

Agricultural Marketing Service
Cotton Program, Grading Branch
Classing Office

SJ#: CN360
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Supervisory Agricultural Commodity Grader (Cotton)
GS-1980-11

I. INTRODUCTION

The _____ Classing Office administers assigned programs on cotton and related commodities provided for in legislative and administrative requirements in connection with standards, marketing services, and allied regulatory responsibilities.

As a supervisory cotton grader in a complex classing office, the incumbent shares in the responsibilities of supervision as related to directing, administering, and carrying out programs and activities assigned to the office as assigned by the Area Director and Assistant Area Director.

II. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The incumbent participates in the formulation of programs within the territory served by the assigned office by contributing ideas, suggestions, and recommendations with respect to the cotton classing services provided by the office where assigned and/or detailed within the Cotton Program. Recognizes and discusses with the Area Director and Assistant Area Director methods of improving the service.

The incumbent may share with the Area Director and/or Assistant Area Director the responsibility for the classification of samples submitted in connection with the cotton classification program at a level determined by the Area Director as needed. The incumbent must be prepared to perform the following activities at the direction of the Area Director: supervision of the classification of cotton performed by employees assigned to the office to insure accurate determinations in accordance with Official Cotton Standards and oversight of the High Volume Instrument (HVI) operations to insure that testing is within tolerances, instruments are properly calibrated, and repairs are made on a timely basis. The incumbent provides technical input and logistical support to other Program units in engineering, quality assurance, statistical, or other special studies. The incumbent would in these cases take on-the-spot action or make appropriate recommendations for solutions to the Area Director and/or Assistant Area Director.

If requested by the Area Director, the incumbent may from time to time represent the Program in the assigned geographical area by contacting state and local officials to discuss the Smith-Doxey Act and talk with local producer groups, industry representatives and others. These contacts provide information that may assist in solving problems prior to their becoming critical and/or requiring resolution at higher management levels. When called upon, incumbent meets with industry to discuss operational issues and provides overviews and presentations about cotton classification procedures.

Supervisory Responsibilities

The incumbent must be able to assume a portion of the responsibility as assigned by the Area Director for direct and indirect technical and administrative supervision of the personnel assigned to the classing office; this includes subordinate supervisors, seasonal classers, field representatives, HVI operators, instrument workers, clerks, computer operators, and production assistants. The work is seasonal, with variable production volume, and this may require the operation of multiple shifts. The incumbent participates in the following functions:

1. Plans and assigns the work of the group with the assistance of subordinate supervisors in consultation with and under the guidance of the Area Director so as to minimize the backlog of samples to be classed. When workload is of sufficiently heavy volume that classing results test the capacity of the resources of the office, the incumbent explores all avenues with the Area Director to maximize the uses of those resources. This would include identification and reduction of bottlenecks in the operations to improve production and efficiency while maintaining work quality.

2. Reviews the work of subordinate supervisors and cotton classers by periodically classing samples previously classed by table classers and other means of on-the-spot technical supervision. Reviews the work of field representatives, including their market information reports. Reviews and analyzes check-lot results obtained from the Quality Assurance Branch along with in-house check procedures and makes recommendations for necessary adjustments in classing instruments as required in manual and instrument classing operations. Performs those operations after approval from the Area Director and Assistant Area Director.

3. Participates in developing performance standards and prepares performance evaluation ratings of subordinate seasonal supervisors and employees. Makes recommendations for awards.

4. As necessary, prepares training for cotton classing schools, develops lesson plans, assembles course materials and conducts the training as needed.

5. Gives advice, counsel, or instruction to individual employees on both work and administrative matters. Recommends disciplinary measures when indicated.

6. Conducts technical classer, workplace safety and HVI operator training as required by the Area Director.

7. Provides equal opportunity in employment for all subordinates, applicants and new hires. Prohibits discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age or physical or mental disability and promotes a full realization of equal employment through continuous affirmative actions within the work environment.

III. FACTORS

Factor 1. Knowledge Required by the Position Level 1-7 1250 pts.

Exceptionally broad and thorough knowledge of the characteristics of cotton in relation to assigned area of production; cotton grading standards, regulations, principles, and methods, and cotton harvesting and processing techniques affecting an extensive range of grades and physical characteristics to technically supervise and recommend final authoritative leaf grade and extraneous matter determinations on difficult, borderline, and controversial cotton samples and to detect, identify, and evaluate defects. Skill in interpreting in-office and Quality Assurance HVI checklot results and recommending corrective action to insure that all HVI systems being operated in the office are adjusted to produce measurements that are on the same test level as those of the Quality Assurance Branch.

Ability to interpret and apply an extensive range of cotton grade standards.

Ability to explain and demonstrate cotton classing techniques and the HVI operations to advise graders on difficult determinations and to instruct trainee graders, and to explain grading factors and other Cotton Program functions to the trade and public. Strong and effective oral and written communications skills are required.

Demonstrated ability to establish and maintain personal relationships with industry officials.

Ability to supervise others, plan, assign, organize, control, and coordinate work for a sizeable number of employees.

Factor 2. Supervisory Controls, Level 2-3 275 pts.

The incumbent is under the supervision of the Area Director (and/or Assistant Area Director, where applicable) who assigns specific tasks and areas of responsibility. The incumbent independently coordinates the activity of the assigned work group. Overall coordination of the activities of the Classing Office is provided by the Area Director who is the official supervisor of all classing office personnel and who bears the primary responsibility for industry relationships. Work is reviewed for adherence to policy through operating reports and on-the-job observations.

Factor 3. Guidelines Level 3-3 275 pts.

Guidelines include the official cotton standards, Program Instructions and procedural manuals, AMS and USDA instructions, a body of administrative regulations and unwritten policies and procedures of the Program. The incumbent exercises extensive initiative and judgment in recommending the selection, interpretation, and application of the proper guidelines to specific cases or problems. Judgments must be made rapidly, based on seasoned working knowledge of cotton classification.

Factor 4. Complexity Level 4-4 225 pts.

The work involves a broad range of duties requiring many different processes and methods such as: making difficult determinations on the classing of cotton; maintaining the accuracy and reliability of the HVI lines; development of lesson plans and course materials for cotton grading classes; formal classroom instruction of graders; oversight and technical guidance and review of groups of cotton

graders and HVI operators; surveying gins to determine if proper sampling is taking place; hearing and ruling on formal appeals filed by gins/producers; setting priorities and making decisions on the operational aspects of the office; and oversight of cotton grading operations. The work requires making many decisions concerning such things as the proper method for handling unusual samples, identification of the defects in cotton, the best approach to solving questionable variations in the level of classification decisions of graders, line leaders and operators within a classing office.

Factor 5. Scope and Effect Level 5-4 225 pts.

The work involves directing and reviewing the work of large number of seasonal workers involved in the classing of cotton. The incumbent provides technical advice on complex issues; grading determinations made by the employee are considered authoritative and may include the classing of futures cotton. The employee is responsible for training future classers and the overall coordination of a group of workers. Consistent, thorough, and uniform instruction and guidance must be provided the personnel in the classing office to insure accurate determinations.

Factor 6. Personal Contacts Level 6-2 25 pts.

Contacts primarily consist of fellow employees in the laboratory and classing office. They may also include producers, ginners, representatives of trade and producer organizations, equipment representatives and the general public. Contacts are established on a routine basis.

Factor 7. Purpose of Contacts Level 7-3 120 pts.

Contacts with Cotton Program personnel are to provide guidance, exchange information, assure adherence to policies and standards, and provide training. Contacts with industry personnel are to investigate and resolve issues, and provide information about programs.

Factor 8. Physical Demands Level 8-2 20 pts.

Generally, work is conducted in a variety of settings, including general office, laboratory, receiving room and dock area. The incumbent will spend the majority of his/her time in the Classing Laboratory. Work requires constant standing and extensive use of hands, arms and shoulders. The duties require physical dexterity and mental alertness, and they are extremely tiring, both mentally and physically.

Factor 9. Work Environment Level 9-2 20 pts

The work in the laboratory may expose the employee to crowded conditions and the presence of lint and dust in the air.