

Position Classification Standard for Agricultural Market Reporting Series, GS-1147

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NOTICE

In response to a request of the Department of Agriculture, this gives official notice of a change in the title structure for the following positions in this series:

Dairy Market Reporter--Includes positions primarily concerned with reporting markets for dairy and/or dairy products. These positions were formerly titled "Market Reporter (Dairy)."

Poultry Market Reporter--Includes positions primarily concerned with reporting markets for poultry and/or poultry products. These positions were formerly titled "Market Reporter (Poultry)."

Agricultural Market Reporter--For positions which include either (a) work in more than two specializations, no one of which is clearly predominant, or (b) work in agricultural markets not identifiable with any of the above specializations. These positions were formerly titled "Market Reporter (General)."

When positions are concerned with two commodity specializations and a working knowledge of each field is required, both specializations should be shown in the title, e.g., Livestock and Meat Market Reporter.

This notice rescinds the titling instructions contained in flysheets of February 1962 and October 1964 (TS 53).

SERIES DEFINITION¹

This series includes all positions primarily concerned with collection, analysis and dissemination of current information on available supplies, movement, demand, prices, marketing trends, and other facts relating to the marketing of agricultural products. This work, in its various aspects, requires: (a) knowledge of the methods and practices characteristic of markets in the assigned commodity area; (b) ability to establish and maintain sound working relationships with the industry; and (c) knowledge of the physical characteristics, production factors, and quality grading or inspection criteria of the assigned group of commodities.

¹ This standard was developed by the Civil Service Commission in cooperation with the Personnel Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, and the Office of the Director of Personnel, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

EXCLUSIONS

1. Positions whose duties consist of editorial, informational, public relations or related work primarily requiring the ability to present information in narrative, tabular or pictorial forms. (See the Information and Editorial Series, GS-0010.)
2. Positions primarily concerned with carrying out studies and analyses from an economic standpoint relating to the marketing and distribution of farm and food products, which duties require the application of a professional knowledge of basic economic theories, principles, and concepts. (See the [Economist Series, GS-0110](#).)
3. Positions primarily involved with the practical application of marketing knowledge and of experience with agricultural marketing methods, practices, etc., to specific marketing problems, usually involving the evaluation and/or modification of specific Governmental marketing, regulatory or standardization programs. (See the Agricultural Marketing Specialist Series, GS-0146.)

(Note: For a discussion of the above two exclusions (2 and 3), see the section "Differences from related series," below.)

4. Positions primarily concerned with the performance of the clerical work involved in a market news operation (e.g., routing collection of specific items of standard information from specified sources); such work does not require extensive knowledge of marketing practices or of particular commodities. (See the [GS-0303 - Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series](#), or appropriate specialized clerical series.)
5. Positions concerned with the performance of market reporting duties in other than agricultural markets. Such positions normally involve a variety of other duties, in addition to market reporting work, which are properly evaluated by reference to a variety of standards from several different series. Such positions should be allocated to either the [General Business and Industry Series, GS-1101](#) (if only GS-1100 Group work is involved) or to the [GS-0303 - Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series](#) (if work from two or more Groups is involved).

This standard directly applies only to nonsupervisory positions. Supervisory positions in this series should be evaluated according to normal classification principles and/or by comparison with other appropriate standards.

DISCUSSION OF OCCUPATION

Purpose of reporting markets

The basic purpose of reporting agricultural market news is to facilitate the prompt, orderly and efficient marketing and distribution of agricultural products throughout the country. This is done

by making available to all interested persons the current and factual market information they need to make sound, timely marketing decisions.

As an illustration, suppose a given producer has harvested his crop of a perishable commodity. He is located midway between two possible markets for his crop and he can ship at equal cost to either one or the other. However, because of the perishability of his crop, he cannot ship first to one market and then, if the market proves unfavorable, re-ship to the other.

In one of these markets, demand for his type or grade of commodity exceeds available supply, and buyers will pay relatively high prices to obtain additional supplies. In the other market, however, supply exceeds demand by a considerable margin and buyers will pay relatively low prices for additional supplies -- if, in fact, their customers can use any additional supplies at all. If the producer is *aware* of the different situations in the two markets, the decision he will make is obvious: he will ship to that market where his product is the more needed and in the greater demand.

In such a situation, the decision to ship to the "unfilled demand" market will benefit others besides the producer. The buyer in the "unfilled demand" market is provided with the additional supplies he needs to meet his customers' orders. And since more adequate supplies means less pressure on other buyers to bid up prices, he will be able to obtain what he needs at lower costs than he would otherwise have had to pay. Consumers in the market area are similarly benefited: the influx of increased supplies means that their needs will be more fully met and that they will be met at lower unit costs.

In the "excess supply" market there are also benefits. The other producers who have been selling in the "excess supply" market receive a fairer price for their products than they would have if additional supplies had flooded the market. Also, buyers and consumers are not confronted with supplies they do not need and cannot handle (a benefit which, in dealing with perishable products, can be crucially important).

Thus the availability of complete, current and accurate information on the differing activities of the various markets for a given commodity enables all members of the trade to make rational, timely, and beneficial marketing and distribution decisions.

This example, of course, is greatly oversimplified. Even the simpler markets involve many more people and much more complex decisions than this. Yet the example does illustrate the primary need which market news reporters fill: the need for information. Each of the myriad of individual decisions, on whose collective timeliness and adequacy the agricultural marketing and distribution system of the United States depends, can be only as good as the information on which it is based. To the extent that each member of the trade has market information which is current, complete and accurate, then to that extent the system will tend to function smoothly and efficiently. To the extent that each lacks such information, however, the system will tend to break down.

It is to provide such information to all who want and need it, that market news reporters cover virtually every major agricultural market throughout the United States.

Differences from related occupations

Understanding this basic mission of the market news reporting organization is important, not only to a sound understanding of the occupation, but also to an understanding of how market news reporting differs from other agriculture-centered occupations which superficially appear similar: the [Agricultural Commodity Grading Series, GS-1980](#) and the [Agricultural Marketing Specialist Series, GS-1146](#).

The work of the Agricultural Commodity Grading Series resembles market news reporting work in that both involve consideration of (a) the characteristic physical features of the commodity dealt with, and of (b) the official standards and regulations governing the grading of such commodities according to standardized criteria of quality, quantity, and condition. However, the two occupations' responsibilities with respect to these commodity matters are quite different.

On the one hand, the central purpose of the Agricultural Commodity Grading occupation is to provide an officially established and certified quality measure of each commodity, so that producers, dealers and consumers may deal with confidence in their transactions, even from distant points, without their having to personally inspect each commodity lot. Such work thus requires a comprehensive knowledge of -- and the ability to make authoritative and binding decisions with respect to the application of -- all official quality grading criteria applicable to the entire assigned class of commodities.

The Market News Reporting occupation, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with reporting the economically significant activities of the assigned commodity market, such as the supply, the demand, and the prices asked and paid for particular commodities and grades. Thus the market news reporter also is concerned with quality factors -- but only insofar as they demonstrably influence the economic activities which are the reporter's prime concern. The market news reporter thus needs a sound working knowledge of the quality distinctions between the various grades of commodities found in his market. The key aspect of this commodity knowledge, however, is the reporter's specialized knowledge of the *economic* significance of the various grades of commodities in his assigned market.

This degree of required economic knowledge, however, should not be confused with that required of positions in the [Economist Series, GS-0110](#). Positions in the Economist Series are primarily concerned with carrying out studies, investigations and analyses from an economic standpoint relating to the marketing and distribution of farm and food produces, which duties require the application of a professional knowledge of basic economic theories, principles and concepts.

The Market News Reporter, on the other hand, is concerned solely with reporting the facts concerning commodity transactions which have taken place in his assigned market. His analyses and evaluations are primarily concerned with the accuracy and adequacy of various items of information and of information sources. Such "economic" interpretations as may be embodied in his market reports are made in terms, not of broad economic theory, but in terms of the reporter's own practical experience and knowledges of marketing activities in his assigned commodity area.

Positions in the [Agricultural Marketing Specialist Series, GS-1146](#), also involve the practical application of marketing knowledge and of experience with agricultural marketing methods, practices, procedures, systems, operations, etc. However, the marketing specialist is concerned with the application of such knowledge to specific marketing problems, usually with a view to the evaluation or modification of specific Governmental marketing programs (such as quotas, price supports, etc.), regulatory programs, or standardization programs. Generally speaking, then, the Agricultural Marketing Specialist *utilizes* particular types of market information for specific purposes, whereas the Market Reporter *gathers* current market information of all types for many different users and purposes.

SPECIALIZATION AND TITLE STRUCTURE

Specialization by commodity

Positions in this series are divided into specializations and are titled according to the type of commodity and market with which the positions are concerned. For example, all positions concerned with reporting trading activities in cotton markets are placed in the "Cotton" specialization and are titled "Cotton Market Reporter."

This division into specializations is based on the differing *commodity* knowledges required by the different markets. For example, all cotton market reporting work requires knowledge of (a) the nature and physical characteristics of the many different varieties and grades of cotton, and of (b) the unique system by which cotton and cotton products are produced, marketed and distributed. However, neither of these two bodies of specialized knowledge of cotton is required -- or is even helpful -- in the work of reporting tobacco or grain markets. (These, of course, require unique commodity and market knowledges of their own.)

The proper specialization of any given position, therefore, is determined by the specialized *commodity* knowledge and experience required, with the understanding that there is a broad range of *market reporting* skills and experience (e.g., public-contact, fact-gathering, and analytical and writing skills and techniques) which are common to all market reporting positions.

The following specializations are recognized in this series:

Cotton -- All positions primarily concerned with reporting markets for cotton and/or cotton products. A representative cotton market involves the following types of products: lint cotton, cotton liners (the fibers adhering to the seed), cotton seed, and cotton seed products. The market handles several biological varieties (e.g., Egyptian, American Egyptian, Sea-Island, and various Upland varieties) and, over a period of time, deals with most or all staple lengths and grades.

Dairy and poultry -- All positions primarily concerned with reporting markets for dairy and/or poultry products. A representative dairy and poultry market deals with substantially all types and grades of poultry and with most or all types of dairy products.

Fruit and vegetable -- All positions primarily concerned with reporting markets for fresh fruits and vegetables. A representative fruit and vegetable market is typically located in either a metropolitan terminal market center or in a major production center. Terminal market centers draw agricultural products from all parts of the country; thus, their daily activities involve fluctuations in supply in many widely separated producing areas. On the other hand, markets located in major centers for the production of particular commodities draw primarily from the local area, but ship to all parts of the country; thus they involve fluctuations in *demand* in many parts of the country. Finally, there are some markets which involve *both* shipping and terminal activities. In no case, however, is the representative market of such impact or importance as to constitute a dominant force in the nationwide marketing activities in a significant number of commodities.

Grain -- All positions primarily concerned with reporting markets for grains and/or feedstuffs. A representative grain market deals with a majority of the types, varieties, and grades of at least three of the most common types of grains (i.e., corn, wheat, rye, oats and barley), as well as with additional commodities (e.g., grain sorghums, soybeans, rice, flaxseed, dry beans, hops, or various feedstuffs).

Livestock -- All positions primarily concerned with reporting markets for cattle, sheep and/or swine.)

Meat -- All positions primarily concerned with reporting markets for fresh meat or meat products.

(Note: A representative livestock or meat market is typically located either in a metropolitan terminal market and/or in a processing center, and characteristically deals with a substantial majority of the many types, weights and grades of cattle, sheep and swine.)

Tobacco -- All positions primarily concerned with reporting markets for tobacco or tobacco products. A representative tobacco market, over a period of time, includes a number of local and seasonal auction markets in two or more "Types" (I. e., producing areas) and involves substantially all qualities and grades of tobacco.

General -- Positions in the "Market Reporter (General)" specialization involve either (a) work in two or more of the above specializations, no one of which is clearly predominant, or (b) work in agricultural markets not identifiable with any of the above specializations.

CLASSIFICATION FACTORS

There are three primary factors which are used in this standard to distinguish between nonsupervisory grade levels. These are:

- (1) Nature and scope of market assignment;
- (2) Independence of action;
- (3) Qualifications required.

Nature and scope of market assignment

This is a measure of that proportion of the total commodity market for which the incumbent is responsible.

In any reporting position, the basic job of the market reporter is the same: (a) to secure current information from the members of the trade, often while the actual trading is going on, with respect to the basic activities of his assigned portion of the market, including such factors as supply, demand, prices, movements, trends, significant individual transactions, etc.; (b) to evaluate the accuracy and reliability of each information source and to analyze each item of information gathered so as to arrive at a true picture of the actual market situation as of the moment; and (c) to prepare reports reflecting the activities of the market for distribution to members of the trade and to the general public. In addition to this, the reporter also gathers and reports news from other sources (e.g., weather conditions in producing areas, reports from other markets, changes in producing, handling or processing costs, variations in the quality of commodities traded, actions taken under Governmental programs, etc.) and such information from past reports (e.g., recent receipts, prices last week, a year ago, etc.) as has either demonstrably influenced current marketing activities, or will aid the reader of the report to understand most fully the nature and significance of the market situation reported.

Since this basic core of reporting duties is the same for all commodity markets, the primary grade-determining element in any individual position within any representative market is the proportion of the total activities of that representative market for which the reporter is responsible. To put it in other terms, the bigger or more difficult the part of a representative market that the reporter has to cover, the more difficult his job.

Independence of action

This is a measure of both supervision received, and of nature and scope of determinations, conclusions, recommendations and commitments.

The duties described above are typically performed with substantial freedom from supervision -- often physically located away from the office and from the supervisor. Further reports must be prepared, in most markets, for such a tight schedule of deadlines that the amount of supervision and review time which the supervisor has for all the many reports issuing from his total organization is strictly limited. For this reason, reporters at the full-performance level must perform their work with substantial independence from technical supervision.

(Incumbents of trainee positions, of course, receive close technical supervision, especially with respect to the drafts of market reports which they submit. At the full-performance level, however, heavy reliance is placed on the reporter's independent commodity, quality grading, and marketing knowledges and experience, as well as on his public contact information-gathering, and analytical abilities and judgment.)

The degree of independence with which a reporter works is also a measure of the finality of his determinations, conclusions, recommendations and commitments. His public contact work in

the marketplace is unreviewed. Any information he gives and any commitments he makes to members of the trade are considered by them to be authoritative. Further, at full-performance levels no detailed review is given to the reporter's evaluation of the relative weights to be accorded to various information sources. In all these respects, the reporter's determinations and decisions are, for practical purposes, final.

The ultimate responsibility for all determinations, conclusions, etc., which are made in the total market news reporting operation in the given market is of course lodged with the supervisor. And the reporter's analyses of data and drafts of reports are subject to final supervisory review for overall adequacy and for conformance to agency policy and precedent. But in such reviews, the experienced reporter's determinations and judgments on factual matters are normally given heavy weight by the supervisor.

Independence of action which is significantly less than that of the full-performance level described above will directly affect the grade of the position, as described in the GS-5 and GS-7 levels below.

Qualifications required

To gather, evaluate and disseminate factual and interpretive market information, the reporter must possess and apply four primary types of knowledges and abilities, as described below.

First, he must have a sound working knowledge of the *physical characteristics of the commodities* with which he deals and of the manner in which such commodities are produced. A livestock market reporter, for example, must have a good working knowledge of all of the many types and varieties of cattle, sheep and swine. He must know the characteristic features of each type, what the different types and varieties are best used for, how they are raised, and what effect different factors (age, weight, type of feed, length of feeding, weather conditions, and so forth) have on the market value of the animals and of their products.

Second, he must have a sound working knowledge of the *quality grading or inspection criteria* which have been established by the Department of Agriculture for the individual commodity or product. A grain reporter, for example, must know how U.S.D.A. grade No. 1 red durum wheat differs from No. 2 grade; how both of these differ from grades No. 1 and 2 soft white wheat; and how all of the many types and grades of wheat grains differ from similarly-numbered grades of corn, rye or barley.

As a further example, a tobacco market reporter cannot accurately report transactions involving "B2F of Type 11" unless he knows what this type of tobacco is (flue-cured leaf, of fine quality, of orange color, which was produced in the Piedmont section of Virginia and North Carolina). Also, he must know how the market value of this particular tobacco differs from that of the same producing area's "B2L" (also flue-cured leaf and of fine quality, but of lemon color), and how both of these differ in value from the market value of "B2F" which was produced in a different area. And so forth.

In addition to U.S.D.A. grades, however, some commodities are traded under various *State* grading systems. The reporter must know these systems and how they differ from U.S.D.A. systems. And finally, some commodities are marketed not only under Governmental grade designations, but also under various well-known *brand names* which are applied by the producer themselves and which, in and of themselves, can influence selling prices in certain areas.

In short, the reporter must have a sound working knowledge of the nature and market effect of *all* of the types of quality grading factors which influence the market which he is reporting. This is especially important in those markets and individual transactions where, because the transactions have not been conducted in terms of official grades, the reporter must make his own grade determinations by on the spot inspections of the commodity lots involved.

Third, the reporter must know how his commodities are *distributed and marketed*. Tobacco purchasers, for example, usually buy directly from the producers (usually in small auction markets located in the producing locality) for direct shipment all over the world. On the other hand, fruits and vegetables from all over the country are sent for marketing to processing, distribution and consumption centers. Thus one major fruit and vegetable market may receive grapes from California, apples from Washington and Oregon, peaches from Colorado, oranges from Florida, grapefruit from Texas, cherries from Wisconsin, melons from Arizona, blueberries from Michigan, and so forth -- all for strictly local consumption.

In either case, however, whether as signed to a market supplying national or international demands for a particular locally-produced commodity, or whether assigned to a market drawing products from far-flung producing areas to meet local consumption demands, the reporter must have a sound knowledge of (a) the system by which his commodities are distributed and marketed, and (b) how the many varying factors of supply and demand, both local and national, influence the day-to-day activities of his market.

Fourth, the reporter must know the members of *the trade*, their unique terminology, and their particular manner of doing business. And -- perhaps most important of all -- the reporter must have the ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with them.

There are no legal sanctions which compel members of the trade to give the market reporter information on their private transactions. Such cooperation is a purely voluntary matter. Yet the market news reporting operation cannot function without it. Securing and maintaining such voluntary cooperation is thus one of the most important parts of the reporter's job.

In the course of a given day, the reporter may contact scores of such persons and must secure hundreds of items of information from them in order to arrive at a complete, accurate picture of the market's activities. Because such information is voluntarily and informally given, however, the reporter must face many problems and difficulties in evaluating individual sources and items of information.

Some people, for example, characteristically tend to embellish the quality of the goods they are offering for sale, or to overstate the prices they have received. Others may overstate the quality or quantity they have purchased or dealt with, or they may understate the unit price they paid for a specific commodity lot. In some markets, in fact, exaggeration is the characteristic language of

bargaining, a fact which any reporter in such markets must know in order to discount such information properly, and thus arrive at the *actual* commodity qualities offered or quantities needed.

In other cases, participants in significant individual transactions, having made an unwise sale or purchase, may try to conceal the transaction to avoid public embarrassment (although they will often confide such information to a reporter of trusted integrity and discretion, so that the atypical price will not be taken or disseminated as being the going price for the day). And occasionally an individual or group will supply inaccurate or misleading information in an attempt to influence the market report for personal advantage. Such attempts have become increasingly less frequent in recent years; however, the reporter must be constantly on guard against their occurrence.

In general, then, the reporter must be able to establish and maintain sound working relationships with all of these many diverse types of persons and with all members of the trade. And he must be able to sift and weigh the differing reliability and accuracy of all of his many sources and items of information so as to arrive at a complete, accurate picture of the market's activities.

It is in the performance of this type of work -- the gathering of information by person-to-person contacts and the evaluating of this information -- that the greatest demands are placed upon the commodity and marketing knowledges, the public-contact skills, and the analytical and interpretive judgment of the reporter.

Difficulty of market

The grade level criteria contained in this standard are written in terms of typical markets in which the great majority of reporter positions are found. These representative markets typically:

- (a) handle a substantial proportion of the total number of commodities and grades found in the specialized commodity area; but
- (b) are *not* so large and complex as to be a dominant or leading force in the nationwide marketing of most or all products in the specialized commodity area.

Since the grade levels describe work of only representative markets, the following discussion is intended as a guide in evaluating the relatively small number of positions found in markets of significantly greater or significantly lesser size and complexity. In such cases, individual positions should be evaluated by comparison with the grade level criteria provided for work in representative markets, and the effects of the significantly different market complexity considered in assigning a final grade level. The following two examples show how (1) a market of great complexity or (2) a market of significantly less than average complexity can affect the difficulty of an otherwise representative "journeyman" position (i.e., a position with substantially independent responsibility for a major portion or the total market).

Example No. 1 -- This market is a livestock market of great size and complexity. It handles vast quantities of virtually all types, weights and grades of cattle, of sheep, and of swine. The

sheep portion is one of the larger sheep markets in that part of the country (although there are several others in the nation of equal or greater size and importance). The swine market is one of the very largest in the nation. And the cattle market is one of the largest and most important in the world. Overall, this market is significantly larger and more complex than are most live-stock markets (the "Specializations" section describes what a representative live stock market includes).

The position involved is that as a reporter with substantially independent responsibility for the *cattle* portion of the total market. This cattle market handles *all* types, weights, and grade of animals. Thus the reporter must be thoroughly informed on the *full* range of physical characteristics, production factors, and official commodity grading criteria which cattle marketing can involve, rather than with only those factors which apply to a *restricted* range of types, etc., as is characteristic of reporters in less complex cattle markets.

Further, the great volume and variety of cattle handled in the market produces a great number and variety of complex individual transactions, each of which must be thoroughly evaluated. Market developments and influences are highly complex and involved. The reporter must balance many more items of information, more variables, factors, and interactions, in order to get a complete picture of the market's activities. The market attracts sellers, buyers, dealers and shippers from all over the United States and from foreign countries, and the reporter must evaluate the supply and demand levels, trends, and influences from all of these many far-flung areas. For all of these reasons, the reporter in this extraordinary market must possess a significantly broader and more intense knowledge of cattle marketing, and a higher level of analytical ability and judgment, than is required of reporters in representative cattle markets.

In addition, because of this cattle market's great size and complexity, the reporter must contact and must deal effectively with a great many more individuals and market officials than are present in representative markets. He must gather and reconcile a great number and variety of items of information from sources of widely varying reliability. The reporter must therefore possess unusual personal contact ability and skill, and must exercise unusual judgment and discretion in evaluating information sources and in handling the information obtained.

Finally, the activities of this cattle market strongly influence the activities of most or all other markets in the nation. Reports from this market are disseminated to hundreds of news papers, broadcasting stations, news and wire services, and commercial and trade organizations; they are widely viewed abroad as reflecting the current state of the U.S. livestock industry as a whole. The preeminent position of this market engenders unusually intense public, commercial, and Governmental interest in its activities and, consequently produces a great volume and complexity of special inquiries and requests. More complex and more frequent reports are necessary. Reports, feature articles, and other special releases must be prepared for a wide variety of purposes. For these reasons, the reporter must possess a high level of analytical ability and writing skill, and he must be sensitive to and aware of the differing report content and format needs of a great variety of users and of dissemination media.

The criteria discussed in the grade levels below indicate that the work of "journeyman" positions in representative markets is of GS-9 level of difficulty. Positions with similarly broad

responsibilities for significantly more complex markets, however, involve duties and responsibilities of a higher level. Thus the work of the cattle reporter described in the above example would be appropriately classified at the GS-11 level.

Example No. 2 -- This second market is a livestock market of limited size and complexity. It handles only a limited range of cattle and relatively small quantities of sheep and swine. The sheep and swine portions of the market handle mostly animals from the immediate vicinity of the market which are sold primarily for local consumption. The cattle portion of the market deals with somewhat more substantial numbers of animals, a portion of which may be sold for shipment to larger markets or to feeding centers. Only one or two types of cattle are involved, however, representing only a small and routine range of weights, and the market seldom if ever involves more than two or three U.S.D.A. quality grades. This limited market is covered by two reporters, one of whom is responsible for the cattle portion of the market. The latter position is discussed here.

The limited range of types, weights and grades found in the cattle market tends to limit the difficulty of reporting work. In contrast to the first example, the reporter in this limited market utilizes only a few of the many types of commodity, production, and grading knowledges and skills which are required in representative markets.

The volume and complexity of transactions are limited by the small size of the market. The level and tone of market activities are primarily influenced by local supply and demand factors and by the activities of more significant markets in the same region; in no sense does the market dominate or lead any significant number of other market.

Fewer items of information are needed to get a full picture of this small market's activities and only a small number of market officials and members of the trade must be contacted. Information is readily available and market fluctuations are not extensive.

Reports of market activities are routine in format and of limited scope, and receive only a very limited circulation beyond the immediate vicinity of the market. Inquiries and requests for information are relatively routine and primarily concern conditions in more significant markets.

The work of the reporter assigned to a portion of a significantly less complex market thus falls *below* the GS-9 level which is typical of representative markets. For this reason, the "journeyman" position in a market of significantly *less* than representative size and complexity is properly classified at less than the GS-9 level; in this second example, the position is considered of the GS-7 level of difficulty.

MARKET REPORTER, GS-1147-05

Nature and scope of market assignment

This is the basic trainee level for positions in this series. Incumbents are given progressively responsible training assignments which are designed to provide:

- (a) A sound understanding of the basic objectives, programs, policies and procedures of the market news service organization;
- (b) A basic working knowledge of one or more of the commodities dealt with in the market to which assigned, including the characteristic physical features of each commodity, how it is produced, how it is graded, and how it is collected, marketed and distributed; and
- (c) First-hand knowledge and experience in the collection, analysis and presentation of basic market information.

An example of a beginning assignment of this level in a fruit and vegetable market would be to gather and organize price and supply information from a particular receiver or distributor in a given market. This typically includes a minor commodity or a small number of closely related commodities. Information is readily available from sources of long-established cooperativeness and reliability. Price fluctuations and quality and condition variances are obvious and easily recognizable.

Independence of action

At this level, reporters initially operate under close technical supervision. Supervisors give incumbents extensive guidance in the basic principles and techniques of market reporting work, give detailed instructions on assigned tasks, and review and discuss the incumbent's finished work products in detail. As the incumbents gain experience, both the scope of assignment and the independence of action are increased. However, incumbents of this level do not exercise continuing independent responsibility for an assigned portion of a market, as is characteristic of positions of the next higher level.

MARKET REPORTER, GS-1147-07

Nature and scope of market assignment

The Market Reporter GS-7 is typically characterized by continuing responsibility for an assigned portion or phase of a representative market. (See the discussion of "representative" markets in "Difficulty of Market" above.) The following are typical examples of assignments of this level:

The position is located in a representative livestock market handling a majority of the classes, grades and weights of cattle, sheep and swine. In this market, the GS-7 incumbent is assigned

continuing responsibility for reporting all activities in all classes, weights and grades of the slaughter lamb portion of the market.

The position is located in a representative fruit and vegetable market. This particular market handles most commodities and grades, with shipments arriving by both rail and truck. In this market, the incumbent is responsible for reporting a substantial segment of the produce market covering such commodities as beans, cabbage, asparagus, broccoli and pears.

The position is located in a representative grain market involving a majority of the classes and grades of wheat, barley and oats, along with such additional products as grain sorghums, flaxseed and feedstuffs. The GS-7 incumbent is assigned continuing responsibility for the oats, grain sorghums, and feedstuffs portion of the market.

Within his assigned portion or phase of the market, the Market Reporter GS-7 performs such duties as:

- (a) Interviewing producers, brokers, dealers, shippers, wholesalers, buyers, and other members of the trade concerning supplies, movement, price, demand, trends, and other market factors;
- (b) Obtaining specific information on significant individual transactions, including the securing of quality and condition data, by such means as: interviews with principals, market officials, and/or U.S.D.A. commodity graders; consulting official market transaction records; and, as appropriate, by personal inspection of the commodity lot figuring in the given transactions;
- (c) Evaluating the reliability and accuracy of the information obtained; reconciling contradictions and discrepancies, determining market tone and level, identifying trends, and isolating factors affecting the observed prices and movements;
- (d) Preparing those portions of the total market report which deal with the assigned phase or portion of the market, as well as preparing special releases, summaries and features for radio, television, press associations, leased wire services, newspapers and trade publications; and
- (e) Answering inquiries from the trade and from the interested general public as to such things as shipments, supplies, receipts, prices, and so forth.

Independence of action

Within the assigned area, the Market Reporter GS-7 works under general technical supervision. The supervisor assigns the portion or phase of the total market for which the reporter will be responsible; discusses with him the various factors likely to affect that portion of the total market; as requested, gives specific guidance and assistance on difficult technical or public contact problems; and reviews reports for adequacy of information, soundness of judgment, adherence to policy and procedure, and coordination with the work of other market reporters.

Except for the referral of difficult problems, as mentioned above, all public contact and information-gathering activities of the Market Reporter GS-7 are performed independently, without close technical supervision or review.

Qualifications required

The job of the Market Reporter GS-7 requires the possession and application of the following knowledges and abilities:

- (a) A sound knowledge of the nature and physical characteristics of the commodity or commodities for which the incumbent has assigned responsibility and of the manner in which these commodities are produced, with special emphasis on those variations in features and in production and processing conditions which influence product availability, supply and quality;
- (b) A sound working knowledge of all product quality grading and condition criteria which are of economic significance in that segment of the total market to which the incumbent is assigned;
- (c) A thorough knowledge of the system by which the assigned commodities are collected, processed, stored, marketed and distributed;
- (d) Knowledge and acquaintance with the members of the trade who deal in the assigned commodity, their functional positions in the market, and their unique terminology and methods of doing business, and the ability to establish and maintain sound working relationships with such persons; and
- (e) Ability to evaluate and reconcile complex and sometimes contradictory information and data, and to determine and describe significant market developments in the assigned commodity area.

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Nature and scope of market assignment

The Market Reporter GS-9 is typically characterized by the performance of reporting tasks, over a period of time, in most or all of the broad range of commodities found in a representative commodity market. The following are typical examples of assignments of this level:

The position is located in a representative livestock market handling a majority of the classes, grades and weights of cattle, sheep and swine. In this market, the GS-9 incumbent is responsible, over a period of time, for reporting both the cattle and the swine portions of the market.

The position is located in a representative grain market handling a majority of the classes and grades of corn, rye, and barley, along with such additional products as rice, flaxseed, hops and feedstuffs. The GS-9 incumbent is responsible for all reporting activities on corn, rye, and barley.

Within his broad assigned area, the Market Reporter GS-9 performs the same type of reporting duties as are performed by the Market Reporter GS-7 in his much narrower assigned area.

Independence of action

Within the assigned area, the Market Reporter GS-9 works with substantial freedom from technical supervision. The supervisor assigns the portions of the total market for which the reporter is responsible. After this initial assignment, the Market Reporter GS-9 is expected to carry out all necessary duties independently. Except in unusually difficult situations, requiring policy decisions, reports are approved by the supervisor substantially without review.

Ultimate responsibility for all actions taken in the entire market news operation at a given market is of course lodged with the supervisor. For this reason, the Market Reporter GS-9 is expected to refer unusually difficult technical or public contact problems, or situations requiring policy decisions, to the supervisor for authoritative decisions. In most cases, however, the determinations, judgments and recommendations of the experienced reporter are given heavy weight.

Except for the referral of unusually difficult cases, as described above, all public contact, information-gathering and market analysis activities of the Market Reporter GS-9 including those involving the most difficult technical problems, are performed with substantial independence from technical supervision and review.

Qualifications required

The qualifications required of the Market Reporter GS-9 are similar in nature to those required at the GS-7 level. The two differ, however, in the scope and intensity of required knowledges. These differences reflect both the greater scope of the GS-9's assigned portion of the market, and the greater independence of action typical of GS-9 positions. The specific differences are as follows:

- (a) All market reporters must have a knowledge of the characteristic physical features of the commodity (or commodities) for which the reporter is responsible, and of the manner in which these commodities are produced. At the GS-7 level, the reporter deals with only one (or a few) classes of commodities. The GS-9, however, must possess such knowledge of most or all of the many different commodities found in the entire commodity market.
- (b) All market reporters must have a sound working knowledge of all quality grading criteria and factors which are of economic significance in that segment of the total market to

which they are assigned. The GS-9 requires the same general type of knowledge as does the GS-7.

However, the greater scope of the GS-9's assigned segment of the total market requires him to have such competence in a much broader range of commodities. Further, the GS-9's greater independence requires that his knowledge of quality grading factors be more complete and authoritative than is characteristic of the GS-7.

- (c) All market reporters must possess a thorough knowledge of the system(s) by which the assigned commodity or commodities are collected, processed, stored, marketed and distributed. The GS-9 almost always deals with a range of commodities presenting several different patterns or types of systems. Because of his more restricted range and variety of commodities, however, the GS-7 seldom must know more than one type of distribution pattern.
- (d) The broader assignments and greater independence typical of the GS-9 level also influence the degree and intensity of required knowledge of the members of the trade and of the characteristic milieu of each market, as well as the degree of skill and ability required to establish and maintain sound working relationships.
- (e) Finally, all market reporters must have the ability to evaluate and reconcile complex and sometimes contradictory information and data, and to accurately determine and describe significant market developments in their assigned commodity area(s). The GS-9 exceeds the GS-7 in this respect not only because the GS-9's greater range and variety of assigned commodities presents more varied and more frequent problem situations, but also because the GS-9 is expected to handle most of the problems independently, whereas the GS-7 is expected to refer many of the problems to the supervisor for solution.