

USDA Information Quality Guidelines for Regulatory Information

These guidelines pertain to information disseminated to the public by USDA agencies and offices in conjunction with their rulemaking activities. Such information includes economic, cost/benefit, scientific, environmental, risk, reporting and recordkeeping, and other pertinent analyses prepared or presented by agencies in support of those activities.

Scope

Information that is subject to the guidelines under this section includes the following:

- Economic analyses prepared in accordance with Executive Order 12866.
- Other cost/benefit analyses prepared in support of rulemaking efforts.
- Scientific analyses (meaning natural sciences -plant pathology, animal physiology, etc.) and risk assessments prepared in support of agency rulemaking efforts.
- Regulatory flexibility analyses or certifications of no significant impact prepared in accordance with the 1980 Regulatory Flexibility Act.
- Environmental assessments, environmental impact statements, and associated documents prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act.
- Any other substantive analyses, documents, procedures prepared in support of agency rulemaking activities or enforcement.

Guidelines

To ensure the objectivity of information disseminated by USDA agencies and offices in conjunction with their regulatory activities, the agencies and offices should:

- Use sound analytical methods in carrying out scientific and economic analyses and in preparing risk assessments.
- Use the most reliable and timely data and information available (e.g., collected data such as from surveys, compiled information, and/or expert opinion).
- Use pre-established criteria to evaluate data quality when using or combining data from different sources.
- Ensure transparency of the analysis by:
 - Presenting a clear explanation of the analysis to the intended audience.
 - Providing good documentation of data sources, methodology, assumptions, limitations, uncertainty, computations, and constraints.

- Explaining why certain data were used over other data.
- Presenting the model or analysis logically so that the conclusions and recommendations are well supported.
- Clearly identify sources of uncertainty affecting data quality.
- For quantitative assessments, clearly state the uncertainty of final estimates to the extent practicable. Data and data collection systems should, as far as possible, be of sufficient quality and precision that uncertainty in the final estimates is appropriately characterized.
- For qualitative assessments, present the nature of the uncertainty.
- When peer review is called for in the analysis:
 - The peer review should be conducted in an open and rigorous manner.
 - Peer reviewers should be selected primarily on the basis of their expertise in the subject matter, disclose their prior technical or policy positions on the issues at hand, and disclose their sources of personal and institutional funding.

To ensure the utility of information disseminated by USDA agencies and offices in conjunction with their regulatory activities, the agencies and offices should:

- Clearly state the purpose of the exercise and the intended audience.
- Ensure that the final product meets the users' needs.

To ensure the integrity of information disseminated by USDA agencies and offices in conjunction with their regulatory activities, the agencies and offices should:

- Ensure that the information is secure and protected from manipulation and/or falsification.
- Ensure against unauthorized internal and external access
- Ensure the confidentiality of individually identifiable information, in accordance with departmental requirements and directives.

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We welcome your comments and suggestions about these pages. For information related to the USDA Quality Information Guidelines, please contact [Dr. Bette Fugitt](#), USDA Records Officer. For comments regarding the site itself: ociowebmaster@ociofc.usda.gov
http://www.ocio.usda.gov/irm/qi_guide/policy.html

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