



**Office of
General Services**

**Procurement
Services**

Individually Quick Frozen Fruit and Vegetable Processing Service

Request For Information (RFI) #22925 Group # 02450: Food

This RFI is posted on the Procurement Services website: www.nyspro.ogs.ny.gov

Issued: February 27, 2015

Response Submission Deadline: March 19, 2015

All inquiries shall be made by email to the following address:

Patricia.Kelly-Sbrega@ogs.ny.gov

This is NOT a bid. Please DO NOT request bid documents.

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION.

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
1.1 PURPOSE.....	3
1.2 PERTINENT DATES.....	3
2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THIS RFI	4
3.0 CONTENT AND FORMAT.....	4
3.1 SUBMISSION OF RESPONSES.....	4
3.2 GENERAL TERMS.....	4
4 RFI RESPONSE FORM.....	6
4.1 COMPANY DEMOGRAPHICS.....	6
4.2 CATEGORY SPECIFIC QUESTIONS.....	7
4.3 PRODUCT AVAILABILITY	13
4.4 REGIONS SERVED.....	14
4.5 GENERAL.....	15
4.6 PRICE	16

1. INTRODUCTION

This is a Request for Information (RFI). This RFI is in no way a request for proposals or invitation for bid. Responses to this RFI will not be used as part of a vendor selection process nor will they result in the award of a contract for such services for any future bids. Any response to this RFI will be treated as information only.

1.1 PURPOSE

The New York State Office of General Services (OGS), Procurement Services, is issuing this Request for Information (RFI) to gain a better understanding of current capabilities of growers, producers, processors, distributors and/or vendors to provide individually quick frozen (IQF) processing services for fruits and/or vegetables which have been grown, harvested, produced or processed in the State of New York, for authorized users of NYS centralized contracts. Using the information acquired through this RFI, Procurement Services will review available options and solutions and may make a determination regarding future contracting strategies.

IQF fruits and/or vegetables are produced from fresh, field-selected raw materials which are sorted, washed, trimmed, pitted, peeled, cut according to specified requirements, blanched and frozen in IQF flow-freezer and finally packed in bulk containers after being metal detected.

The IQF process involves freezing the water in the cellular spaces of tissue. As this water freezes it expands forming ice crystals that rupture cell walls which can result in softer texture once a fruit or vegetable is thawed. To reduce cellular damage chill and freeze quickly so that the ice crystals formed are smaller.

For purposes of this Request for Information (RFI), the IQF processing service may include: product identification, grading and acquisition; acceptance at an industrial processing facility; washing and stone removal; trimming; sizing; blanching; freezing, bulk storage, packaging; package storage and shipping.

This RFI is in no way a request for proposals or invitation for bid. Responses to this RFI will not be used as part of a vendor selection process nor will they result in the award of a contract for such services for any future bids. Any response to this RFI will be treated as information only. No entitlement to payment of direct or indirect costs or charges by OGS will arise as a result of submission of responses to this RFI or to OGS for use of such information. Not responding to this RFI does not preclude participation in any future solicitation, if issued.

1.2 PERTINENT DATES

Milestone	Date and Time
RFI Release Date	February 27, 2015
RFI Response Due Date	March 19, 2015, 5:00PM (Eastern)

2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THIS RFI

- Develop a general understanding of business demographics and requirements for creation of individually quick frozen produce items.
- Obtain supply-chain feedback on working with NYS agencies and other Authorized users of NYS contracts, and possible operating models, leading practices, pricing structures and process improvements, related to current procurement models.
- Solicit supplier information on the future direction for processing individually quick frozen foods.
- Ensure that all possible alternatives are considered.
- Gain a more comprehensive understanding of business models and industry best practices.
- Identify issues, roadblocks and barriers to successful implementation.
- Obtain vendor feedback on M/WBE participation when working with New York State.

3.0 CONTENT AND FORMAT

3.1 SUBMISSION OF RESPONSES

In order to facilitate the review of the responses, please provide the information using the RFI Response Form attached to this document. Please enter responses within the yellow cells found next to or below each question. Please maintain the original formatting of this document. Respondents should answer all questions. If a question cannot be answered, provide a brief explanation as to why the question cannot be answered (e.g., N/A outside the scope of available business offering). Please do not leave blanks. Respondents may also submit any existing material or material prepared specifically in response to the RFI which they believe may be of interest or use to the State. Please do not include pricing, or cost estimates specifically prepared for this response. This is not a bid and cost information will not be reviewed or evaluated.

Please rename this document with the following naming convention: **NYS IQF RFI Vendor Name.docx** (.doc format is also acceptable) and submit according to the directions below. OGS reserves the right to have follow-up communications with individual vendors who responded to the RFI.

If any of the information in the vendor response is considered confidential, proprietary or a trade secret, it must be clearly indicated on the appropriate page of the vendor response. Release of such materials is governed by the NYS Freedom of Information Law, which in pertinent part requires the requester to provide specific justification as to why disclosure of particular information in the response would cause substantial injury to the competitive position of the vendor.

Please submit your response electronically via email no later than March 19, 2015, 5:00PM (Eastern) to the Procurement Services: patricia.kelly-sbrega@ogs.ny.gov

3.2 GENERAL TERMS

1. The State will not be liable for any costs of work performed in the preparation and production of any RFI response. By submitting a response to the RFI, vendor agrees not to make any claims for, or have any right to damages because of any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the information, or because of any misinformation or lack of information in the RFI. All responses to the RFI shall become the property of the State of New York.

NYS Office of General Services
RFI 22925 IQF Processing Services

2. Vendors are requested to respond to all questions. This RFI is issued as a means for collecting market research; solely for information and planning purposes. A response does not bind or obligate the responder or the New York State Office of General Services to any agreement of provision or procurement of services referenced. No contract can or will be awarded based on RFI submissions.
3. Since this RFI is designed as a tool to collect information and will not result in a procurement contract, it does not fall under the requirements of State Finance Law §§139-j and 139-k (the Procurement Lobbying Law) and there is no restricted period.
4. Freedom of Information Law and Responses
 - a) The purpose of New York State's Freedom of Information Law (FOIL), which is contained in Public Officers Law Sections 84-90, is to promote the public's right to know the process of governmental decision making and to grant maximum public access to governmental records.
 - b) Thus, a member of the public may submit a FOIL request for disclosure of the contents of the responses submitted to the State in response to this RFI. The responses of respondents are subject to disclosure under FOIL. However, pursuant to Section 87(2) (d) of FOIL, a State agency may deny access to those portions of responses which "are trade secrets or submitted to an agency by a commercial enterprise or derived from information obtained from a commercial enterprise and which if disclosed would cause substantial injury to the competitive position of the subject enterprise." Please note that information which you may claim as proprietary, copyrighted or rights reserved is not necessarily protected from disclosure under FOIL.
 - c) If there is information in your response which you claim meets the definition set forth in Section 87(2) (d), you must so inform us in a letter accompanying your response.
5. The State reserves the right to:
 - a) Postpone or cancel this RFI without further notification to RFI respondents.
 - b) Amend the specifications after the RFI release with appropriate notice to all RFI respondents.
 - c) Request RFI respondents to present supplemental information clarifying their responses, either in writing or in formal presentation.

NYS Office of General Services
RFI 22925 IQF Processing Services
4 RFI RESPONSE FORM

4.1 COMPANY DEMOGRAPHICS

4.1	Company Demographic Questions	Company Response
1.	Company Name	
	Address	
	City, State, Zip Code	
	Number of Employees	
	Years in Business	
2.	Contact Name	
	Title	
	Email Address	
	Phone Number	
3.	Please provide an overview of your company's business model, strategy and scope of individual quick frozen processing services.	
4.	How many production facilities and employees are currently available for individually quick frozen fruit and / or vegetable processing services?	
5.	What are the locations of these facilities?	
6.	Are workers required to have any special training or certifications? If yes, how are they trained?	
7.	What is your annual revenue from IQF Processing?	
8.	Are you a minority-owned business enterprise?	(Please respond Yes or No)
	If yes, in which state(s)?	
9.	Are you a woman-owned business enterprise?	(Please respond Yes or No)
	If yes, in which state(s)?	

**NYS Office of General Services
RFI 22925 IQF Processing Services**

4.1	Company Demographic Questions	Company Response
10.	Are you certified with Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) as a minority and/or woman owned business (M/WBE)?	(Please respond Yes or No)
11.	Does your company have a production facility located within NYS?	
	If no, would your company consider creation and operation of such a facility in NYS?	
12.	Do you currently provide services to New York State Agencies?	(Please respond Yes or No)
	If yes, please list of Agencies	
	If yes, please provide a list of Services Provided	

4.2 CATEGORY SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

4.2	Category Specific Questions	Company Response
1.	Provide a brief summary of your company's experience providing individually quick frozen fruits/vegetables and to whom these services were provided.	
2.	How do you define individually quick frozen produce?	
3.	Please explain the process used by your company to produce individually quick frozen fruits/vegetables?	
4.	Do the items produced contain additives, preservatives or any added ingredients? If yes, please specify	

**NYS Office of General Services
RFI 22925 IQF Processing Services**

5.	Please explain how and where raw produce items are sourced for the IQF process.	
6.	What is the typical time line from harvest to IQF processing?	
7.	Please provide information about industry best practices for product freshness.	
8.	<p>Have you worked with clients that have multiple sets of requirements?</p> <p>For example, NY State contract users may include state and local government organizations such as hospitals, schools, correctional institutions. One customer may require no salt added. Another may require double blanching. A third another may require only domestic products.</p>	
9.	How does your company meet the needs of diverse customer groups?	
10.	<p>How many production facilities and employees are currently available for individually quick frozen fruit/vegetable processing services?</p> <p>What are the locations of these facilities?</p>	

NYS Office of General Services
RFI 22925 IQF Processing Services

11.	Are workers required to have any special training or certifications? If yes, how are they trained?	
	What is done to ensure compliance?	
	What is the production capacity of each facility?	
	What are the days and hours of plant operation?	
12.	What health and safety standards are required to operate an industrial facility for individually quick frozen vegetables?	
	Does your company follow all of these standards?	
	Do you have a recent report that you can share? If yes, please attach.	
13.	Do you require health and safety standards from your produce suppliers to insure that products are safe for human consumption?	
	Do you require GAP or other grower certifications?	
	How do you insure that produce supplier is in compliance?	
14.	Do you have a USDA inspector on site?	
	Do you comply with all USDA food processing standards?	
	Are you an authorized USDA vendor?	
15.	What certifications and licenses does your company possess? If any, please describe the requirement and benefit.	

NYS Office of General Services
RFI 22925 IQF Processing Services

16.	<p>Does your IQF processing facility accept foreign produce (produce items that have been grown or processed outside of the continental United States or its Territories)?</p> <p>If yes, do you have a segregation plan? Please provide details.</p>	
17.	<p>What traceability practices are used to identify products in the case of a recall?</p>	
18.	<p>Has your company's individual quick frozen processing service ever produced an item that has been the root cause of a recall?</p> <p>If yes, please explain cause and remediation.</p>	
19.	<p>Seasonal climate, growing conditions and weather can affect the yield and availability of locally grown produce.</p> <p>How does your company deal with shortages in raw material?</p>	
	<p>How do material shortages impact IQF prices?</p>	
20.	<p>What percentage of the total product cost is attributed to overhead and to profit?</p>	
21.	<p>How does your company ensure that produce freshness and nutritional value is protected?</p>	
22.	<p>Does your company include any additives to the IQF products?</p>	
23.	<p>Does your company have a harvest to processing timeline?</p>	
	<p>Does this timeline vary for different produce items?</p>	

NYS Office of General Services
RFI 22925 IQF Processing Services

24.	How long are <i>bulk</i> IQF products stored in your facility?	
	How long are <i>packaged</i> IQF products stored in your facility?	
25.	What is the typical shelf-life a consumer can expect from an IQF product produced by your company?	
26.	How does your company ensure that finished products get to the customer delivery location?	
27.	Please describe your distribution channel, partners and model.	
28.	Is there a regional boundary to your distribution area? If yes, please provide details.	
29.	How do you ensure customer satisfaction?	
30.	Does your company own or lease refrigerated trucks and/or trailers?	
	Does your company own or lease vehicles for residential delivery?	
	If yes, how many, what type?	
31.	What information would you like to see in a potential solicitation that would help you effectively respond to and price IQF services for NYS?	

**NYS Office of General Services
RFI 22925 IQF Processing Services**

32.	<p>Are there certain metrics that should be considered, measured or tracked when acquiring individual quick frozen processing services?</p> <p>If yes, please specify.</p>	
33.	<p>Please outline the full range of your company's service offerings.</p> <p>Example: menu planning, marketing, brand development, distribution, etc.</p>	
34.	<p>Are there questions that we didn't ask, but should have asked?</p>	

4.3 PRODUCT AVAILABILITY

Please answer, "Yes" or "No" and estimate annual production volume for each item.

4.3 Product Availability	Annual Production Volume	Product Availability	Annual Production Volume
Apple		Lima beans	
Bean (Green)		Butternut squash	
Broccoli		Zucchini	
Carrot		Spinach	
Celery		Peas Sugar Snap	
Corn		Turnip greens	
Onion		Mixed Vegetables	
Peas (Green)		Collard greens	
Russet potato		Green pepper	
Sweet potato		Red pepper	
Other (Specify)		Other (Specify)	
Other (Specify)		Other (Specify)	
Other (Specify)		Other (Specify)	

(Continued)

4.4 REGIONS SERVED

4.4 Regions Served Question	Company Response
<p>Would it be possible for your company to provide processing services statewide in New York?</p> <p>If no, please identify counties your company can serve.</p>	

County	Service Available	
	YES	NO
Albany		
Allegany		
Bronx		
Broome		
Cattaraugus		
Cayuga		
Chautauqua		
Chemung		
Chenango		
Clinton		
Columbia		
Cortland		
Delaware		
Dutchess		
Erie		
Essex		
Franklin		
Fulton		
Genesee		
Greene		
Hamilton		
Herkimer		
Jefferson		
Kings		
Lewis		
Livingston		
Madison		
Monroe		
Montgomery		
Nassau		

County	Service Available	
	YES	NO
New York		
Niagara		
Oneida		
Onondaga		
Ontario		
Orange		
Orleans		
Oswego		
Otsego		
Putnam		
Queens		
Rensselaer		
Richmond		
Rockland		
Saratoga		
Schenectady		
Schoharie		
Schuyler		
Seneca		
St. Lawrence		
Steuben		
Suffolk		
Sullivan		
Tioga		
Tompkins		
Ulster		
Warren		
Washington		
Wayne		
Westchester		
Wyoming		
Yates		

(Continued)

NYS Office of General Services
RFI 22925 IQF Processing Services
4.5 GENERAL

4.5	General Question	Company Response
1.	Briefly explain how your company takes an active approach to helping clients identify savings opportunities.	
2.	Briefly describe your ideas to save the State of New York money when purchasing IQF food products	
3.	From your perspective, what are the most important trends in the Individually Quick Frozen Foods industry?	
4.	What are the key reasons that individual quick frozen processing projects fail or fall short of intended goals?	
5.	What challenges would you see the State encountering it moves forward with administering individual quick frozen processing solicitation or contract?	
6.	Would you be interested in bidding competitively for an individual quick frozen processing award? Why or Why not?	
7.	Please use this space to provide any additional feedback about the industry or your experience working with New York State. Please do not provide cost proposals, sales or marketing materials.	

(Continued)

NYS Office of General Services
RFI 22925 IQF Processing Services
4.6 PRICE

4.6	Price Questions	Company Response
1.	What type of pricing structure does your company currently use with your customer base? (For example: price per pound / per case, FOB destination, etc.)	
2.	Please describe pricing models you would recommend using for New York State.	
3.	How does your pricing structure account for price adjustments? For example increasing production cost or increased raw material cost.	
4.	Are there federal state or local regulatory guidelines related to price? If yes, please explain.	
5.	How frequently are prices adjusted?	
6.	Please provide a sample of your standard customer order form.	
7.	Please provide a copy of your billing documentation structure.	
8.	Presuming that the IQF process cost can be equated to a per pound unit price, how long are these prices typically in place?	
9.	What are the market indicators or indices used to set IQF produce prices?	
10.	Do you require cost escalation clauses in multi-year contracts?	
11.	Please provide any information that would help OGS understand the IQF processing industry.	