

Green Purchasing: Leading USDA Green Purchasing through BioPreferred

Increasing green purchasing to the maximum extent possible is integral to two of USDA's strategic goals to 1) enhance economic opportunities for agricultural producers and 2) to protect and enhance the nation's natural resource base and environment. Since the Federal Government largely purchases services rather than products, USDA led by example in 2007 by securing green services and products and by institutionalizing this process through rules, regulations, guidelines and outreach.

To coordinate these efforts, the Secretary of Agriculture named Assistant Secretary Boyd Rutherford as the senior official to implement Executive Order (E.O.) 13423. Assistant Secretary Rutherford subsequently established the USDA Sustainable Operations Council (SOC). This is a senior level USDA intra-agency council that has four working groups, one of which, the Green Purchasing Work Group, develops policy proposals and implementation strategies for increasing the Department's purchases of all green product categories. More information on this USDA SOC can be found at www.greening.usda.gov.

This narrative lists some of the policies and procedures now in place or under development for an effective green purchasing program and annual review and monitoring to measure effectiveness, briefly discusses internal and external outreach tools and other efforts to promote green purchasing, and cites a few examples of green purchases by USDA agencies. Although USDA has increased green purchasing across the board, many of USDA's green purchasing policies have been modeled by the BioPreferredSM program which USDA was specifically charged to lead under section 9002 of FSRIA (the 2002 Farm Bill)..

Green Purchasing Polices and Procedures - Acquisition Planning - Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 7.103 now requires agency planners to consider energy efficient products and services, products containing energy efficient standby power devices, products containing recovered materials, biobased products, and environmentally preferable products and services. USDA-developed language culminated in the Final Rule on the FAR published in November 7, 2007 entitled "Federal Procurement of Biobased Products."

USDA updated its Agricultural Acquisition Regulation (AGAR) Advisory No. 83, Acquisition Strategy Review and Approval Procedures on December 31, 2007, requiring USDA agencies to submit written documentation on all contracts over \$5 million to the Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO). Specifically, this review requires written justification that, if applicable, green products were included in the contract. For more information, visit: http://www.usda.gov/procurement/policy/advisories_x/agarad83.htm

USDA is updating its Green Purchasing Affirmative Procurement Program to cover all relevant green purchasing programs. This document applies to all USDA agencies, program offices, operations offices, sites, and applicable contractors and applies to USDA agency purchases, including those at or below the micro-purchase threshold. <http://www.usda.gov/energyandenvironment/greenpurchasing/index.html>

USDA is working towards establishing systems to Track and Report USDA green purchases. In FY 2007 USDA has inserted two biobased elements into its USDA Integrated Acquisition System (IAS) in order to better capture those contracts that contain biobased information. USDA created a baseline for the number of USDA contracts issued that contained designated and non-designated biobased products, and in FY 2008 - FY 2012, USDA will increase the number of contracts issued by USDA containing designated and non-designated biobased products will increase 10 percent over the previous year's accomplishments. USDA is working to expand these biobased elements to include all green purchasing programs.

Promotion, Outreach, and Training – USDA educates its own employees on biobased and other green purchasing using: classroom training sessions, web casts, other Federal training sources such as GSA and commercial training. Contracting officers are trained to comply with the FAR, including buy-green requirements. The USDA procurement policy web site is a primary means of communicating information to the USDA procurement community and features a tool kit linked directly to the OFEE site. <http://www.usda.gov/procurement/> and additional information can be found at <http://www.usda.gov/energyandenvironment/greenpurchasing/resources.html>.

Training for USDA purchase card holders is essential because of the large volume of transactions and dollars handled by USDA credit card holders. Training of USDA's purchase card holders is the responsibility of the USDA's Procurement Systems Division and the designated departmental Agency Program Coordinators and Local Agency Program Coordinators. Training focuses on awareness of green purchasing programs and how to purchase green products. Training vehicles are on-line including the Purchase Card Management System (PCMS) Micro-Purchase Guide.

USDA has designed a web-based awareness curriculum for program, contracting officers, and contract specialists on the benefits of designated biobased purchasing, methods and procedures for selecting designated biobased products, and incorporating designated biobased purchasing into daily operations. This training will be updated and expanded to all green purchasing programs in FY2008.

USDA has conducted procurement forecast training for small business coordinators and specialists. This training includes information on how the forecast will be used in conjunction with the BioPreferredSM and green purchasing initiatives. On biobased procurement outreach alone USDA held 28 meetings in 2007 reaching over 10,000 people.

Working with the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, to identify women-owned, small disadvantaged, HUBZone, and service disabled veteran owned small businesses that are green product and services vendors, and define green product and services opportunities for them.

USDA has developed a number of tools and procurement templates. Examples of these documents include:

- Fact Sheet for Technical and Requirements Personnel - a document that will prove very valuable as it can be used by any federal agency employee.
- Fact Sheet for Purchase Card Holders - to assist credit card holders in meeting green purchasing requirements.
- Sample Contract Language and Source Selection Factors - for use in any contract, language for technical proposals that require the offeror to identify the green products to be purchased and used under the contract.
- The BioPreferred BEES Tool - USDA is currently developing a BioPreferredSM Life-Cycle Performance Information Sheet for Contracting Officers and Procurement Officials to provide basic summary information on 1) the role of life-cycle performance information in the BioPreferred Program and 2) how to use the preferred "tools" to assess this information and allows purchase agents to look beyond price to value.
- How to do BioPreferredSM Business: Selling Biobased Products to the Federal Government - This document is also under development to facilitate access to Federal Government procurement opportunities; enhance the ability to compete at both the subcontract and prime levels; and promote knowledge of Government contracting

initiatives making it easier to conduct business with the Federal Government.

In early FY 2007, USDA developed a new brand identity, BioPreferredSM, formally the Federal Biobased Products Preferred Procurement Program (FB4P). USDA then developed a comprehensive marketing strategy to reach Federal buyers which included a series of internal and external sessions. USDA's FY07 external outreach with regard to the BioPreferred Program included holding training sessions and or exhibiting at the 2007 GSA Expo, Department of Veteran Affairs Environmental Conference, Federal Environmental Symposium, EcoBuild, Department of Veteran Affairs Green Purchasing and Recycling Awareness Fair, GSA SmartPay, and partnering with the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service to provide information to land-grant colleges and other institutions.

Examples of Agency Implementation - USDA is collecting and publishing on the USDA web anecdotal data from all Federal agencies on their green purchasing successes to recognize trailblazers and encourage others. These are being used as handouts at various outreach conferences and meetings and also appeared in publications.

- USDA directly purchased biobased products or through service contracts in FY 2007 including: hydraulic tractor fluid, soy-based ink, two-cycle engine oil, bathroom cleaner, heavy duty hand cleaner, hand soap, cartridge grease, hand sanitizer, toilet bowl cleaner, floor cleaner, rest room disinfectant, floor stripper, hand soap, degreaser/sanitizer, paper towels, seat covers and disposable single use food service products.
- USDA leads by example in removing single use petroleum-based food service products (plates, bowls, trays, cups, cutlery, etc) from the Washington DC area cafeterias and replacing them with food service products made from renewable materials. The Cafeteria Green team designed a workable green cafeteria program that is being replicated by other Federal cafeterias, including those in the U.S. Capitol complex as announced December 2007. USDA removed the Styrofoam carryout trays from its Headquarters cafeterias and replaced them with molded recycled paper trays which compost and actually function better than the Styrofoam trays. Styrofoam bowls and plates have been replaced with compostable paper products.
- Likewise the Pacific Southwest Research Station (PSW) of the U.S. Forest Service has switched to sustainable disposable flatware and tableware at food events.
- USDA's Beltsville Agricultural Research Service (BARC), three time CTC winner, continues to buy green products but now the ARS headquarters Facilities Division has made architects and engineers aware of the biobased products like insulation, wheat straw board, carpeting, cleaners, lubricants and inks, form release agents, linoleum, rapidly renewable cork, palm, and bamboo flooring, erosion control products and many other green non-biobased items. ARS has language in Facilities Division contracts requiring biobased products and ARS roofs in Beaver, WV, were recently recovered with biobased roofing. Green Procurement Requirements and Opportunities was published November 2006 and includes products for construction, transportation, landscaping, parks and recreation, office products—paper and non-paper, automotive, and many other products.
- Another example of USDA's work in the sustainable design area is the USDA South Building Headquarters' modernization plan to achieve LEEDS certification requires that each new design phase incorporates additional environmental and energy requirements. Phase 4 is designed to achieve no less than 26 points under the LEED-Existing Building and includes requirements for recycled content products, certified wood products, and EPP products and services.
- USDA's Office of Procurement and Property Management awarded a blanket purchase agreement for remanufactured toner and inkjet cartridges to a service-disabled veteran-

owned small business exclusively for the use of the 2400 Service Centers throughout the country that house the three service agencies: NRCS, Farm Service Agency, and Rural Development. Over \$20 savings per cartridge has saved just these three agencies alone over half a million dollars.

- The Pacific Southwest Research Stations' Center for Urban Forest Research purchased sustainable desk chairs to replace old chairs that were outdated and in disrepair. Many of these chairs are made of 40 percent recycled materials and are fully recyclable.
- Forest Service (USFS) Region 2 just completed a region-wide mass purchase of energy and water conservation items including vending misers, occupancy sensors, compact florescent light bulbs, and low flow showerheads. These items saved significant energy costs and paid for themselves within one year. USFS Region 2 just awarded 9 water and energy conservation micro-grants for \$2000 including: xeriscaping at a district office, installation of low flush toilets and lighting retrofits. The funding for the micro-grant program came from estimated savings of vending miser installations in 2006.
- Cleveland National Forest adopted numerous water-saving measures including low-flow plumbing fixtures at all of the district offices, native landscaping plants, self-closing water valves at recreation sites, and car washes that use reclaimed water.

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