

peanut imports, and peanut butter imports. This is because the ICEC food use estimate is an aggregate which includes peanut product exports and is derived from total supply that includes imports of peanuts and peanut butter. Peanut product exports are in most instances made from, or otherwise credited under Section 358(e)(1) of the 1938 Act as being made from, additional peanuts.

Farm use and local sales are estimated at 1 percent of ICEC's production estimate. This percentage reflects the average difference between USDA production estimates and inspection data. However, only about one half of the amount is included in the quota determination because of farmer held peanuts used for seed.

The *crushing residual* is the portion of farmer stock quota peanuts suitable only for the crushing market. The quota must be sufficient to provide for the shelling of both edible and crushing grades. Therefore, a crushing residual representing the farmer stock equivalent weight of crushing grade kernels shelled from quota peanuts is included under the "related uses" category. The crushing residual is estimated under the assumption that crushing peanuts will be approximately 12 percent, on a farmer stock basis, of total domestic food and seed production.

Shrinkage and other losses is an estimate of reduced kernel weight available for marketing as well as for kernel losses due to damage, fire, and spillage. These losses were estimated by multiplying a factor of 0.04 times domestic food use. The utilized factor is an FSA estimate equal to the minimum allowable shrinkage used in calculating a handler's obligation to export or crush additional peanuts as set forth in Section 358e(d)(2)(iv) of the 1938 Act. Excessive moisture and weight loss due to foreign material in delivered farmer stock peanuts were not considered since such factors are accounted for at buying points and do not impact quota marketing tonnage.

Segregation 2 and 3 loan transfers to quota loan represent transfers of Segregation 2 and 3 peanuts from additional price support loan pools to quota loan pools. Such transfers occur when quota peanut producers have insufficient Segregation 1 peanuts to fill their quotas yet have Segregation 2 and 3 peanuts in additional loan pools which would have been eligible to be pledged as collateral for price support at the quota loan rate, if it were not for quality problems. In such cases, for price support purposes only, these peanuts may be pledged as collateral for

price support loans at a discounted quota loan rate.

In addition, an allowance has been made for underproduction because the 1996 quota amendments also ended the ability of producers to carry forward undermarketings as a supplement to their current quotas. The allowance takes into account normal undermarketings. Also, it takes into account that the change in law should reduce the amount of undermarketings by eliminating the compensatory quota increase formerly available to individual producers.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 729

Poundage quotas, Peanuts, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Accordingly, 7 CFR part 729 is amended as follows:

PART 729—PEANUTS

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR part 729 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1301, 1357 et seq., 1372, 1373, 1375; 7 U.S.C. 1445c-3.

§ 729.216 [Amended]

2. Section 729.216(a) is amended by adding after the words "and related uses" the words: "as may be set out in paragraph (c) of this section."

3. Section 729.216 is amended further by adding paragraph (c) to read as follows:

§ 729.216 National poundage quota.

* * * * *

(c) *Quota determination for individual marketing years.* The basic national poundage quota for peanuts for marketing year 1996, exclusive of the temporary quota allocation for seed use provided for in section 358-1 (b) of the Act, is 1,100,000 short tons.

Signed at Washington, DC, on November 15, 1996.

Bruce R. Weber,

Acting Administrator, Farm Service Agency.

[FR Doc. 96-30087 Filed 11-27-96; 8:45 am]

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Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 966

[Docket No. FV96-966-1 IFR]

Tomatoes Grown in Florida; 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

Florida Tomato Committee (Committee) under Marketing Order No. 966 for the 1996-97 and subsequent fiscal periods. The Committee is responsible for local administration of the marketing order which regulates the handling of tomatoes grown in Florida.

Authorization to assess Florida tomato 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 December 30, 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 2525-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: Doris Jamieson, Marketing Assistant, Southeast Marketing Field Office, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 2276, Winter Haven, FL 33883-2276, telephone 941-299-4770; FAX 941-299-5169, or Martha Sue Clark, Program Assistant, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room 2525-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, telephone 202-720-9918; 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 2525-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456; telephone 202-720-2491; FAX 202-720-5698.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This rule is issued under Marketing Agreement No. 125 and Order No. 966, both as amended (7 CFR part 966), regulating the handling of tomatoes grown in Florida, 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 (Department) 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, Florida tomato 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 tomatoes 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 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. 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 90 producers of Florida tomatoes in the production area and approximately 75 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 Florida tomato producers and handlers may be classified as small entities.

The Florida tomato 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 of Florida tomatoes. They are familiar with the Committee's needs and with the costs of 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 September 5, 1996, and unanimously recommended 1996-97 expenditures of \$1,189,000 and an assessment rate of \$0.03 per 25-pound container of tomatoes. In comparison, last year's budgeted expenditures were \$2,025,000. The assessment rate of \$0.03 is \$0.01 less than last year's established rate. Major expenditures recommended by the Committee for the 1996-97 fiscal period compared to those budgeted for 1995-96 (in parentheses) include: \$500,000 for education and promotion (\$1,225,000), \$5,000 for miscellaneous promotion (\$5,000), \$284,650 for office salaries (\$319,100), \$180,000 for research (\$245,000), \$45,500 for employees' retirement program (\$50,500), \$30,000 for employees' travel (\$30,000), \$24,500 for office rent (\$24,500), \$22,150 for payroll taxes (\$22,150), \$20,000 for employees' health insurance (\$29,500), \$19,150 for depreciation on the office furniture and automobiles (\$19,000), \$14,000 for communications (\$12,000), \$12,000 for Committee member travel (\$12,000), \$9,000 for supplies and printing (\$8,500), \$8,000 for insurance and bonds (\$8,000), and \$7,000 for postage, (\$7,000).

The assessment rate recommended by the Committee was derived by dividing anticipated expenses by expected shipments of Florida tomatoes. Tomato shipments for the year are estimated at 40,000,000 25-pound containers which should provide \$1,200,000 in assessment income, which will be adequate to cover projected expenses.

This action will reduce the assessment obligation imposed on handlers. 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 from 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 businesses.

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 began on August 1, 1996, and the marketing order requires that the rate of assessment for each fiscal period apply to all assessable tomatoes handled during such fiscal period; (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; 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 966

Marketing agreements, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Tomatoes.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR part 966 is amended as follows:

PART 966—TOMATOES GROWN IN FLORIDA

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR part 966 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 601–674.

2. A new subpart titled “Assessment Rates” consisting of a new § 966.234 and a new subpart heading titled “Handling Regulations” are added immediately preceding § 966.323, to read as follows:

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

Subpart—Assessment Rates**§ 966.234 Assessment rate.**

On and after August 1, 1996, an assessment rate of \$0.03 per 25-pound container is established for Florida tomatoes.

Subpart—Handling Regulations

Dated: November 22, 1996.

Robert C. Keeney,

Director, Fruit and Vegetable Division.

[FR Doc. 96–30485 Filed 11–27–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–02–P

7 CFR Part 984

[Docket No. FV96–984–1 IFR]

Walnuts 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 Walnut Marketing Board (Board) under Marketing Order No. 984 for the 1996–97 and subsequent marketing years. The Board is responsible for local administration of the marketing order which regulates the handling of walnuts grown in California. Authorization to assess walnut handlers enables the Board to incur expenses that are reasonable and necessary to administer the program.

DATES: Effective on August 1, 1996. Comments received by December 30, 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 2525–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, suite 102B, 2202 Monterey Street, Fresno, California 93721, telephone 209–487–5901; FAX 209–487–5906, or Martha Sue Clark, Program Assistant, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room 2525–S, Washington, DC 20090–6456, telephone 202–720–9918; 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 2525–S, Washington, DC 20090–6456; telephone 202–720–2491; FAX 202–720–5698.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This rule is issued under Marketing Agreement and Order No. 984, both as amended (7 CFR part 984), regulating the handling of walnuts 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 (Department) 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 walnut 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 walnuts 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

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. 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 5,000 producers of California walnuts in the production area and approximately 55 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 California walnut producers and handlers may be classified as small entities.

The California walnut marketing order provides authority for the Board, 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 Board are producers and handlers of California walnuts. They are familiar with the Board's needs and with the costs of 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 Board met on September 6, 1996, and unanimously recommended 1996–97 expenditures of \$2,301,869 and an