

The Committee reviewed and unanimously recommended 2002–03 expenditures of \$1,226,022, which included a decrease in the Mexican Fruit Fly program and an increase in the management and administration of the program. Budgeted expenses for the advertising program and the compliance program remained the same as last year. In arriving at the budget, the Committee considered information from various sources, including the Executive Committee. The Committee considered leaving the established higher assessment rate unchanged. However, it concluded that the reserves currently held by the Committee are higher than the Committee needs to administer the program.

The proposed assessment rate of \$0.11 per $\frac{7}{10}$ -bushel carton of assessable oranges and grapefruit was determined by dividing the total budget by the 10 million $\frac{7}{10}$ -bushel cartons of oranges and grapefruit estimated for the 2002–03 fiscal period. The \$0.11 rate will provide \$1,100,000 in assessment income. The additional \$126,022 to fund the Committees estimated expenses will come from the Committee's reserve, a refund of an overpayment from the Mexican Fruit Fly program, and interest income.

A review of historical information (October 1998 through May 2002) and preliminary information pertaining to the upcoming fiscal period indicates that the packinghouse door price for the 2002–03 fiscal period could range, monthly, from \$1.65 to \$10.36 per $\frac{7}{10}$ -bushel carton of Texas oranges and grapefruit, depending upon the fruit variety, size, and quality. Therefore, the estimated assessment revenue for the 2002–03 fiscal period as a percentage of total grower (packinghouse door) revenue could range between 6.67 percent and 1.06 percent.

This action decreases the assessment obligation imposed on handlers. Assessments are applied uniformly on all handlers, and some of the costs may be passed on to producers. However, decreasing the assessment rate reduces the burden on handlers, and may reduce the burden on producers. In addition, the Committee's meeting was widely publicized throughout the Texas orange and grapefruit industry and all interested persons were invited to attend the meeting and participate in Committee deliberations on all issues. Like all Committee meetings, the August 28, 2002, meeting was a public meeting and all entities, both large and small, were able to express views on this issue. Finally, interested persons are invited to submit information on the regulatory

and informational impacts of this action on small businesses.

This action imposes no additional reporting or recordkeeping requirements on either small or large Texas orange and grapefruit handlers. As with all Federal marketing order programs, reports and forms are periodically reviewed to reduce information requirements and duplication by industry and public sector agencies.

USDA has not identified any relevant Federal rules that duplicate, overlap, or conflict with this rule.

A small business guide on complying with fruit, vegetable, and specialty crop marketing agreements and orders may be viewed at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/moab.html>. Any questions about the compliance guide should be sent to Jay Guerber at the previously mentioned address in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section.

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 2002–03 fiscal period began on August 1, 2002, 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; (2) this action decreases the assessment rate for assessable oranges and grapefruit beginning with the 2002–03 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 60-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

Grapefruit, Marketing agreements, 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 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 revised to read as follows:

§ 906.235 Assessment rate.

On and after August 1, 2002, an assessment rate of \$0.11 per $\frac{7}{10}$ -bushel carton is established for oranges and grapefruit grown in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas.

Dated: October 1, 2002.

A.J. Yates,

Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service.

[FR Doc. 02–25429 Filed 10–4–02; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 920

[Docket No. FV02–920–4 FR]

Kiwifruit Grown in California; Increased Assessment Rate

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This rule increases the assessment rate established for the Kiwifruit Administrative Committee (Committee) for the 2002–03 and subsequent fiscal periods from \$0.03 to \$0.045 per 22-pound volume fill container or equivalent of kiwifruit. The Committee locally administers the marketing order which regulates the handling of kiwifruit grown in California. Authorization to assess kiwifruit handlers enables the Committee to incur expenses that are reasonable and necessary to administer the program. The fiscal period began August 1 and ends July 31. The assessment rate will remain in effect indefinitely unless modified, suspended, or terminated.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 8, 2002.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Toni Sasselli, Marketing Assistant, or Rose M. Aguayo, Marketing Specialist, California Marketing Field Office, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, 2202 Monterey Street, Suite 102B, Fresno, California 93721; telephone: (559) 487–5901; Fax: (559) 487–5906; or George Kelhart, Technical Advisor, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and

Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, STOP 0237, Washington, DC 20250-0237; telephone: (202) 720-2491; Fax: (202) 720-8938.

Small businesses may request information on complying with this regulation by contacting Jay Guerber, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, STOP 0237, Washington, DC 20250-0237; telephone: (202) 720-2491; Fax: (202) 720-8938; or e-mail: Jay.Guerber@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This rule is issued under Marketing Order No. 920, as amended (7 CFR part 920), regulating the handling of kiwifruit grown in California, hereinafter referred to as the "order." The order is 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 (USDA) is issuing this rule in conformance with Executive Order 12866.

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12988, Civil Justice Reform. Under the marketing order now in effect, California kiwifruit handlers 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 kiwifruit beginning on August 1, 2002, and continue 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 USDA 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 USDA 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 USDA's ruling on the petition, provided an action is filed not later than 20 days after the date of the entry of the ruling.

This rule increases the assessment rate established for the Committee for

the 2002-03 and subsequent fiscal periods from \$0.03 to \$0.045 per 22-pound volume fill container or equivalent of kiwifruit.

The California kiwifruit marketing order provides authority for the Committee, with the approval of USDA, to formulate an annual budget of expenses and collect assessments from handlers to administer the program. The members of the Committee are producers of California kiwifruit. They are familiar with the Committee's needs and 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 at a public meeting. Thus, all directly affected persons have an opportunity to participate and provide input.

For the 2000-01 and subsequent fiscal periods, the Committee recommended, and USDA approved, an assessment rate that would continue in effect from fiscal period to fiscal period unless modified, suspended, or terminated by USDA upon recommendation and information submitted by the Committee or other information available to USDA.

The Committee met on July 10, 2002, and unanimously recommended 2002-03 expenditures of \$80,760 and an assessment rate of \$0.045 per 22-pound volume fill container or equivalent of kiwifruit. In comparison, last year's budgeted expenditures were \$78,000. The assessment rate of \$0.045 is \$0.015 higher than the rate currently in effect. The higher assessment rate is needed to offset the 2002-03 increase in salaries and vehicle expenses, and to keep the operating reserve at an adequate level.

The following table compares major budget expenditures recommended by the Committee for the 2002-03 and 2001-02 fiscal periods:

Budget expense categories	2002-03	2001-02
Administrative Staff & Field Salaries	\$55,500	\$50,000
Travel	5,000	9,500
Office Costs/Annual Audit	14,500	14,500
Vehicle Expense Account	5,760	4,000

The assessment rate recommended by the Committee was derived using the following formula: Anticipated expenses (\$80,760), plus the desired 2003 ending reserve (\$36,287), minus the 2002 beginning reserve (\$23,979), divided by the total estimated 2002-03 shipments (2,068,182 22-pound volume fill containers). This calculation resulted in the \$0.045 assessment rate.

This rate will provide sufficient funds to meet the anticipated expenses of \$80,760 and result in a July 2003 ending reserve of \$36,287, which is acceptable to the Committee. The July 2003 ending reserve funds (estimated to be \$36,287) will be within the maximum permitted by the order, approximately one fiscal period's expenses (\$920.41).

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

Although this assessment rate will be in effect 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 USDA. Committee meetings are open to the public and interested persons may express their views at these meetings. USDA 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 2002-03 budget and those for subsequent fiscal periods would be reviewed and, as appropriate, approved by USDA.

Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis

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. Accordingly, AMS has prepared this final regulatory flexibility analysis.

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 326 producers of kiwifruit in the production area and approximately 52 handlers subject to regulation under the marketing order. Small agricultural producers are defined by the Small Business Administration (13 CFR 121.201) as those having annual receipts less than \$750,000, and small agricultural service firms are defined as

those whose annual receipts are less than \$5,000,000.

None of the 52 handlers subject to regulation have annual kiwifruit sales of at least \$5,000,000. Two of the 326 producers subject to regulation have annual sales of at least \$750,000. Thus, the majority of handlers and producers of kiwifruit may be classified as small entities.

This rule increases the assessment rate established for the Committee and collected from handlers for the 2002–03 and subsequent fiscal periods from \$0.03 to \$0.045 per 22-pound volume fill container or equivalent of kiwifruit. The Committee unanimously recommended 2002–03 expenditures of \$80,760 and an assessment rate of \$0.045 per 22-pound volume fill container or equivalent of kiwifruit. The assessment rate of \$0.045 is \$0.015 higher than the 2001–02 rate. The quantity of assessable kiwifruit for the 2002–03 fiscal period is estimated at 2,068,182 22-pound volume fill container or equivalent of kiwifruit. Thus, the \$0.045 rate should provide \$93,068 in assessment income and be adequate to meet this year's expenses.

The following table compares major budget expenditures recommended by the Committee for the 2002–03 and 2001–02 fiscal years:

Budget expense categories	2002–03	2001–02
Administrative Staff & Field Salaries	\$55,500	\$50,000
Travel	5,000	9,500
Office Costs/Annual Audit	14,500	14,500
Vehicle Expense Account	5,760	4,000

The Committee reviewed and unanimously recommended 2002–03 expenditures of \$80,760, which included increases in administrative salaries and vehicle expenses. Prior to arriving at this budget, the Committee considered alternative expenditure levels, but ultimately decided that the recommended levels were reasonable to properly administer the order. The assessment rate recommended by the Committee was derived using the following formula: Anticipated expenses (\$80,760), plus the desired 2003 ending reserve (\$36,287), minus the 2002 beginning reserve (\$23,979), divided by the total estimated 2002–03 shipments (2,068,182 22-pound volume fill containers). This calculation resulted in the \$0.045 assessment rate. This rate will provide sufficient funds to meet the anticipated expenses of \$80,760 and result in a July 2003 ending reserve of \$36,287, which is acceptable

to the Committee. The July 2003 ending reserve funds (estimated to be \$36,287) will be within the maximum permitted by the order, approximately one fiscal period's expenses (§ 920.41).

A review of historical information and preliminary information pertaining to the upcoming fiscal period indicates that the grower price for the 2002–03 season could range between \$9.50 and \$13.00 per 22-pound volume fill container or equivalent of kiwifruit. Therefore, the estimated assessment revenue for the 2002–03 fiscal period as a percentage of total grower revenue could range between 0.5 and 0.3 percent.

This action increases the assessment obligation imposed on handlers. While assessments impose some additional costs on handlers, the costs are minimal and uniform 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. In addition, the Committee's meeting was widely publicized throughout the California kiwifruit industry and all interested persons were invited to attend the meeting and participate in Committee deliberations on all issues. Like all Committee meetings, the July 10, 2002, meeting was a public meeting and all entities, both large and small, were able to express views on this issue.

This rule imposes no additional reporting or recordkeeping requirements on either small or large California kiwifruit handlers. As with all Federal marketing order programs, reports and forms are periodically reviewed to reduce information requirements and duplication by industry and public sector agencies.

USDA has not identified any relevant Federal rules that duplicate, overlap, or conflict with this rule.

A proposed rule concerning this action was published in the **Federal Register** on August 15, 2002 (67 FR 53322). Copies of the proposed rule were also mailed or sent via facsimile to all California kiwifruit handlers. Finally, the proposal was made available through the Internet by the Office of the Federal Register and USDA. A 30-day comment period ending September 16, 2002, was provided for interested persons to respond to the proposal. No comments were received.

A small business guide on complying with fruit, vegetable, and specialty crop marketing agreements and orders may be viewed at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/moab.html>. Any questions about the compliance guide should be sent to Jay Guerber at the previously mentioned

address in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section.

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 also found and determined that good cause exists for not postponing the effective date of this rule until 30 days after publication in the **Federal Register** because: (1) Handlers are already receiving the 2002–03 kiwifruit crop and the marketing order requires that the rate of assessment apply to all assessable kiwifruit handled during the 2002–03 and subsequent seasons; (2) the Committee needs to have sufficient funds to pay its expenses which are incurred on a continuous basis; and (3) handlers are aware of this action which was unanimously recommended by the Committee at a public meeting and is similar to other assessment rate actions issued in past years. Also, a 30-day comment period was provided for in the proposed rule, and no comments were received.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 920

Kiwifruit, Marketing agreements.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR part 920 is amended as follows:

PART 920—KIWIFRUIT GROWN IN CALIFORNIA

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR part 920 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 601–674.

2. Section 920.213 is revised to read as follows:

§ 920.213 Assessment rate.

On and after August 1, 2002, an assessment rate of 0.045 per 22-pound volume fill container or equivalent of kiwifruit is established for kiwifruit grown in California.

Dated: October 1, 2002.

A.J. Yates,

Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service.

[FR Doc. 02–25428 Filed 10–4–02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–02–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Commodity Credit Corporation****7 CFR Part 1437****RIN 0560-AG82****Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance for Sea Grass and Sea Oats****AGENCY:** Commodity Credit Corporation, USDA.**ACTION:** Final rule.

SUMMARY: This rule amends the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) regulations governing the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) to add sea grass and sea oats as eligible crops as provided for in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (2002 Act). The intended affect of this rule is to make producers of these crops eligible for disaster assistance under NAP.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 7, 2002.**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Steve Peterson, Chief, Noninsured Assistance Programs Branch (NAPB); Production, Emergencies, and Compliance Division (PECD); Farm Service Agency (FSA); United States Department of Agriculture, STOP 0517, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0517; telephone (202) 720-5172; e-mail Steve_Peterson@wdc.usda.gov. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication (Braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact the USDA Target Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Notice and Comment**

Section 196 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement Act of 1996 (1996 Act) is the statutory authority for NAP. Section 10101 of the 2002 Act amended section 196 to provide for the new crop eligibility implemented by this rule. Section 161 of the 1996 Act requires that the provisions of Title I of the 1996 Act, which includes section 196, be issued without regard to the notice and comment provisions of 5 U.S.C. 553 or the Statement of Policy of the Secretary of Agriculture effective July 24, 1971, (36 FR 13804) relating to notices of proposed rulemaking and public participation in rulemaking. These regulations are thus issued as final.

Executive Order 12866

This final rule has been determined to be not significant under Executive Order 12866 and therefore has not been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Federal Assistance Programs

The title and number of the Federal assistance program, as found in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance, to which this final rule applies are:

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance—10.451.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

The Regulatory Flexibility Act is not applicable to this rule because neither the Secretary of Agriculture nor CCC are required by 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law to publish a notice of proposed rulemaking for the subject matter of this rule.

Environmental Assessment

The environmental impacts of this rule have been considered in accordance with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*, the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), and FSA's regulations for compliance with NEPA, 7 CFR part 799. FSA has concluded that this rule is categorically excluded from further environmental review and documentation as evidenced by the completion of an environmental evaluation. No extraordinary circumstances or other unforeseeable factors exist which would require preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. A copy of the environmental evaluation is available for inspection and review upon request.

Executive Order 12778

The final rule has been reviewed in accordance with Executive Order 12778. This final rule preempts State laws to the extent such laws are inconsistent with the provisions of this rule. The provisions of this rule are not retroactive. Before any judicial action may be brought concerning the provisions of this rule, the administrative remedies must be exhausted.

Executive Order 12372

This program is not subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, which require intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. See the notice related to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V, published at 48 FR 29115 (June 24, 1983).

Unfunded Mandates

The provisions of Title II of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (UMRA) do not apply to this rule because neither the Secretary of Agriculture nor CCC are required by 5

U.S.C. 553 or any other law to publish a notice of proposed rulemaking for the subject matter of this rule. Also, the rule imposes no mandates as defined in UMRA.

Paperwork Reduction Act

Section 196 of the 1996 Act requires that these regulations be issued without regard to the Paperwork Reduction Act. This means that the normal 60-day public comment period and OMB approval of the information collections required by this rule are not necessary before the regulations may be made effective. However, FSA will still request approval of the new information collections required by this rule.

Government Paperwork Elimination Act

CCC and FSA are committed to compliance with the Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA) and the Freedom to E-File Act, which require Government agencies in general, and FSA in particular, to provide the public the option of submitting information or transacting business electronically to the maximum extent possible. The forms and other information collection activities required by participation in the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program are not yet fully implemented in a way that would allow the public to conduct business with FSA electronically. Accordingly, applications for this program may be submitted at FSA offices by mail or FAX.

Background

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program is operated by FSA and CCC under the authority section 196 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (7 U.S.C. 7333) (the 1996 Act). The 1996 Act requires that eligible program crops be crops that are used for food or fiber or that are specifically identified by the statute. Sea grass and sea oats were neither and therefore were not eligible. Section 10101 of the 2002 Act amended section 196 of the 1996 Act to specifically identify them as eligible crops.

Section 196 of the 1996 Act provides that the Secretary of Agriculture shall operate a noninsured crop disaster assistance program to provide coverage equivalent to the catastrophic risk protection otherwise available under section 508(b) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act (7 U.S.C. 1508(b)). Coverage under section 196 is limited to crops that are commercial or agricultural in nature for which