



United States Office of Personnel Management

Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness

Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions

December 2002

Article No. 29-06

Standard: Agricultural Program Specialist, GS-1145 (October 1968) [\[PDF\]](#)[\[TXT\]](#)

Factor: Nature of assignments

Issue: Fully meeting the GS-13 criteria

Identification of the Classification Issue

The appellant, whose position was graded at the GS-12 level, was the conservation program specialist at the State Office level of a Federal agricultural agency. She planned, coordinated, adapted, and directed implementation of conservation programs and related activities throughout the State. She believed her duties and program fully met the GS-13 criteria.

Resolution

For a position to be credited at the GS-13 level, the scope and complexity of assignments have to meet five criteria. The program must cover a major commodity or variety of commodities or practices that significantly affect national agricultural policies. The State has to be a primary producer of a major commodity or group of commodities, and the program must have a considerable effect on the economy for both the State and the nation. The rate of participation must be very high in all active, major programs. Administration of the program involves a high degree of innovation and extension of guidelines to unprecedented or critical situations. Strong influential interests toward program operations and changes are evident and frequently involve major farm organizations with considerable power throughout a State or a geographic region.

The appellant's position met the third criterion in that over 90 percent of the available farming acreage in the State was enrolled in the program. However, the position fell short of the other four criteria. Unlike the first criterion, the practices devoted to conservation of soil, water, wetlands, and wildlife in the State did not affect national conservation/agricultural policies. The second criterion was not met because the State was not a primary producer of a major commodity or group of them. The agency identified six major commodities that could critically

impact a State's *and* the national economy: peanuts, tobacco, wheat, feed grains, cotton, and rice. Although the appellant's State produced one type of feed grain (barley) accounting for 24 percent of the nation's barley, its national economic value amounted to only 1.5 percent of the total national value of feed grains in 1999. All the other commodities were either not produced or were in such small quantities that they had no impact on the national economy.

Regarding the fourth criterion, OPM found that while the appellant interpreted, clarified, and supplemented national program guidelines for State use in administering the conservation program, she did not apply a high degree of innovation and extension of guidelines to unprecedented or critical situations. Such situations were referred to program specialists at the agency headquarters level. In contrast to the fifth criterion, the appellant's relationship with various agricultural organizations in the State was generally positive with only an occasional operating practice or procedure contested at the local level. Based on the preceding analysis, the grade of the appellant's position was sustained at the GS-12 grade level.

Link to C-1145-12-01 [\[PDF\]](#) [\[TXT\]](#)