

FOREIGN SERVICE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM

1. PURPOSE

This Directive revises the Animal and Health Inspection Service (APHIS), International Services (IS), Foreign Service (FS) Performance Appraisal system in accordance with and subject to the provisions set forth in the Foreign Service Act of 1980, Executive Order 12363 (1982), and 7 CFR 371.2(h) (2) that delegates authority for "maintaining and administering the Foreign Service personnel system for employees of APHIS" to the IS Deputy Administrator (ISDA).

2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- a. This Directive replaces Directive 4430.2, dated 10/30/00.
- b. The system has been revised to accomplish the following:
 - (1) Provide accurate documentation of the Foreign Service member's performance during the appraisal period.
 - (2) Provide information in a format that is more useful to the FS Selection Board during its rating process by:
 - (a) Adding a summary sign-off coversheet listing the individual performance element ratings of satisfactory or unsatisfactory, IS Form 436-R (see Attachment 1).
 - (b) Reducing the rated employee's accomplishment statement to one page.

3. SCOPE

All FS employees of APHIS are covered by this performance appraisal system. The appraisal period is from May 1 to April 30.

4. POLICY

It is APHIS-IS policy to:

- a. Encourage excellence in the performance of duties, through employee participation in establishing realistic objectives and fair standards of performance;
- b. Assess performance of duties through the use of an objective, job-based appraisal system;
- c. Recognize and reward quality performance by granting promotions, meritorious within-class step increases, and cash awards based on performance; and
- d. Use the results of performance appraisals to make appropriate personnel decisions regarding conversion, tenure, assignments, training, disciplinary actions, and/or separation.

5. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Agency's performance appraisal system are to:

- a. Provide for a periodic evaluation of employees' job achievements;
- b. Ensure that employees understand and participate in the formulation of work expectations and priorities established at the beginning of each assignment;
- c. Establish a constructive dialogue between supervisors and employees throughout each appraisal period;
- d. Help employees recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and initiate steps to correct any performance deficiencies;
- e. Identify and address training needs;
- f. Ensure fair treatment of all employees; and
- g. Provide information to the FS Selection Board in a format that allows for fair and accurate assessment of candidates.

6. GENERAL GUIDELINES

- a. The Assignment Letter. This letter is initiated for each new assignment. The letter is developed by the supervisor and employee as a collaborative effort and is signed and dated by both as an indication of their agreement. The letter serves as the basis for the Mid-Year and Annual Performance Appraisal Report. The letter clarifies for supervisor and employee:
 - (1) The employee's job description and primary responsibilities;
 - (2) The areas of work priorities;
 - (3) The goals the employee will need to meet for the assignment period, and
 - (4) The support the supervisor has agreed to provide to enable the employee to achieve expected results.

- b. The areas for which performance elements might be developed are:
 - (1) Management.
 - (2) Supervision.
 - (3) Professional/technical/programmatic outcomes.
 - (4) Representation of APHIS, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the U.S. Government.

- c. Originals of the assignment letter are kept by the supervisor and employee. Copies are provided to the Reviewing Official and the IS Administrative Services (ISAS) Director of Personnel. The copy for the ISAS Director of Personnel will be filed in the employee performance file. To keep the letter up-to-date, an addendum can be added each performance cycle, if needed. Copies of any changes or addendums are provided to the same officials.

- d. The Mid-Year Performance Appraisal. This appraisal presents a structured opportunity for the supervisor and employee to review and discuss the employee's progress in achieving the agreements specified in the Assignment Letter. The Mid-Year Performance Appraisal uses the same forms as the Annual Performance

Appraisal. The employee initiates the process by submitting a completed, signed, and dated IS Form 437-R, Foreign Service Member's Accomplishment Statement, no later than November 15 (see Attachment 2). The employee and supervisor discuss the report, and if the supervisor agrees fully with the assessment, they simply sign the report, return the original to the employee, keep a copy for the supervisor's files, and submit a copy to the Reviewing Official.

- e. Should the supervisor not agree with the employee's assessment, the supervisor must make a statement that offers evidence of higher or lower achievement than reported. In the case of lower achievement than expected, the supervisor discusses what may be impeding the attainment of the agreed upon expectations.
 - (1) The supervisor is obligated to initiate a formal Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), if a performance deficiency is judged by the supervisor to be severe enough to put in question a satisfactory rating for the year.
 - (2) The Reviewing Official is responsible for monitoring the procedure for mid-year reviews and ensuring that the PIP, if necessary, is in place.

- f. The Annual Performance Appraisal. This appraisal consists of the:
 - (1) IS Form 436-R;
 - (2) IS Form 437-R;
 - (3) IS Form 438-R, Part A, FS Member's Supervisory Assessment, Rating Official's Section;
 - (4) IS Form 438-R, Part B, Rated Employee's Section; and
 - (5) IS Form 438-R, Parts B and C, Reviewing Official's Section (see Attachment 3).
 - (a) The Annual Performance Appraisal presents a structured opportunity for the supervisor and employee to review and discuss the employee's progress in achieving the goals specified in the Assignment Letter. The procedure is initiated by the employee, who completes and submits to the supervisor, by May 31, the IS Form 437-R.
 - (b) The supervisor reviews the submitted IS Form 437-R, and discusses this statement with the employee, if necessary.

- (c) The supervisor must complete the IS Form 436-R listing all Performance Elements, indicate satisfactory or unsatisfactory for each element, and write a narrative using IS Form 438-R, Part A.
- (d) The supervisor may concur or not concur with the employee's self assessment and offer observations about the employee's performance. In addition, the supervisor is required to evaluate the employee in the following five areas:
 - 1 Communication.
 - 2 Management and Supervisory Skills.
 - 3 Leadership Skills.
 - 4 Initiative.
 - 5 Technical Skills.
- (e) If the supervisor does not concur with the employee's accomplishment statement, the supervisor is expected to indicate the differences. The ideal situation would be that as a result of the review and discussion, the supervisor and employee could agree and modify the employee's report without the supervisor having to submit an alternative view.
- (f) If a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) was put into place at the Mid-Year Review, the supervisor must comment on whether or not the employee has met the agreements in the PIP.
- (g) The supervisor must sign and date the two forms and send them to the employee by June 14.
- (h) When the employee receives the completed forms from the supervisor, the employee must complete APHIS-IS 438-R, Part B, providing an appropriate narrative and then sign and date the form. An employee who fails to obtain satisfaction after a discussion with his/her supervisor may refute statements in the record that the employee considers to be based on incomplete data or on limited observation.

- (i) The completed, signed, and dated IS Forms 436-R, 437-R, and 438-R, Parts A and B, are then submitted to the Reviewing Official by June 21.

7. REVIEWING OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Reviewing Official is expected to read each Performance Appraisal (IS Forms 436-R, 437-R, and 438-R, Parts A and B) to ensure that the expectations specified in the Annual Assignment Letter have been adequately addressed by both the employee and the supervisor.

- a. The Reviewing Official completes IS Form 438-R, Part C. He/she will concur or not concur and make any appropriate comments. If the Reviewing Official does not concur, a written explanation is required.
- b. Once the Reviewing Official has completed, signed, and dated the form, it must be sent to the ISAS Director of Personnel by August 16. ISAS Personnel will provide a copy of the completed report to the employee. The employee then will be able to provide a rebuttal on a separate single page to the ISAS Director of Personnel that will be attached to the completed report, if desired.

8. FORMAT INSTRUCTIONS

The entire performance appraisal must be typed in 12 pitch and cannot exceed the space allotted on the forms. Performance Appraisals not complying with these instructions will be returned.

9. FOREIGN SERVICE BOARDS

Each completed employee's Annual Performance Appraisal, (IS Forms 436-R, 437-R, and 438-R, Parts A, B, and C) will be presented in September by ISAS Personnel to the Foreign Agriculture Service FS Selection Board and the APHIS FS Intermediate Selection Board, as appropriate, that make recommendations on promotions, tenure, and awards.

10. GRIEVANCES

The Foreign Service Performance Appraisal System evaluation of the performance of members of the Foreign Service are not grievable unless alleged procedural violation of law, regulation, collective bargaining agreement, or prohibited personnel practices arising under those procedures existed.

11. INQUIRIES

- a. Direct inquiries through administrative channels to the ISAS Director of Personnel and Travel.

Director of Personnel and Travel
USDA/APHIS/IS, Unit 65
4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD 20737
USA

- b. This Directive is available on the Internet at www.aphis.usda.gov/library.

/s/

William J. Hudnall
Deputy Administrator
MRP Business Services

3 Attachments