

Mississippi State University

Notice of Proposed Sole Source Purchase

Mississippi State University anticipates purchasing the item(s) listed below as a sole source procurement. Any person or entity objecting to this purchase should follow the procedures established by the University.

1. Commodity to be Purchased

Experimental catfish diets containing 28% crude protein formulated to contain 3% and 6% lipids.

2. Explanation of the Need, Uniqueness of the Item, and Why It Is the Only Product That Meets the Department's Requirements

The Mississippi State University aquaculture research program is conducting a commercial-scale production study to evaluate the effects of elevated dietary lipid concentrations on catfish growth performance, feed efficiency, fillet yield, fillet quality, and overwinter survival. The study was requested by the Board of Directors of Fish Belt Feeds and regional catfish producers following laboratory research conducted by Dr. Fernando Yamamoto, Mississippi State University Fish Nutritionist, demonstrating catfish fed diets containing approximately 6% lipid significantly outperformed fish fed conventional diets containing approximately 3% lipid. Higher lipid diets increased growth, improved fillet yield, and reduced overwinter weight loss.

Although increasing dietary lipid concentrations has the potential to improve production efficiency, higher oil inclusion rates may create manufacturing challenges and could alter fillet fat content, texture, and marketability. Before commercial adoption, these diets must be evaluated under commercial pond production conditions using feed manufactured with the same ingredients and production methods utilized by Mississippi Delta catfish producers.

To meet the specifications of the study, diets must be manufactured using similarly sourced feed ingredients for catfish production in the Mississippi Delta. Feed manufactured in other regions of the southeastern United States utilizes different ingredient compositions, including greater reliance on peanut meal, rice products, or other alternative protein sources that are not representative of commercial diets used by producers in the Mississippi Delta. Since this study evaluates both production performance and fillet quality, maintaining ingredient consistency is essential to ensure any observed treatment differences are attributable solely to dietary lipid concentration rather than differences in protein sources or ingredient composition.

Fish Belt Feeds is the only feed mill capable of manufacturing experimental diets that meet the specifications of this study. The study requires two custom formulations containing 28% crude protein: a control diet containing approximately 3% lipid and a treatment diet containing approximately 6% lipid. Fish Belt Feeds has agreed to manufacture the required experimental

diets in 10-ton production batches and is the only supplier capable of meeting the technical and logistical requirements of this project.

3. Name of Company and Why It Is the Only Source Capable of Providing the Required Item

Fish Belt Feeds, Inc.
33 Moorhead Itta Bena Road
Moorhead, MS 38761

Fish Belt Feeds is the only regional manufacturer capable of producing the required experimental diets in 10-ton batches using ingredient formulations representative of those used by commercial feed manufacturers in the region. Its manufacturing capabilities uniquely meet the requirements of the research design while accommodating the storage limitations of the research facility.

4. Estimated Cost and Explanation of Price Reasonableness

Feed prices are primarily determined by commodity markets, including corn, soybean meal, cottonseed meal, supplemental oils, and energy costs, and therefore fluctuate throughout the production season. Based on current market conditions, the experimental feed is expected to cost approximately \$425 per ton, delivered, and prices are anticipated to remain relatively stable during the study period. The project is expected to require approximately 300 tons of feed, resulting in an estimated total cost of approximately \$127,500, subject to commodity prices at the time each 10-ton batch is manufactured.

The estimated pricing is consistent with current commercial market rates for regionally manufactured and delivered catfish feed and is considered fair and reasonable.

5. Efforts Made to Determine That This Is the Only Practical Source and to Obtain the Best Possible Price

We contacted both locally owned feed manufacturers that produce catfish diets representative of those used by producers in the Mississippi Delta—Delta Western Feed and Fish Belt Feeds—to determine their ability to manufacture the experimental diets required for this study. Although both companies use comparable regional ingredient sources, Delta Western is unable to produce the diets in the required 10-ton batches because its minimum production run is 20 tons. This exceeds the feed storage capacity of the National Warmwater Aquaculture Center research facility. Delta Western also indicated that it cannot accommodate the equipment modifications necessary to manufacture the higher-lipid experimental diets during the current production season.

Fish Belt Feeds has confirmed that it can manufacture the custom formulations in 10-ton batches, allowing the project to maintain appropriate feed inventories while preserving feed

quality throughout the study. As the only regional manufacturer capable of meeting the required batch size, manufacturing specifications, facility storage limitations, production schedule, and research objectives while offering competitive market pricing, Fish Belt Feeds is the only source for this procurement.

Any person or entity that objects and proposes that the commodity listed is not sole source and can be provided by another person or entity shall submit a written notice to:

Jennifer Mayfield, CPPO

Director of Procurement Services, Chief Procurement Officer

jmayfield@procurement.msstate.edu

Subject Line must read "Sole Source Objection"

The notice shall contain a detailed explanation of why the commodity is not a sole source procurement. Appropriate documentation shall also be submitted if applicable.

If after a review of the submitted notice and documents, MSU determines that the commodity in the proposed sole source request can be provided by another person or entity, then MSU will withdraw the sole source request publication from the procurement portal website and submit the procurement of the commodity to an advertised competitive bid or selection process.

If MSU determines after review that there is only one (1) source for the required commodity, then MSU will appeal to the Public Procurement Review Board. MSU will have the burden of proving that the commodity is only provided by one (1) source.

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