

authority for these data collection activities is granted under U.S. Code Title 7, Section 2204. This statute specifies that "The Secretary of Agriculture shall procure and preserve all information concerning agriculture which he can obtain * * * by the collection of statistics * * * and shall distribute them among agriculturists." National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) received new funding in FY 1997 to start collecting pesticide usage information on chemicals applied after harvest of a commodity. These data are needed to provide accurate information on the type of chemicals and amounts of chemicals applied postharvest. This information collection obtains chemical use and postharvest chemical use data in addition to agricultural resource management survey data. NASS will collect information using a survey.

Need and Use of the Information: NASS will collect information to provide estimates on the extent of residue of chemicals on fruits and vegetables and to produce environmental and economic estimates of the costs of farming. If the information is not collected NASS would not be able to update the Index of Prices Paid by Farmers.

Description of Respondents: Farms.

Number of Respondents: 108,183.

Frequency of Responses: Reporting: On occasion; Annually.

Total Burden Hours: 38,274.

Rural Utilities Service

Title: Accounting Requirements for RUS Electric and Telecommunications Borrowers.

OMB Control Number: 0572-0003.

Summary of Collection: Rural Utilities Service (RUS) manages loan programs in accordance with the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, 7 U.S.C. 901 *et seq.*, as amended. Currently 800 rural electric and 830 telecommunications systems have outstanding loans from RUS. RUS does not own or operate rural electric facilities. Its function is to provide, through self-liquidating loans and technical assistance, adequate and dependable electric and telecommunications service to rural people under rates and conditions that permit productive use of these utility services. RUS borrowers, as all businesses, need accounting systems for their own internal use as well as external use. Such records are maintained as part of normal business practices. Without systems, no records would exist, for example, or what they own or what they owe. Such records systems provide borrowers with information that is required by the manager and board of directors to

operate on a daily basis, to complete their tax returns, and to support requests to state regulatory commissions for rate approvals.

Need and Use of the Information: RUS collects information to evaluate a borrower's financial performance, to determine whether current loans are at risk, and to determine the credit worthiness of future loans. If basic financial records were not maintained, the borrower, its investors, and RUS would be unable to evaluate a borrower's financial performance.

Description of Respondents: Not-for-profit institutions; Business or other for-profit.

Number of Respondents: 1,630.

Frequency of Responses:

Recordkeeping.

Total Burden Hours: 45,520.

Nancy B. Sternberg,

Departmental Clearance Officer.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

[FV-98-305]

United States Standards for Grades of Oranges (California and Arizona), United States Standards for Grades of Grapefruit (California and Arizona), United States Standards for Grades of Tangerines and the United States Standards for Grades of Lemons

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This document gives notice of the availability of revisions to the United States Standards for Grades of Oranges, Grapefruit, Tangerines and Lemons. The changes will provide a minimum 25-count sample to be applied to tolerances for defects, revise the grades to make them uniform and consistent with each other and other recently revised U.S. grade standards, and, delete references to outdated industry practices and terminology.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This notice is effective December 27, 1999.

ADDRESSES: The revised standards are available from Kenneth R. Mizelle, Fresh Products Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 2065, South Building, STOP 0240, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090-6456; or at www.ams.gov/standards/frutmrkt.htm.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kenneth R. Mizelle (202) 720-2185.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 203(c) of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended, directs and authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture "to develop and improve standards of quality, condition, quantity, grade, and packaging and recommend and demonstrate such standards in order to encourage uniformity and consistency in commercial practices * * *." AMS is committed to carrying out this authority in a manner that facilitates the marketing of agricultural commodities and to making copies of official standards available upon request. The United States Standards for Grades of Oranges (California and Arizona), United States Standards for Grades of Grapefruit (California and Arizona), United States Standards for Grades of Tangerines and the United States Standards for Grades of Lemons no longer appear in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR); however, they are maintained by USDA.

AMS is revising the United States Standards for Grades of Oranges (California and Arizona), United States Standards for Grades of Grapefruit (California and Arizona), United States Standards for Grades of Tangerines and the United States Standards for Grades of Lemons using the procedures it published in the August 13, 1997, **Federal Register** and that appear in Part 36 of Title 7 of the CFR.

The notice, with a request for comments on the proposed changes, was published in the **Federal Register** on June 17, 1999 (64 FR 32666-32703).

The petitioner (Sunkist Growers), which represents the majority of citrus growers and packers in California, requested that the standards be revised to provide a minimum 25-count sample applied to tolerances for defects. In addition, AMS proposed several other changes to promote greater uniformity and consistency in application of the standard. These standards have not been changed within the last 34 to 50 years, depending on the commodity. These changes are needed to bring the standards into conformity with current cultural and marketing practices and to promote more uniform application of the U.S. grade standards.

AMS published the notice in the **Federal Register** with an outline of the specific proposed changes and provided for a comment period of 60 days, which ended August 16, 1999. No comments were received on the notice during that time. However, a request from industry to reopen and extend the comment period was received on August 16, 1999. The request was granted, and the comment period was extended through September 20, 1999. A total of 2

comments were received, one from an organization of agricultural product receivers and one from the petitioner.

The receivers comments stated, in summary, that they "strongly oppose the proposed changes." They suggested that "The Department shall define the terms 'Injury, Damage, Serious Damage and Very Serious Damage' but shall not interfere with the actual areas prescribed for each defect as it is in the current definitions. The Department shall also restrain from changing the terms, 'FREE FROM' to 'FREE FROM INJURY BY BRUISES' in the proposed U.S. Standard for U.S. Fancy Grade of Oranges, (California and Arizona)." It is the receivers' contention that the changes will allow 100 percent bruising plus 12 percent damage by bruising in lots of U.S. Fancy oranges. AMS disagrees with this assertion and feels that there has been some misunderstanding with regard to the proposed changes. This portion of the proposal was not made at the request of the petitioner, but rather was initiated by AMS as part of its efforts to promote greater uniformity and consistency in application of the standard. The definitions that were included in the proposed standards are the same definitions that are currently used in the instructional manuals to provide inspectors with guidelines as to what constitutes a bruise. Additionally, these definitions are used in other citrus grades. The definitions prevent inspectors from scoring fruit with slight skin indentations as bruises when, in fact, there is no injury to the skin or flesh of the fruit. Accordingly, AMS believes that the proposal should be adopted. The revision also provides language that is consistent with other citrus grades.

The receivers comments stated: "When one thinks of a 'FANCY FRUIT,' the mind creates a picture of a perfect fruit, without blemishes, free from any injury of any kind and of perfect characteristic color an idea of the ultimate description of excellence and perfection. This is the FANCY GRADE OF CITRUS that we know and we want to keep it that way. Therefore these changes are unnecessary, preposterous, not warranted and bias [sic] against the receiving sector of the produce industry, and the consumer." AMS disagrees with the commenter's assertion that Fancy fruit is perfect, without blemishes and free from injury of any kind. Every AMS fruit and vegetable grade standard provides for degrees of defects, as well as defect tolerances, thus allowing for "less than perfect" fruit, up to a certain point. The purpose of these standards, established by USDA in cooperation

with the citrus industry in 1948, 1950, 1957 and 1964, is to provide attainable grading classifications that can be utilized by the entire fruit and vegetable community, not to regulate difficult, if not impossible, parameters of perfection.

The receivers are also "vigorously opposed to the change for the DECAY TOLERANCES at shipping point for each grade listed in the notice." They note that "this change would give an extra advantage to the packers and growers." AMS disagrees with the receivers. The proposed change would increase the decay tolerance to a total of 1 percent at shipping point, from a previous $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1 percent. The 1 percent shipping point decay tolerance is already widely used in citrus and other fruit and vegetable standards. AMS can foresee no impact on the receivers or the consumers in this regard because the decay tolerance of 3 percent at destination remains unchanged.

Regarding the grapefruit standard, the receivers recommended that allowable skin thickness remain at not more than $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch to meet the "fairly thin skinned" requirement and more than $\frac{7}{16}$ inch to meet the requirement of "excessively thick skinned." AMS recommended a slight increase for skin thickness ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch and $\frac{5}{8}$ inch respectively), based on a fruit diameter of $4\frac{1}{8}$ inch. Smaller or larger areas would be allowed, proportionately, for smaller or larger fruit. This new scoring guide is consistent with the recently-revised U.S. standards for Florida grapefruit standard and will remain as proposed.

The receivers stated they did not understand a phrase contained in the grapefruit standard on "Injury, (k)," pertaining to green spots, which reads, "Green spots * * * which are green and more than $\frac{1}{4}$ in number." This was a typographical error in the notice and will be changed to read, "Green spots * * * which are green and more than 4 in number."

The receivers contend that the proposed scoring guidelines for creasing of tangerines, in all but the U.S. No. 1 grade, are too lenient. AMS, however, believes that there is a distinction between the severity of creasing allowed in each grade in addition to the amount of area affected by creasing of any degree. In the proposed tangerine grade, for each lower grade, a more severe degree of creasing is allowed. This is the standard method of scoring for any defect, regardless of commodity. Additionally, the proposed scoring criteria for creasing also provides that no more than a specified area of any visible creasing be allowed. This scoring

guide is consistent with the U.S. standards for Florida tangerines and provides an objective basis for scoring this defect.

Also concerning the tangerine standard, the receivers contended that scoring guidelines in the U.S. No. 3 grade (very serious damage) are too lenient for the following defects: skin breakdown, scale, sprayburn, buckskin, scab and green spots. The receivers recommended an affected area of 20 percent of the surface before scoring. In the proposal, AMS considered an affected area of over 25 percent of the fruit surface for these defects to be scorable. The original standard contained a scoring guide for these defects defined as "when it very seriously detracts from the appearance." However, AMS believes that the receivers recommendation of 20 percent is too restrictive. Further, the new scoring guide, which is consistent with the U.S. standards for Florida tangerines with regard to virtually all defects, provides an objective method for scoring, as opposed to the subjective method contained in the old U.S. standard. Accordingly, AMS is making this change as proposed.

The receivers consider the proposed skin breakdown scoring guide in the lemon standard of allowing $\frac{1}{4}$ inch as being "excessive." They stated that $\frac{1}{4}$ inch "represents 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ % on a fruit 2 inches in diameter." They suggested an area not exceeding $\frac{3}{16}$ inch for damage and not exceeding $\frac{1}{2}$ inch for serious damage. Their recommendation was mathematically based on their belief that these averages represented 10% and 25%, respectively, of the area of the fruit. These percentages appear to have been based on an "area" 2 inches in diameter as opposed to a "sphere" of 2 inches in diameter which has a much larger surface area. AMS, when determining areas allowed for defects, considers both the mathematical area and the appearance of the defect for the commodity in question. AMS has concluded that the scoring guideline of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch for damage, based on a lemon 2 inches in diameter, does not allow an excessive amount of the defect on the fruit, before it is scored as a defect. However, in light of the receivers' concern with the serious damage skin breakdown scoring guide of not exceeding $\frac{5}{8}$ inch, AMS has concluded that this could be considered an excessive amount for this defect. Consequently, AMS agrees with the receivers' suggestion of not exceeding $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter for serious damage by skin breakdown.

The receivers agree to the proposed change to create separate shipping point

and en route or at destination tolerances for the commodities appearing in the notice.

The petitioner submitted the only other comment received by AMS. They stated, "We strongly support proposed changes in the procedures for sampling fruit to measure against defect tolerances. The new standard calling for a minimum 25 count sample promotes greater uniformity and consistency within the standards and affords a fairer and more realistic evaluation of the arrival quality of fruit shipments. Additionally, we view favorably the proposed change in tolerance standard for a grapefruit rind thickness; elimination of the juice content requirement for lemons; and a change of measurement of surface blemishes on fruit as a percentage of the surface area instead of a specific size definition of the blemish, allowing for a more consistent means of measurement relative to the actual size of the fruit. In general, the proposed modifications eliminate many obsolete standards and criteria that are not reflective of modern production conditions and the realities of the modern marketplace."

AMS also discovered several typographical omissions in the lemon standard. The section pertaining to standard sizing and fill (a) was inadvertently omitted. Also, the letter designations for the defect definition sub-paragraphs relating to bruising and skin breakdown under damage and serious damage (h, i, j and k respectively) were inadvertently omitted. Although the definitions remain unchanged from the original notice, to eliminate any confusion, the letter designations (h, i, and j) will be included in the final U.S. standard. With regard to what should have been designated paragraph "k" (serious damage by skin breakdown), the definition is being changed slightly based on the comments received.

Accordingly, further changes to the notice revising the United States Standards for Grades of Oranges (California and Arizona), United States Standards for Grades of Grapefruit (California and Arizona), United States Standards for Grades of Tangerines and the United States Standards for Grades of Lemons as published in the **Federal Register** at 64 FR 32666-32703 on June 17, 1999, are made as described above.

The revised standards are available either through the above address or by accessing AMS's Home Page on the Internet at www.ams.usda.gov/standards/frutmrkt.htm.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1621-1627.

Dated: November 16, 1999.

Robert C. Keeney,

Deputy Administrator, Fruit and Vegetable Programs.

[FR Doc. 99-30420 Filed 11-23-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Docket No. 99-051N]

Equivalence Evaluation Process for Foreign Meat and Poultry Food Regulatory Systems

AGENCY: Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is announcing a public meeting on December 14, 1999 to (1) report the Pathogen Reduction/HACCP equivalence status of each country that exports meat or poultry to the United States, (2) explain the rationale for acceptance of alternative PR/HACCP sanitary measures, and (3) receive additional public comments on the state of FSIS equivalence activities.

DATES: The public meeting will be held on December 14, 1999, from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. No preregistration is necessary.

ADDRESSES: The public meeting will be held in the Federal Room, Washington Plaza Hotel, 10 Thomas Circle NW (at Massachusetts Avenue and 14th Street), Washington, DC 20009, (202) 842-1300. Attendees requiring sign-language interpreters or other special accommodation should contact Mr. Clark Danford (identified below in **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) by November 30, 1999. Transcripts of the meeting will be available in the FSIS Docket Office, Room 102, 300 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20250-3700.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Clark Danford, Acting Director, International Policy Division; Office of Policy, Program Development, and Evaluation; (202) 720-6400, or by electronic mail to clark.danford@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: FSIS published a notice in the **Federal Register** of March 12, 1999 (64 FR 12281) announcing the availability of a document that describes the Agency's process for evaluating foreign meat and poultry inspection systems to determine whether they are equivalent to the United States' inspection system. FSIS solicited public comments on this

document and held a public meeting on April 14, 1999, to discuss the equivalence evaluation process. The comment period ended May 11, 1999. This notice announces a follow-up public meeting to (1) report the Pathogen Reduction/HACCP equivalence status of each country that exports meat or poultry to the United States, (2) explain the rationale for acceptance of alternative PR/HACCP sanitary measures, and (3) receive additional public comments on the state of FSIS equivalence activities.

Departmental Regulation 4300-4

FSIS has considered, under Department Regulation 4300-4, "Civil Rights Impact Analysis," dated September 1993, the potential civil rights impact of this notice on minorities, women, and persons with disabilities. FSIS anticipates that this notice will not have a negative or disproportionate impact on minorities, women, and persons with disabilities. Notices generally are designed to provide information and increase public awareness of important policy developments. Public involvement in all segments of policy development is important. Consequently, in an effort to better ensure that minorities, women, and persons with disabilities are aware of this notice of a public meeting, FSIS will announce the publication of this **Federal Register** notice in the *FSIS Constituent Update*.

FSIS provides a weekly *FSIS Constituent Update*, which is communicated via fax to over 300 organizations and individuals. In addition, the update is available on line through the FSIS web page located at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov>. The update is used to provide information regarding FSIS policies, procedures, regulations, **Federal Register** notices, FSIS public meetings, recalls, and any other types of information that could affect or would be of interest to our constituents. This constituent fax list consists of industry, trade, and farm groups, consumer interest groups, allied health professionals, scientific professionals, and other individuals that have requested to be included. Through these various channels, FSIS is able to provide information to a much broader, more diverse audience than would otherwise be possible. For more information or to be added to the constituent fax list, fax your request to the Agency's Congressional and Public Affairs Office, at (202) 720-5704.