

NOV 18 2003



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

**SUBJECT:** Business Class Airfare

**TO:** All FMD Cooperators

**BACKGROUND:**

Recently, several Cooperators commented that the prevailing FAS policy regarding business class (i.e., premium class other than first-class) travel under the Cooperator program did not adequately take into account the work and travel practices of the private sector. Particularly, the industry feedback indicated that FAS' policy of disallowing the full reimbursement of business class airfare for travelers returning to their duty sites on Friday or Saturday did not reflect the fact that most program-funded travelers (staff and non-staff alike) typically work a full day upon their return, regardless of the day of the week. As a result of the numerous practical and industry considerations that have been brought to FAS' attention, FAS is eliminating the provision concerning normally scheduled workdays.

As a reminder, business class airfare above the full fare economy class rate is not reimbursable under the Market Access Program (MAP).

**ISSUE:**

What is the FAS policy regarding the reimbursement of business class airfare above the full fare economy class rate?

**POLICY:**

(a) FAS will reimburse business class airfare above the full fare economy class rate when regularly scheduled flights between origin and destination points do not offer economy class (or equivalent) airfare and the Cooperator receives written documentation from its travel agent to that effect at the time the tickets are purchased.

(b) FAS will reimburse business class airfare above the full fare economy class rate when business class air travel is necessary to accommodate an eligible traveler's disability. A disability must be substantiated in writing by a physician.

(c) When a traveler's origin and/or destination are outside of the continental United States and the scheduled flight time, beginning with the scheduled departure time, ending with the scheduled arrival time, and including stopovers and changes of planes, exceeds 14 hours, FAS will reimburse:

(i) business class airfare above the full fare economy class rate. If the Cooperator claims reimbursement of business class airfare, then per diem and other allowable expenses will be reimbursable for the day of arrival. However, no expenses will be reimbursable for a rest period or for any non-workdays (e.g., weekends, holidays, personal leave, etc.) immediately following the date of arrival; or

(ii) economy class airfare **plus** per diem and other allowable travel expenses related to a rest period of up to 24 hours, either en route or upon arrival at the destination.

For a trip with multiple destinations, each origin/destination combination will be considered separately when applying the 14-hour rule for eligibility of reimbursement of business class travel or rest period expenses.

For the purpose of this policy, a stopover is the time a traveler spends at an airport, other than the originating or destination airport, which is a normally scheduled part of a flight.

For the purpose of this policy, a change of planes is the time a traveler spends at an airport, other than the originating or destination airport, to disembark from one flight and embark on another. For example, a traveler may not be able to get a single flight from St. Louis to Frankfurt, so the traveler takes one flight to New York, disembarks from that flight, and then embarks on a different flight to Frankfurt.

All travel should follow a direct or usually traveled route. Under no circumstances should a traveler select flights in a manner that extends the scheduled flight time to beyond 14 hours for the purpose of securing eligibility for reimbursement of business class travel.

**(d) This policy is effective beginning December 1, 2003. All activities conducted prior to December 1, 2003, are subject to the previous policy in effect; and will be reviewed in accordance with said policy.**



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