

system which is not offset by Government-wide savings.

The Chief Information Officer has granted a waiver to Agricultural Marketing Service to employ the RSA digital signature algorithm instead of one conforming to FIPS 186 DSS. The RSA algorithm provides document security that is at least comparable to that specified by FIPS 186 DSS. Unlike the DSS, the algorithm is widely used in a variety of commercial software applications, making development of applications to generate secure USDA documents feasible and cost-effective. Use of DSS would cause major adverse financial impact on the agency, and therefore on its fee-paying customers, because the cost of developing new software employing DSS would be many times the cost of using existing commercial software that employs the RSA algorithm. In accordance with the requirements of FIPS 186, notice of this waiver has been sent to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, United States Department of Commerce; to the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight of the House of Representatives; and to the Committee on Governmental Affairs of the United States Senate.

Anne F. Thomson Reed,

Acting Chief Information Officer.

[FR Doc. 97-10162 Filed 4-18-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-01-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

[FV-96-701]

Fresh Cut Flowers and Fresh Cut Greens Promotion and Information Order; Referendum Order

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA

ACTION: Notice; Referendum order.

SUMMARY: This document gives notice that a referendum will be conducted to determine whether qualified handlers of fresh cut flowers and greens favor the continuation of the Fresh Cut Flowers and Fresh Cut Greens Promotion and Information Order (Order). The Order must be favored by a simple majority of the qualified handlers voting in the referendum. This action establishes the voting period, representative period, method of voting, and agents.

DATES: The referendum will be conducted by mail ballot from June 2 through June 20, 1997. The representative period for establishing voter eligibility shall be the period from

January 1, 1996, through December 31, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Fresh Cut Flowers and Fresh Cut Greens Promotion and Information Order may be obtained from: Referendum Agent, Research and Promotion Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, Room 2535-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, fax (202) 205-2800.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Sonia N. Jimenez, Research and Promotion Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, Room 2535-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, telephone (202) 720-9916 or (888) 720-9917.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: A referendum will be conducted among qualified handlers of fresh cut flowers and greens to determine whether the continuance of the Fresh Cut Flowers and Fresh Cut Greens Promotion and Information Order (Order) (7 CFR Part 1208) is favored by persons voting in the referendum. The Order is authorized under the Fresh Cut Flowers and Fresh Cut Greens Promotion and Information Act (Act) (7 U.S.C. 6801-6814).

The representative period for establishing voter eligibility for the referendum shall be the period from January 1, 1996, through December 31, 1996. Only those wholesale handlers (including, but not limited to, wholesale jobbers, bouquet and floral article manufacturers, auction houses that clear the sale of cut flowers and greens, and retail distribution centers), producers, and importers who have annual sales of \$750,000 or more of fresh cut flowers and greens and who sell those products to exempt handlers, retailers, or consumers are considered qualified handlers and are eligible to vote in the referendum. Persons who have received an exemption from assessment for the entire representative period are ineligible to vote. The referendum shall be conducted by mail ballot from June 2 through 20, 1997.

Section 7 of the Act provides that the Secretary of Agriculture (Secretary) shall conduct a referendum not later than 3 years after the issuance of an order to ascertain whether the order then in effect shall be continued. The Order was issued on December 29, 1994. Paragraph (a)(2) of Section 7 of the Act requires that the Order be approved by a simple majority of all votes cast in the referendum. In addition, paragraph (b) of Section 7 of the Act specifies that each qualified handler eligible to vote in the referendum shall be entitled to cast one vote for each separate facility of the person that is an eligible separate

facility. Eligible separate facility is defined in paragraph (b)(2) of Section 7 of the Act as a handling or marketing facility of a qualified handler that is physically located away from other facilities of the qualified handler or that the business function of the separate facility is substantially different from the functions of other facilities owned or operated by the qualified handler and the annual sales of cut flowers and cut greens to retailers and exempt handlers from the facility are \$750,000 or more annually. The Order shall continue in effect if it is approved by a simple majority of qualified handlers voting in the referendum. If the Secretary determines that the Order has not been approved by a simple majority of all votes in the referendum, or the Secretary determines that suspension or termination of the Order is favored by a simple majority of all votes cast in the referendum, the Secretary shall terminate or suspend the collection of assessments under the Order and suspend or terminate activities under the Order as soon as practicable.

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 [Pub. L. 104-13], the referendum ballot has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and has been assigned OMB number 0581-0093. There are approximately 692 eligible voters representing approximately 923 votes, some of which represent separate facilities. It will take an average of 15 minutes for each voter to read the voting instructions and complete the referendum ballot. The total burden on the total number of voters will be 77 hours.

Referendum Order

It is hereby directed that a referendum be conducted among qualified handlers to determine whether they favor the continuance of the Order. The representative period for establishing voter eligibility for the referendum shall be the period from January 1, 1996, through December 31, 1996. A referendum shall be conducted by mail ballot from June 2 through 20, 1997.

Section 7 of the Act provides that the Secretary of Agriculture (Secretary) shall conduct a referendum not later than 3 years after the issuance of an order to ascertain whether the order then in effect shall be continued. The Order shall be continued only if approved by a simple majority of all votes cast in the referendum.

Referendum procedures were published in the **Federal Register** on April 14, 1997 [62 FR 18033]. The Procedure for the Conduct of Referenda in Connection with the Fresh Cut

Flowers and Fresh Cut Greens Promotion and Information Order [7 CFR 1208.200–1208.207] shall be used to conduct the referendum. Ballots will be mailed to all known qualified handlers on or before June 2, 1997. Eligible voters who do not receive a ballot by mail may call the following toll-free telephone number to receive a ballot: 1 (888) 720–9917. All ballots will be subject to verification. Ballots must be received by the referendum agents no later than June 20, 1997, to be counted.

Sonia N. Jimenez and Martha B. Ransom, Research and Promotion Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 2535–S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090–6456, are designated as the referendum agents of the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct the referendum.

Ballots to be cast in the referendum, and any related material relevant to the referendum, will be mailed by the referendum agents to all known qualified handlers. Qualified handlers, as defined in the Order, who had \$750,000 gross sales of fresh cut flowers and greens during the representative period are eligible to vote. Persons who have received an exemption from assessment for the entire representative period are ineligible to vote.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 1208

Administrative practice and procedure, Advertising, Consumer information, Marketing agreements, Cut flowers, Cut greens, Promotion, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 6801–6814.

Dated: April 14, 1997.

Michael V. Dunn,

Assistant Secretary, Marketing and Regulatory Programs.

[FR Doc. 97–10166 Filed 4–18–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–02–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Notice of Availability of Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Environmental Impact for the Boll Weevil Eradication Loan Program

AGENCY: Farm Service Agency, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of Availability and Finding of No Significant Impact.

SUMMARY: The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is preparing to implement the Boll Weevil Eradication Loan Program as provided in an Act making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug

Administration, and Related Agencies (Act) programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1997, and for other purposes. The specific elements of this program will be to provide financing to State Boll Weevil Eradication Foundations to enable them to conduct or continue to conduct boll weevil eradication activities in cooperation with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of USDA. In accordance with the Act, the loan funds will supplement program cost-share funds appropriated to and administered by APHIS for boll weevil eradication activities.

The FSA has assessed the potential environmental impacts of this proposed action in the attached Environmental Assessment which is, hereby, incorporated into this notice. Based on this analysis, FSA has determined that the proposed action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the Agency will not prepare an environmental impact statement for this proposed action. Although this program is new to FSA as a loan program, APHIS previously operated eradication programs and therefore a 15-day comment period is appropriate. The FSA will make no further decisions regarding this proposed action during a 15-day comment period.

DATES: Written comments regarding this determination should be provided by May 6, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be submitted to Carolyn B. Cooksie, Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs, Farm Service Agency, Stop 0520, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250–0520.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michael R. Hinton, Chief, Direct Loans and Funding Branch, Farm Loan Programs Loan Making Division, Farm Service Agency, telephone 202–720–1632; facsimile: 202–690–1117; or e-mail: mhintonwdc.fsa.usda.gov

Signed at Washington, DC, on April 15, 1997.

Bruce R. Weber,

Acting Administrator, Farm Service Agency.

Farm Service Agency Boll Weevil Eradication Loan Program

Environmental Assessment, March 1997

Agency Contact: Michael R. Hinton, Chief, Funds Management/Direct Loans Branch, Loan Making Division, Farm Service Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, Mail Stop 0522, Washington, DC 20013, (202) 720–1764.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national

origin, gender, religion, age, disability, marital or familial status, or political beliefs. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA Office of Communications at 202–720–5881 (voice) or 202–720–7808 (TDD).

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA, Washington, DC 20250, or call 202–720–7327 (voice) or 202–720–1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.

Table of Contents

I. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action.....	1
II. Alternatives	2
III. Environmental Impacts of Proposed Action and Alternative	3
IV. Listing of Agencies and Persons Consulted.....	10
Appendix. References.....	11

I. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Farm Service Agency (FSA), is proposing to issue regulations for a loan program in support of the National Boll Weevil Cooperative Control Program (BWCP). FSA loans would support and enable Federal/State/private cooperation for components of a national incremental strategy to eradicate the boll weevil from the U.S. Cotton Belt. The proposal would implement provisions of the “Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1997,” which directed the Secretary of Agriculture to implement a new loan program to facilitate efforts to eradicate the boll weevil and to protect previous program areas from reinfestation. This programmatic environmental assessment (EA) considers the potential environmental impacts of FSA’s proposed loan program and its “no action” alternative.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321–4347 (NEPA)) and its implementing regulations, the USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and its cooperators in boll weevil control analyzed the potential environmental effects of the BWCP in a comprehensive, programmatic environmental document, the “National Boll Weevil Cooperative Control Program, Final Environmental Impact Statement—1991” (EIS). Subsequent to the publication of the EIS, new program increments have been analyzed within site-specific EA’s, and minor program changes/or alterations have been analyzed within other supporting reference documents. The