



Agricultural Marketing Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



# AMS

Creating Opportunities for  
American Farms & Businesses



# Specialty Crops Inspection Division

Modernizing Specialty Crops Inspection Services



# Specialty Crops Inspection Division

- Part of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Specialty Crops Program (SCP), which helps provide for the competitive, efficient, and transparent marketing of all specialty crops.
- SCI's mission is to support the global specialty crops market by collaborating with the agricultural community to provide trusted, impartial, prompt, and accurate quality assurance and food safety verification services.
- For more than 100 years, SCI and its predecessor organizations have provided services that help the specialty crops farming and distribution sectors effectively market products.



# What We Do

- **We facilitate the efficient, fair marketing of America's fresh, frozen, and processed fruits, vegetables, and other specialty crops by providing:**
  - **Grading, inspection, and certification services**
  - **Voluntary, audit-based services to verify good agricultural and manufacturing practices, HACCP, traceability, food defense, and export certification**
  - **300+ U.S. grade standards and related guidance, and 180+ Commercial Item Descriptions for all commodities**



# What We Do

- Services are voluntary *except* when mandated by Federal marketing orders, or school lunch and other feeding programs
- Services provided on a user-fee basis to anyone with a financial interest in product load



# Delivering Service

- **600 Federal employees**
  - **14 Area Offices**
    - Los Angeles, Fresno, Stockton, Yakima, San Antonio, Oshkosh, South Bend, Winter Haven, College Park, Hunt Valley, Philadelphia, New Jersey, Bronx, Boston
  - **6 Sub-Offices**
    - Houston, Ft. Worth, Chicago, Puerto Rico, Miami, Richmond
  - **17 Inspection Points**
    - Rochester, Jessup, Wilkes-Barre, San Juan, Hartford, Ellsworth, Mankato, Kansas City, Houston, Allen Park, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Prunedale, Indio, Portland, Denver, Burley
- **3,400 Federal-State Cooperators in 36 States**



# Current Inspection Services

- **Inspect fresh and processed fruits, vegetables, nuts, and specialty crops products**
- **Certify class, quality, quantity, and condition of product upon shipping or receipt in interstate commerce**
- **Customers choose inspection type:**

U.S. grade standards or contract terms	Full inspection (quality and condition)
Condition only	Weight or count only
Temperature only	Custom certifications



# Challenges

- **Keep pace with continuously and rapidly evolving marketing needs to ensure voluntary USDA quality inspection services for specialty crops remain relevant and of value to the industry**
  - **Meet nationwide inspection needs even as we close small offices across the country because they cannot generate sufficient revenue to cover their own costs.**
  - **Ensure we meet our regulatory mandate to achieve cost recovery through user fees, which account for 96% of SCI's budget.**
- **To meet both needs, we are exploring new ways to provide inspections.**





# For Your Consideration

**How can SCI use technology to provide faster, more-cost effective inspection services that meet both your needs and our fiduciary responsibilities?**

# The Charge

1. What technologies could we use to optimize inspection and grading services?
2. Would a “virtual inspection service” that leverages modern technology to provide unofficial inspection results using a virtual sampling and inspection protocol...
  - a. Meet your inspection needs?
  - b. Help provide cost-effective, timely service in remote areas?
3. What concerns would industry have with using a virtual inspection protocol?





# Contact Info

Ryan Wilson

Director

Specialty Crops Inspection Division

AMS Specialty Crops Program

202-720-0298

[Ryan.Wilson@usda.gov](mailto:Ryan.Wilson@usda.gov)