



Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
United States Department of Agriculture

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

What is the Freedom of Information Act?

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), enacted in 1966 and taking effect on July 5, 1967, is the principle federal statute governing public access to government information. The statute provides that any person has a right, enforceable in court, to obtain access to Federal Agency records, except to the extent that such records (or portions of them) are protected from public disclosure by one of nine exemptions or by one of three special law enforcement record exclusions.

What is the Privacy Act?

Closely related to the FOIA is the Privacy Act, another statute relating to federal government records. The [Privacy Act](#) establishes certain controls over how the government agencies gather, maintain, and disseminate personal information. The Privacy Act can also be used to obtain access to information, but it pertains only to records the federal government keeps on individual citizens and lawfully admitted resident aliens. The FOIA, on the other hand, covers all records under the custody and control of federal agencies.

What is the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration?

The [Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration](#) (GIPSA) is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's agency that facilitates the marketing of livestock, poultry, meat, cereals, oilseeds, and related agricultural products, and promotes fair and competitive trading practices for the overall benefit of consumers and American agriculture. GIPSA has two mission areas: the [Federal Grain Inspection Service](#), which is responsible for administering the U.S. Grain Standards Act and the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946; and the [Packers and Stockyards Program](#), which is responsible for administering the Packers and Stockyards Act and carries out limited responsibility for the Secretary of Agriculture under Section 1324 of the Food and Securities Act.

Requesting GIPSA Records

GIPSA maintains only records relating to its mission programs. To request records from other government agencies, please consult their web sites or FOIA offices for instructions.

The GIPSA Management Support Staff administers the Agency's FOIA program from its Washington, DC, offices. Specific information on how to request records from GIPSA can be found in the Agency's FOIA Processing Guidelines.

GIPSA maintains a public Reading Room in Room 1640-South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC, 20250. The Reading Room is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The telephone number is 202-720-8087.

Specific information on how to request records from GIPSA can be found on GIPSA's web site at the [Freedom of Information Act Guide](#).