

annuitant may request a review of the decision from the retirement system as provided under § 890.104.

(5) Termination of enrollment for failure to pay premiums within the time frame established in accordance with paragraph (d)(3) of this section is retroactive to the end of the last pay period for which payment has been timely received.

(6) The retirement system will submit all direct premium payments along with its regular health benefits premiums to OPM in accordance with procedures established by that office.

(e) *Direct payment of premiums during periods of LWOP status in excess of 365 days.* (1) An employee who is granted leave without pay under subpart L of part 630 of this chapter which exceeds the 365 days of continued coverage under § 890.303(e) must pay the employee contributions directly to the employing office on a current basis.

(2) Payment must be made after the pay period in which the employee is covered in accordance with a schedule established by the employing office. If the employing office does not receive the payment by the date due, the employing office must notify the employee in writing that continuation of coverage depends upon payment being made within 15 days (45 days for employees residing overseas) after receipt of the notice. If no subsequent payments are made, the employing office terminates the enrollment 60 days (90 days for enrollees residing overseas) after the date of the notice.

(3) If the employee was prevented by circumstances beyond his or her control from making payment within the time frame specified in paragraph (e)(2) of this section, he or she may request reinstatement of the coverage by writing to the employing office. The employee must describe the circumstances that prevented timely notice and file the request within 30 calendar days from the date of termination.

(4) The employing office determines whether the employee is eligible for reinstatement of coverage. If the determination is affirmative, the employing office reinstates the coverage of the employee retroactive to the date of termination. If the determination is negative, the employee may request a review of the decision from the employing agency as provided under § 890.104.

(5) An employee whose coverage is terminated under paragraph (e)(2) of this section may enroll upon his or her return to duty in a pay status in a position in which the employee is eligible for coverage under this part.

4. In § 890.808, the last sentence of paragraph (d)(2) is revised to read as follows:

§ 890.808 Employing office responsibilities.

* * * * *

(d) * * *

(2) * * * If the determination is negative, the individual may request a review of the decision from the employing agency as provided under § 890.104.

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5. In § 890.1109, the last sentence of paragraph (d)(2) is revised to read as follows:

§ 890.1109 Premium payments

* * * * *

(d) * * *

(2) * * * If the determination is negative, the individual may request a review of the decision from the employing agency as provided under § 890.104.

[FR Doc. 96-18515 Filed 7-19-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6325-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 906

[Docket No. FV96-906-1 IFR]

Oranges and Grapefruit Grown in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas; Assessment Rate

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Interim final rule with request for comments.

SUMMARY: This interim final rule establishes an assessment rate for the Texas Valley Citrus Committee (Committee) under Marketing Order No. 906 for the 1996-97 and subsequent fiscal period. The Committee is responsible for local administration of the marketing order which regulates the handling of oranges and grapefruit grown in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas. Authorization to assess orange and grapefruit handlers enables the Committee to incur expenses that are reasonable and necessary to administer the program.

DATES: Effective on August 1, 1996. Comments received by August 21, 1996, will be considered prior to issuance of a final rule.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit written comments concerning this rule. Comments must be

sent in triplicate to the Docket Clerk, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room 2523-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, FAX (202) 720-5698. Comments should reference the docket number and the date and page number of this issue of the Federal Register and will be available for public inspection in the Office of the Docket Clerk during regular business hours.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Belinda G. Garza, McAllen Marketing Field Office, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, 1313 E. Hackberry, McAllen, TX 78501, telephone (210) 682-2833, FAX (210) 682-5942, or Charles L. Rush, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room 2523-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, telephone (202) 690-3670, FAX (202) 720-5698. Small businesses may request information on compliance with this regulation by contacting: Jay Guerber, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, Room 2523-S, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456; telephone: (202) 720-2491, Fax# (202) 720-5698.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This rule is issued under Marketing Agreement and Order No. 906 (7 CFR part 906), regulating the handling of oranges and grapefruit grown in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas, hereinafter referred to as the "order." The marketing agreement and order are effective under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, as amended (7 U.S.C. 601-674), hereinafter referred to as the "Act."

The Department of Agriculture (Department) is issuing this rule in conformance with Executive Order 12866.

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12778, Civil Justice Reform. Under the marketing order now in effect, handlers in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas are subject to assessments. Funds to administer the order are derived from such assessments. It is intended that the assessment rate as issued herein will be applicable to all assessable oranges and grapefruit beginning August 1, 1996, and continuing until amended, suspended, or terminated. This rule will not preempt any State or local laws, regulations, or policies, unless they present an irreconcilable conflict with this rule.

The Act provides that administrative proceedings must be exhausted before parties may file suit in court. Under section 608c(15)(A) of the Act, any handler subject to an order may file

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with the Secretary a petition stating that the order, any provision of the order, or any obligation imposed in connection with the order is not in accordance with law and request a modification of the order or to be exempted therefrom. Such handler is afforded the opportunity for a hearing on the petition. After the hearing the Secretary would rule on the petition. The Act provides that the district court of the United States in any district in which the handler is an inhabitant, or has his or her principal place of business, has jurisdiction to review the Secretary's ruling on the petition, provided an action is filed not later than 20 days after the date of the entry of the ruling.

Pursuant to requirements set forth in the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA), the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has considered the economic impact of this rule on small entities.

The purpose of the RFA is to fit regulatory actions to the scale of business subject to such actions in order that small businesses will not be unduly or disproportionately burdened. Marketing orders issued pursuant to the Act, and the rules issued thereunder, are unique in that they are brought about through group action of essentially small entities acting on their own behalf. Thus, both statutes have small entity orientation and compatibility.

There are approximately 2,000 producers of oranges and grapefruit in the production area and 19 handlers subject to regulation under the marketing order. Small agricultural producers have been defined by the Small Business Administration (13 CFR 121.601) as those having annual receipts of less than \$500,000, and small agricultural service firms are defined as those whose annual receipts are less than \$5,000,000. The majority of orange and grapefruit producers and handlers may be classified as small entities.

The Texas orange and grapefruit marketing order provides authority for the Committee, with the approval of the Department, to formulate an annual budget of expenses and collect assessments from handlers to administer the program. The members of the Committee are producers and handlers of Texas oranges and grapefruit. They are familiar with the Committee's needs and with the costs for goods and services in their local area and are thus in a position to formulate an appropriate budget and assessment rate. The assessment rate is formulated and discussed in a public meeting. Thus, all directly affected persons have an opportunity to participate and provide input.

The Committee met on May 29, 1996, and recommended 1996-97 expenditures of \$1,085,130 and an assessment rate of \$0.125 per 7/10 bushel carton of oranges and grapefruit. In comparison, last year's budgeted expenditures were \$1,008,643. The assessment rate of \$0.125 is \$0.025 higher than last year's established rate. Major expenditures recommended by the Committee for the 1996-97 fiscal year include \$712,800 for advertising, and \$174,000 for the Mexican Fruit Fly support program. Budgeted expenses for these items in 1995-96 were \$500,000 for advertising, and \$174,000 for Mexican Fruit Fly support program.

The assessment rate recommended by the Committee was derived by dividing anticipated expenses by expected shipments of Texas oranges and grapefruit. Texas orange and grapefruit shipments for the year are estimated at 8 million cartons which should provide \$1,000,000 in assessment income. Income derived from handler assessments, along with interest income and funds from the Committee's authorized reserve, will be adequate to cover budgeted expenses. Funds in the reserve will be kept within the maximum permitted by the order.

While this rule will impose some additional costs on handlers, the costs are in the form of uniform assessments on all handlers. Some of the additional costs may be passed on to producers. However, these costs will be offset by the benefits derived by the operation of the marketing order. Therefore, the AMS has determined that this rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. Interested persons are invited to submit information on the regulatory and informational impacts of this action on small business.

The assessment rate established in this rule will continue in effect indefinitely unless modified, suspended, or terminated by the Secretary upon recommendation and information submitted by the Committee or other available information.

Although this assessment rate is effective for an indefinite period, the Committee will continue to meet prior to or during each fiscal period to recommend a budget of expenses and consider recommendations for modification of the assessment rate. The dates and times of Committee meetings are available from the Committee or the Department. Committee meetings are open to the public and interested persons may express their views at these meetings. The Department will evaluate Committee recommendations and other

available information to determine whether modification of the assessment rate is needed. Further rulemaking will be undertaken as necessary. The Committee's 1996-97 budget and those for subsequent fiscal periods will be reviewed and, as appropriate, approved by the Department.

After consideration of all relevant material presented, including the information and recommendation submitted by the Committee and other available information, it is hereby found that this rule, as hereinafter set forth, will tend to effectuate the declared policy of the Act.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553, it is also found and determined upon good cause that it is impracticable, unnecessary, and contrary to the public interest to give preliminary notice prior to putting this rule into effect, and that good cause exists for not postponing the effective date of this rule until 30 days after publication in the Federal Register because: (1) The Committee needs to have sufficient funds to pay its expenses which are incurred on a continuous basis; (2) the 1996-97 fiscal period begins on August 1, 1996, and the marketing order requires that the rate of assessment for each fiscal period apply to all assessable oranges and grapefruit handled during such fiscal period; (3) handlers are aware of this action which was recommended by the Committee at a public meeting and is similar to other assessment rate actions issued in past years; and (4) this interim final rule provides a 30-day comment period, and all comments timely received will be considered prior to finalization of this rule.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 906

Marketing agreements, Grapefruit, Oranges, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR part 906 is amended as follows:

PART 906—ORANGES AND GRAPEFRUIT GROWN IN THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY IN TEXAS

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR part 906 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 601-674.

2. Section 906.235 is added to read as follows:

Note: This section will appear in the Code of Federal Regulations.

§ 906.235 Assessment rate.

On and after August 1, 1996, an assessment rate of \$0.125 per 7/10 bushel carton is established for oranges

and grapefruit grown in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas.

Dated: July 15, 1996.

Robert C. Keeney,

Director, Fruit and Vegetable Division.

[FR Doc. 96-18465 Filed 7-19-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

7 CFR Parts 916 and 917

[Docket No. FV96-916-1 IFR]

Nectarines and Fresh Peaches Grown in California; Assessment Rate

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Interim final rule with request for comments.

SUMMARY: This interim final rule establishes an assessment rate for the Nectarine Administrative Committee and the Peach Commodity Committee (Committees) under Marketing Order Nos. 916 and 917 for the 1996-97 and subsequent fiscal periods. The Committees are responsible for local administration of the marketing orders which regulate the handling of nectarines and fresh peaches grown in California. Authorization to assess nectarine and fresh peach handlers enable the Committees to incur expenses that are reasonable and necessary to administer the programs.

DATES: Effective on March 1, 1996. Comments received by August 21, 1996, will be considered prior to issuance of a final rule.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit written comments concerning this rule. Comments must be sent in triplicate to the Docket Clerk, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room 2523-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, FAX (202) 720-5698. Comments should reference the docket number and the date and page number of this issue of the Federal Register and will be available for public inspection in the Office of the Docket Clerk during regular business hours.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Mary Kate Nelson, Marketing Assistant, California Marketing Field Office, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, 2202 Monterey Street, suite 102B, Fresno, California 93721, (209) 487-5901, FAX (209) 487-5906, or Kenneth G. Johnson, Marketing Specialist, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room 2523-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, telephone (202) 720-5127, FAX (202) 720-5698. Small businesses may request information on compliance with this

regulation by contacting: Jay Guerber, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, Room 2523-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456; telephone: (202) 720-2491, Fax # (202) 720-5698.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This rule is issued under Marketing Agreement No. 916 and Order No. 916, both as amended (7 CFR part 916), regulating the handling of nectarines grown in California, and Marketing Agreement No. 917 and Order No. 917, both as amended (7 CFR part 917), regulating the handling of fresh peaches grown in California, hereinafter referred to as the "orders." The marketing agreements and orders are effective under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, as amended (7 U.S.C. 601-674), hereinafter referred to as the "Act."

The Department of Agriculture (Department) is issuing this rule in conformance with Executive Order 12866.

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12778, Civil Justice Reform. Under the marketing orders now in effect, California nectarine and fresh peach handlers are subject to assessments. Funds to administer the orders are derived from such assessments. It is intended that the assessment rates as issued herein will be applicable to all assessable nectarines and peaches beginning March 1, 1996, and continuing until amended, suspended, or terminated. This rule will not preempt any State or local laws, regulations, or policies, unless they present an irreconcilable conflict with this rule.

The Act provides that administrative proceedings must be exhausted before parties may file suit in court. Under section 608c(15)(A) of the Act, any handler subject to an order may file with the Secretary a petition stating that the order, any provision of the order, or any obligation imposed in connection with the order is not in accordance with law and request a modification of the order or to be exempted therefrom. Such handler is afforded the opportunity for a hearing on the petition. After the hearing the Secretary would rule on the petition. The Act provides that the district court of the United States in any district in which the handler is an inhabitant, or has his or her principal place of business, has jurisdiction to review the Secretary's ruling on the petition, provided an action is filed not later than 20 days after the date of the entry of the ruling.

Pursuant to requirements set forth in the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA), the

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has considered the economic impact of this rule on small entities.

The purpose of the RFA is to fit regulatory actions to the scale of business subject to such actions in order that small businesses will not be unduly or disproportionately burdened. Marketing orders issued pursuant to the Act, and the rules issued thereunder, are unique in that they are brought about through group action of essentially small entities acting on their own behalf. Thus, both statutes have small entity orientation and compatibility.

There are approximately 1,800 producers of nectarines and peaches in the production area and approximately 300 handlers subject to regulation under the marketing order. Small agricultural producers have been defined by the Small Business Administration (13 CFR 121.601) as those having annual receipts less than \$500,000, and small agricultural service firms are defined as those whose annual receipts are less than \$5,000,000. The majority of nectarine and fresh peach producers and handlers may be classified as small entities.

The nectarine and peach marketing orders provide authority for the Committees, with the approval of the Department, to formulate annual budgets of expenses and collect assessments from handlers to administer the programs. The members of the Committees are producers and handlers of California nectarines and fresh peaches. They are familiar with the Committees' needs and with the costs for goods and services in their local area and are thus in a position to formulate appropriate budgets and assessment rates. The assessment rates are formulated and discussed in public meetings. Thus, all directly affected persons have an opportunity to participate and provide input.

The Nectarine Administrative Committee met on May 2, 1996, and unanimously recommended 1996-97 expenditures of \$3,682,728 and an assessment rate of \$0.1850 per 25-pound container or equivalent of nectarines. In comparison, last year's budgeted expenditures were \$3,683,031. The assessment rate of \$0.1850 is the same as last year's established rate. Major expenditures recommended by the Committee for the 1996-97 year include \$1,326,376 for domestic market development, \$972,300 for inspection, \$342,250 in salaries and benefits, and \$120,870 for research.

The Peach Commodity Committee met on May 1, 1996, and unanimously recommended 1996-97 expenditures of \$3,722,757 and an assessment rate of