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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of the Secretary

National Food and Agriculture Council (Service Center Initiative); Notice of Request for Approval of Information Collection

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Service Center Initiative's (SCI) intention to request approval for information collection. This information collection consists of a limited customer survey in support of project pilot development prior to national deployment. This support is part of the Service Center reorganization authorized by the Federal Crop Insurance Reform and Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (Pub. L. 103-354)—the 1994 Act.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received on or before February 28, 2000 to be assured consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS: Contact Dave McSween, Senior Financial Analyst, Business Case Team, Service Center Initiative, USDA, 5602 Sunnyside Avenue; Beltsville, MD 20505-5000; telephone (301) 504-7554; e-mail: dave_mcsween@soza.com; or facsimile (301) 504-4103.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Customer Feedback from USDA Service Center Initiative Pilot Sites.

OMB Control Number: Not assigned—this is a new request.

Expiration Date of Approval: Not assigned—this is a new request.

Abstract: This request is to conduct customer interviews as to the quality, effectiveness, and utility of piloted projects. The 1994 Act authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to reorganize the Department. Within the goals and priorities of the National Partnership for

Reinventing Government, a business process reengineering initiative was begun. USDA Service Centers nationwide are the backbone for providing USDA programs to rural America. The Service Center agencies are: Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Rural Development. Internal Department studies identified business processes and information technology at the Service Centers as having major deficiencies that impeded customer service. This Service Center Initiative (SCI) was formed to spearhead changes in service delivery.

Nine national pilot sites were selected to be the test sites for new processes. Criteria for selection of the pilot sites included diversity of geographic, production, program and customer factors to ensure the full range of USDA's customers, partners and programs were represented. The nine pilot sites are: Snow Hill, MD; Okeechobee, FL; Scottsburg, IN; Paola, KS; Abilene, TX; Sacramento, CA; The Dalles, OR; Rolla, ND and Los Lunas, NM. As a result of business area analysis, specific projects were chartered to test new ideas at the pilot sites prior to nationwide deployment. The evaluation of the projects is scheduled to include internal USDA process savings and customer benefits. The Service Centers exist to provide customer service. There is no substitute for the opportunity to speak with customers and receive their candid thoughts on how well a specific project did or did not meet their needs. Without this information, projects may be deployed to 2500 Service Centers nationwide that do not meet basic customer requirements.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 2 hours per response.

Respondents: Service Center customers and partners.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 200.

Estimated number of responses per respondent: 1.0.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 400 hours.

Proposed topics for comment include: (a) whether the information to be collected is necessary for the proper performance of the agency's functions, including whether the information will

have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the clarity, quality, and usefulness of the information to be collected; or (d) ways to minimize further the burden of information collection for those who respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments must be sent to the Desk Officer for Agriculture, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, DC and to Dave McSween, Senior Financial Analyst, Business Case Team, Service Center Initiative, USDA, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue; Beltsville, MD 20705-5000; telephone (301) 504-7445; e-mail: dave_mcsween@soza.com; or facsimile (301) 504-4103.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Signed at Washington, DC on December 16, 1999.

Greg Carnill,

Executive Officer, National Food and Agriculture Council.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

[Docket No. FV00-901-1NC]

Notice of Request for Extension and Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35), this notice announces the Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) intention to request an extension for and revision to a currently approved generic information collection for vegetables and specialty crops.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by February 28, 2000.