



National Finance Center CAPPS Notification

Transfer of FOCUS-Generated Files

June 12, 2020

Reference Number: NFC-1591736807

Dear Customer:

Several of our Agencies have requested automation of the transfer of FOCUS-generated files from our mainframe as part of their efforts to meet United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other departmental mandates to convert from standard File Transfer Protocol (FTP) to secure FTP (SFTP). During the process of implementing some of these projects, we realized that, while not complex, a tremendous amount of time and effort was required to recreate the FOCUS-generated files to match Agency security settings and coordinate testing. This had the impact of delaying the actual SFTP conversion and taking National Finance Center (NFC) staff away from other critical projects. Additionally, because there are literally thousands of FOCUS jobs in Agency libraries, automating them would quite possibly take years to accomplish.

In the March 4, 2020, SFTP workgroup meeting, NFC and Agency stakeholders discussed FOCUS file transfers via SFTP, and at that time we stated that we would remove the FOCUS section from the AD-3113 SFTP File Transfer form. Currently, we are awaiting that form modification to be approved by USDA Headquarters.

Please be aware that the SFTP mandate does not prevent Agencies from continuing to transfer mainframe files with a terminal emulator such as Rumba because that type of transfer occurs within the virtual private network (VPN), allowing a secure transfer.

Automating FOCUS jobs would also take away some Agency control of critical data retrieval. Currently, Agencies can run FOCUS jobs based on their own scheduling requirements and control processing parameters like the data fields and selection criteria. This was the whole purpose of providing FOCUS for our customers. Automation

of these jobs requires NFC to make modifications on behalf of the Agencies and could possibly delay critical data availability.

We considered other solutions like transferring the files that Agencies create from FOCUS and developing job streams to transfer those files, but there are concerns with this. If NFC transmits files from our production environment, those files must be created by NFC for audit purposes. Additionally, the files that are created by users are associated by UserID to the users who created them, and policy does not allow users to create “production” data files.

It is possible that at some point, after SFTP connectivity has been successfully established for all Agencies, NFC could revisit the prospect of automating FOCUS files, but some conditions would have to be met:

- Agencies would have to already have established SFTP connectivity.
- Agencies would have to submit Software Change Requests (SCR) with clear requirements on the data and conditions to build each file.
- A cost would be incurred.

Federal employees with questions concerning this notification should contact their Servicing Personnel Office. Authorized Agency representatives with questions concerning this notification should contact NFC’s Contact Center at either 1-855-632-4468; via email to NFCcontactcenter@usda.gov or via Service Now.