

## **Working with Native American Businesses**

USDA awards over 50% of its Federal nutrition program eligible contracting dollars to small businesses. AMS works closely with Native American-owned businesses to help them become eligible vendors. Native American-owned businesses qualify as 8(a) organizations under the Small Business Administration. The goal of the 8(a) program is to help socially and economically disadvantaged entrepreneurs gain access to the economic mainstream of American society. USDA has helped at least one Service Disabled Veteran-Owned, Native American-owned small businesses become a USDA food program vendor. With the support of AMS staff throughout the approval process, Native American-owned businesses have gained USDA approval.

In 2012, USDA purchased a total of 1,890,000 pounds of food from one Native American company for approximately \$4.8 million. In 2013, USDA purchased 3,473,200 pounds of product valued at \$8.1 million from two Native American companies. Much of the food purchased by USDA from Native American vendors is directed to the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) program. FDPIR provides USDA foods to low-income households on Indian reservations, and to Native American families residing in designated areas near reservations and in the State of Oklahoma.

AMS is currently working with several Native American owned businesses who have expressed an interest in wanting to provide ground bison/buffalo that would also be destined to the FDPIR. There is increasing optimism that in the very near future there will at least one if not more Native American owned businesses on the AMS Approved Eligible Suppliers List for ground bison/buffalo.

Aside from the obvious business benefits for Native American owned companies to participate in USDA Programs, a more common goal that actually has no monetary value but is more of the driving force for this type of collaboration.....is the potential of a Native American owned business to provide food products to Native American recipients. That is something which is beneficial to all Tribes.

Also, outside the arena of food purchase programs, assistance is being provided to Tribal requests in other areas. One example is at the request of the Seminole Tribe of Florida; an (Live Stock, Poultry and Seed) LPS representative has developed the Seminole Pride Angus Beef program. This USDA specification is for certification by an AMS agent of Prime, Choice and Select beef carcasses that exhibit Angus influence and meet other specific carcass requirements.

**For more information, please contact: Terry Lutz (202) 567-1757 or Carl Schroeder (202) 692-0342.**