ACGS)

This Timetable is intended for supervisors who require ACGs to perform terminal market inspections. Commodity specific training is not authorized without successfully completing the Fundamentals of Market Inspection (FoMI) course.

The Timetable is structured for ACGs with no previous inspection experience. Completion of all time periods is approximately six months. The actual time needed will vary from one ACG to another, depending on previous experience, background and abilities. Qualified training providers and supervisors will work together to ensure that the student is properly trained at an appropriate pace, in accordance with field office needs.

The process requires close communication and coordination between the qualified training provider and supervisor. Where the local market is not an active market daily, it may be financially advisable to have the student go to an active market, especially for Fed-State students from Shipping Point areas.

### Period I

- A. Approximate length is two months
- B. Local Inspection Office Procedures and Equipment:
  - Review local office procedures including answering phone calls and filing of inspection related paperwork.
  - Assign full complement of inspection equipment and explain intended use.
  - Provide a hard copy of the General Market Manual (GMM) and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Certificate (FV-300) Manual and provide sufficient time for the student to read the sections as indicated above under FoMI Pre-Enrollment.
  - Enroll the student in the FoMI course.
  - Student successfully completes the FoMI course.
  - Record the date the FoMI certificate was issued on the student's OJT Checklist.
- C. Beginning of Commodity Specific Training:
  - Once the student has successfully completed the FoMI course, provide hard copies and instructions on where to find electronic versions of standards and handbooks of the **four commodities** to be inspected at the locally assigned market.

- For students with no previous experience begin with less complicated commodities such as peppers, berries, squash or cucumbers. Provide sufficient time for the student to read the entire handbook of each commodity prior to being taught.
  - Administer corresponding Commodity Questionnaires, grade and review with student.
  - Utilize live or mock inspections as needed to demonstrate, review and knowledge check all commodity related scopes and procedures.
  - Increase student's level of independent grading as knowledge and skills develop.
- D. Efficiency and Customer Service:
- Reinforce importance of dedicated and timely delivery of services.
  - During live inspections demonstrate best practices in providing expedient and attentive service to all customers.
  - Where possible introduce student to applicant points of contact.
- E. Documentation:
- Throughout this period a training log will be maintained for each student recording scopes and dates of training provided.
  - For SCI ACGs the TMI ACG Probationary Evaluation form (SC-340) must be completed every two weeks until the student is cleared to inspect their first commodity without direct supervision. At that point the frequency may be decreased to once per month as the student will follow the normal schedule for Supervisory Reviews of Agricultural Commodity Graders.
  - At any time during the once per month timing if the student's performance shows more than one Unacceptable or Deficient element, the frequency would revert back to bi-weekly and seek guidance from the Regional Inspection Operations Branch office or Federal Program Manager regarding how long the bi-weekly timing will continue.
  - Review and critique all independently graded inspection notesheets and certificates. Complete a [SCI Records Review form \(SC-383\)](#) documenting the reviews.
  - Record FoMI training completion date and commodity status on the student's On the Job (OJT) Checklist.

## Period II

- A. Approximate length is two months
- B. Continuation of Commodity Specific Training:
- Increase frequency and level of independent grading on commodities taught in first eight weeks.
  - Provide hard copies or electronic versions of standards and handbooks for **four additional commodities** inspected at the locally assigned market.
  - Gradually increase the complexity of commodities covered.

- Provide sufficient time for the student to read the entire handbook of each additional commodity prior to being taught.
  - Administer corresponding Commodity Questionnaires, grade and review with student.
  - Utilize live or mock inspections as needed to demonstrate, review and knowledge check all commodity related scopes and procedures.
  - Increase student's level of independent grading as knowledge and skills continue to develop.
- C. Efficiency and Customer Service:
- Ensure that dedicated independent grading and timely delivery of services is occurring.
  - Ensure that best practices are being followed in providing expedient and attentive service to all customers.
- D. Documentation:
- Throughout this period maintain and update training log.
  - For SCI ACGs the TMI ACG Probationary Evaluation form (SC-340) must be completed once per month as the student follows the normal schedule for Supervisory Reviews of Agricultural Commodity Graders.
  - Attach copies of the student's Supervisory Reviews along with the TMI ACG Probationary Evaluation form.
  - At any time during the once per month timing if the student's performance shows more than one Unacceptable or Deficient element, the frequency would revert back to bi-weekly and seek guidance from the Regional Inspection Operations Branch office or Federal Program Manager regarding how long the bi-weekly timing will continue.
  - Review and critique all independently graded inspection notesheets and certificates. Complete a [SCI Records Review form \(SC-383\)](#) documenting reviews.
  - Continue to update student's OJT Checklist with each completed and evaluated task or commodity.

### Period III

- A. Approximate length is one month
- B. Continuation of Commodity Specific Training:
- Monitor independent grading on commodities taught in first four months, take corrective actions as needed.
  - Continue to increase the complexity and number of commodities covered.
  - Rotate student into more complex assignments.
  - Administer corresponding Commodity Questionnaires on new commodities as needed.

- Based on abilities and individual development **steadily increase the complexity of commodities taught**, building toward the most complex Standards such as potatoes, tomatoes and table grapes.  
Utilize live or mock inspections as needed to demonstrate, review and knowledge check all commodity related scopes and procedures.
  - Independent grading should be occurring regularly on all commodities previously covered.
- C. Efficiency and Customer Service:
- Ensure that timely, expedient and attentive delivery of services is occurring to all customers.
- D. Documentation:
- Throughout this period maintain and update training log.
  - Throughout this period the TMI ACG Probationary Evaluation form (SC-340) must be completed as outlined in Period I.
  - Review and critique all independently graded inspection notesheets and certificates. Complete a SCI Records Review form (SC-383) documenting reviews.
  - Continue to update student's OJT Checklist with each completed and evaluated commodity.

#### Period IV

- A. Approximate length is one month
- B. Continuation of Commodity Specific Training:
- Monitor independent grading on commodities taught in first six months, take corrective actions as needed.
  - Continue to increase the complexity and number of commodities covered.
  - Continue to rotate student into more complex assignments as warranted.
  - Independent grading should be occurring regularly on all commodities previously covered.
- C. FEIRS (where applicable):
- Once the minimum ACG performance, experience, and activity requirements within the [Requesting Deployment of the Fresh Electronic Inspection Reporting/Resource System \(FEIRS\) Program and Related Equipment](#) policy are reached, a request for FEIRS deployment can be made.
  - Once FEIRS basic training is complete, all inspections are to be completed via FEIRS.
  - Monitor issued FEIRS certificates for accuracy.
- D. Digital Imaging:
- Provide guidance on camera operation and General Market Manual guidance for taking and processing of digital images.

- E. Efficiency and Customer Service:
- Ensure that timely, expedient and attentive delivery of services is occurring to all customers.
- F. Documentation:
- Throughout this period maintain and update training log.
  - Throughout this period the TMI ACG Probationary Evaluation form (SC-340) must be completed as outlined in Period I.
  - Review and critique 25 independently graded inspection FEIRS certificates per month. Complete a [SCI Records Review form \(SC-383\)](#) documenting reviews.
  - Continue to update student's OJT Checklist with each completed and evaluated commodity and with completed FEIRS basic training.

### **TMI TRAINING COMPLETION**

Once the student has completed the requirements of Periods I through IV, has demonstrated sufficient knowledge, skill and ability toward inspection of commodities not covered and without direct supervision, this training is considered complete and the final entry made in the student's OJT Checklist.

**REFERENCE LINKS****Version Date  
(Printed for distribution)**

- SC-340 TMI Probationary Evaluation Form:** \_\_\_\_\_  
<https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/ams/AMSFormsCatalog/SC-340.pdf>
- Supervisory Reviews of Agricultural Commodity Graders:** \_\_\_\_\_  
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/Supervisory%20Reviews%20of%20ACGs%20-%20May%202016.pdf>
- Requesting Deployment of the Fresh Electronic Inspection Reporting/Resource System (FEIRS) Program and Related Equipment:** \_\_\_\_\_  
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/FEIRSDeploymentProcedures.pdf>
- SCI Records Review form (SC-383):** \_\_\_\_\_  
<https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/:b:r/sites/ams/AMSFormsCatalog/SC-383.pdf?csf=1&web=1>

**Checked Materials have been printed from the links in this manual and included for reference.**

