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§ 1.11 Handling information from a private business.

(a) The USDA is responsible for making the final determination with regard to the disclosure or nondisclosure of information submitted by a business. When, in the course of responding to an FOIA request, an agency cannot readily determine whether the information obtained from a person is privileged or confidential business information, the policy of USDA is to obtain and consider the views of the submitter of the information and to provide the submitter an opportunity to object to any decision to disclose the information. If a request (including a subpoena duces tecum as described in §1.215) is received in USDA for information which has been submitted by a business, all agencies of the Department shall:

(1) Provide the business information submitter with prompt notification of a request for that information (unless it is readily determined by the agency that the information requested should not be disclosed or, on the other hand, that the information is not exempt by law from disclosure);

(2) Notify the requester of the need to inform the submitter of a request for submitted business information;

(3) Afford business information submitters time in which to object to the disclosure of any specified portion of the information. The submitter must explain fully all grounds upon which disclosure is opposed. For example, if the submitter maintains that disclosure is likely to cause substantial harm to its competitive position, the submitter must explain item-by-item why disclosure would cause such harm. Information provided by a business submitter pursuant to this paragraph may itself be subject to disclosure under FOIA;

(4) Provide business information submitters with notice of any determination to disclose such records prior to the disclosure date, in order that the matter may be considered for possible judicial intervention; and

(5) Notify business information submitters promptly of all instances in which FOIA requesters bring suit seeking to compel disclosure of submitted information.

7 CFR Subtitle A (1-1-00 Edition)

(b) [Reserved]

[52 FR 49386, Dec. 31, 1987, as amended at 62 FR 33979, June 24, 1997]

§ 1.12 Date of receipt of requests or appeals.

(a) The date of receipt of a request or appeal, which contains the phrase "FOIA REQUEST" or "FOIA APPEAL" and is addressed in accordance with applicable agency regulations, shall be the date it is received in the office responsible for the administrative processing of FOIA requests or appeals.

(b) The date of receipt of a request or appeal which is hand-delivered to the address specified in agency regulations shall be the date of such hand-delivery.

(c) The date of receipt of a request or appeal which does not comply with paragraphs (a) or (b) of this section shall be the date it is received by the official designated in agency regulations to make the applicable determination.

§ 1.13 Appeals.

(a) Each agency shall provide for review of appeals by an official different from the official or officials designated to make initial denials.

(b) Each agency, upon a determination that it wishes to deny an appeal, shall send a copy of the records requested and of all correspondence relating to the request to the Assistant General Counsel, Research and Operations Division, Office of the General Counsel. When the volume of records is so large as to make sending a copy impracticable, the agency shall enclose an informative summary of those records. The agency shall not deny an appeal until it receives concurrence from the Assistant General Counsel, General Law Division, Office of the General Counsel.

(c) The Assistant General Counsel, General Law Division, Office of the General Counsel, shall promptly review the matter (including necessary consultation with the Department of Justice and coordination with the Office of Communications) and render all necessary assistance to enable the agency

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to respond to the appeal within the administrative deadline or any extension of the administrative deadline.

[52 FR 49386, Dec. 31, 1987, as amended at 62 FR 33979, June 24, 1997]

§ 1.14 Extension of administrative deadlines.

(a) In unusual circumstances as specified in this section, either of the administrative deadlines prescribed in § 1.8 may be extended by an authorized agency official. Written notice of the extension shall be sent to the requester within the applicable deadline, setting forth the reasons for such extension and the date a determination is expected to be sent to the requester. In no event shall the extension exceed a total of 10 working days.

(b) As used in this section, "unusual circumstances" shall be limited to the following:

(1) The need to search for and collect the requested records from field facilities or other establishments that are separate from the office processing the request;

(2) The need to search for, collect, and appropriately examine a voluminous amount of separate and distinct records which are demanded in a single request; and

(3) The need for consultation, which shall be conducted with all practicable speed, with another Department or agency having a substantial interest in the determination of the request or among two or more components of the agency having substantial subject-matter interest in the request. (Note: consultation regarding policy or legal issues between an agency and the Office of the General Counsel, Office of Communications, or the Department of Justice is not a basis for extension under this section.)

(c) The 10-day extension authorized by this section may be divided between the initial and appellate reviews, but in no event shall the total extension exceed 10 working days.

(d) Nothing in this section shall preclude the agency and the requester from agreeing to an extension of time. Any such agreement should be con-

firmed in writing and should specify clearly the total time agreed upon.

[52 FR 49386, Dec. 31, 1987, as amended at 62 FR 33979, June 24, 1997]

§ 1.15 Failure to meet administrative deadlines.

In the event an agency fails to meet either of the administrative deadlines set forth in § 1.8, plus any extension authorized by § 1.14, it shall notify the requester, state the reasons for the delay, and the date by which it expects to dispatch a determination. Although the requester may be deemed to have exhausted his or her administrative remedies under 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(6)(C), the agency shall continue processing the request as expeditiously as possible and dispatch the determination when it is reached in the same manner and form as if it had been reached within the applicable deadline.

§ 1.16 Fee schedule.

Pursuant to § 2.28 of this title, the Chief Financial Officer is delegated authority to promulgate regulations providing for a uniform fee schedule applicable to all agencies of the Department regarding requests for records under this subpart. The regulations providing for a uniform fee schedule are found in appendix A of this subpart.

[62 FR 33979, June 24, 1997]

§ 1.17 Exemptions and discretionary release.

(a) All agency records, except those specifically exempted from mandatory disclosure by one or more provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552(b), shall be made promptly available to any person submitting a request under this subpart.

(b) Except where disclosure is specifically prohibited by Executive Order, statute, or applicable regulations, an agency may release records exempt from mandatory disclosure under 5 U.S.C. 552(b) whenever it determines that such disclosure would be in the public interest. Such a record is considered to be in the public interest if the benefit to the public in releasing the document outweighs any harm likely to result from disclosure.