

HASS AVOCADO PROMOTION, RESEARCH, AND INFORMATION ACT

Effective: October 28, 2000

United States Code Annotated

Title 7. Agriculture

→ Chapter 105. Hass Avocado Promotion, Research, and Information

§ 7801. Findings and declaration of policy

(a) Findings

Congress finds the following:

- (1) Hass avocados are an integral food source in the United States that are a valuable and healthy part of the human diet and are enjoyed by millions of persons every year for a multitude of everyday and special occasions.
- (2) Hass avocados are a significant tree fruit crop grown by many individual producers, but virtually all domestically produced Hass avocados for the commercial market are grown in the State of California.
- (3) Hass avocados move in interstate and foreign commerce, and Hass avocados that do not move in interstate or foreign channels of commerce but only in intrastate commerce directly affect interstate commerce in Hass avocados.
- (4) In recent years, large quantities of Hass avocados have been imported into the United States from other countries.
- (5) The maintenance and expansion of markets in existence on October 28, 2000, and the development of new or improved markets or uses for Hass avocados are needed to preserve and strengthen the economic viability of the domestic Hass avocado industry for the benefit of producers and other persons associated with the producing, marketing, processing, and consuming of Hass avocados.
- (6) An effective and coordinated program of promotion, research, industry information, and consumer information regarding Hass avocados is necessary for the maintenance, expansion, and development of domestic markets for Hass avocados.

(b) Purpose

It is the purpose of this chapter to authorize the establishment, through the exercise of the powers provided in this chapter, of an orderly procedure for the development and financing (through an adequate assessment on Hass avocados sold by producers and importers in the United States) of an effective and coordinated program of promotion, research, industry information, and consumer information, including funds for marketing and market research activities, that is designed to--

- (1) strengthen the position of the Hass avocado industry in the domestic marketplace; and
- (2) maintain, develop, and expand markets and uses for Hass avocados in the domestic marketplace.

(c) Limitation

Nothing in this chapter may be construed to provide for the control of production or otherwise limit the right of any person to produce, handle, or import Hass avocados.

§ 7802. Definitions

As used in this chapter:

(1) Board

The terms "Avocado Board" and "Board" mean the Hass Avocado Board established under [section 7804](#) of this title.

(2) Conflict of interest

The term "conflict of interest" means a situation in which a member or employee of the Board has a direct or indirect financial interest in a person that performs a service for, or enters into a contract with, the Board for anything of economic value.

(3) Consumer information

The term "consumer information" means any action or program that provides information to consumers and other persons on the use, nutritional attributes, and other information that will assist consumers and other persons in making evaluations and decisions regarding the purchase, preparation, and use of Hass avocados.

(4) Customs

The term "Customs" means the United States Customs Service.

(5) Department

The term "Department" means the United States Department of Agriculture.

(6) Hass avocado

(A) In general

The term "Hass avocado"--

(i) the fruit of any Hass variety avocado tree; and

(ii) any other type of avocado fruit that the Board, with the approval of the Secretary, determines is so similar to the Hass variety avocado as to be indistinguishable to consumers in fresh form.

(B) Form of fruit

Except as provided in subparagraph (C), the term includes avocado fruit described in subparagraph (A) whether in fresh, frozen, or any other processed form.

(C) Exceptions

In any case in which a handler further processes avocados described in subparagraph (A), or products of such avocados, for sale to a retailer, the Board, with the approval of the Secretary, may determine that such further processed products do not constitute a substantial value of the product and that, based on its determination, the product shall not be treated as a product of Hass avocados subject to assessment under the order. In addition, the Board, with the approval of the Secretary, may exempt certain frozen avocado products from assessment under the order.

(7) Handler

(A) First handler

The term "first handler" means a person operating in the Hass avocados marketing system that sells domestic or imported Hass avocados for United States domestic consumption, and who is responsible for remitting assessments to the Board. The term includes an importer or producer who sells directly to consumers Hass avocados that the importer or producer has imported into the United States or produced, respectively.

(B) Exempt handler

The term "exempt handler" means a person who would otherwise be considered a first handler, except that all avocados purchased by the person have already been subject to the assessment under [section 7804\(h\)](#) of this title.

(8) Importer

The term "importer" means any person who imports Hass avocados into the United States.

(9) Industry information

The term "industry information" means information and programs that are designed to increase efficiency in processing, enhance the development of new markets and marketing strategies, increase marketing efficiency, and activities to enhance the image of Hass avocados and the Hass avocado industry domestically.

(10) Order

The term "order" means the Hass avocado promotion, research, and information order issued under this chapter.

(11) Person

The term "person" means any individual, group of individuals, firm, partnership, corporation, joint stock company, association, cooperative, or other legal entity.

(12) Producer

The term "producer" means any person who--

(A) is engaged in the domestic production of Hass avocados for commercial use; and

(B) owns, or shares the ownership and risk of loss, of such Hass avocados.

(13) Promotion

The term "promotion" means any action to advance the image, desirability, or marketability of Hass avocados, including paid advertising, sales promotion, and publicity, in order to improve the competitive position and stimulate sales of Hass avocados in the domestic marketplace.

(14) Research

The term "research" means any type of test, study, or analysis relating to market research, market development, and marketing efforts, or relating to the use, quality, or nutritional value of Hass avocados, other related food science research, or research designed to advance the image, desirability, and marketability of Hass avocados.

(15) Secretary

The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Agriculture.

(16) State

The term "State" means each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

(17) United States

The term "United States" means the United States collectively.

§ 7803. Issuance of orders

(a) In general

(1) Issuance

To effectuate the policy of this chapter specified in [section 7801\(b\)](#) of this title, the Secretary, subject to the procedures provided in subsection (b) of this section, shall issue orders under this chapter applicable to producers, importers, and first handlers of Hass avocados.

(2) Scope

Any order shall be national in scope.

(3) One order

Not more than one order shall be in effect at any one time.

(b) Procedures

(1) Proposal for an order

An existing organization of avocado producers established pursuant to a State statute, or any other person who will be affected by this chapter, may request the issuance of, and submit a proposal for an order.

(2) Publication of proposal

The Secretary shall publish a proposed order and give notice and opportunity for public comment on the proposed order not later than 60 days after receipt by the Secretary of a proposal for an order from an existing organization of avocado producers established pursuant to a State statute, as provided in paragraph (1).

(3) Issuance of order

(A) In general

After notice and opportunity for public comment are provided in accordance with paragraph (2), the Secretary shall issue the order, taking into consideration the comments received and including in the order such provisions as are necessary to ensure that the order is in conformity with this chapter.

(B) Effective date

The order shall be issued and become effective only after an affirmative vote in a referendum as provided in [section 7805](#) of this title, but not later than 180 days after publication of the proposed order.

(c) Amendments

The Secretary, from time to time, may amend an order. The provisions of this chapter applicable to an order shall be applicable to any amendment to an order.

§ 7804. Required terms in orders

(a) In general

An order shall contain the terms and provisions specified in this section.

(b) Hass Avocado Board

(1) Establishment and membership

(A) Establishment

The order shall provide for the establishment of a Hass Avocado Board, consisting of 12 members, to administer the order.

(B) Membership

(i) Appointment

The order shall provide that members of the Board shall be appointed by the Secretary from nominations submitted as provided in this subsection.

(ii) Composition

The Board shall consist of participating domestic producers and importers.

(C) Special definition of importer

In this subsection, the term "importer" means a person who is involved in, as a substantial activity, the importation, sale, and marketing of Hass avocados in the United States (either directly or as an agent, broker, or consignee of any person or nation that produces or handles Hass avocados outside the United States for sale in the United States), and who is subject to assessments under the order.

(2) Distribution of appointments

(A) In general

The order shall provide that the membership of the Board shall consist of the following:

(i) Seven members who are domestic producers of Hass avocados and are subject to assessments under the order.

(ii) Two members who represent importers of Hass avocados and are subject to assessments under the order.

(iii) Three members who are domestic producers of Hass avocados and are subject to assessments under

the order, or are importers of Hass avocados and are subject to assessments under the order, to reflect the proportion of domestic production and imports supplying the United States market, which shall be based on the Secretary's determination of the average volume of domestic production of Hass avocados proportionate to the average volume of imports of Hass avocados in the United States over the previous 3 years.

(B) Adjustment in Board representation

Three years after the assessment of Hass avocados commences pursuant to an order, and at the end of each 3-year period thereafter, the Avocado Board shall adjust the proportion of producer representatives to importer representatives on the Board under subparagraph (A)(iii) on the basis of the amount of assessments collected from producers and importers over the immediately preceding 3-year period. Any adjustment under this subparagraph shall be subject to the review and approval of the Secretary.

(3) Nomination process

The order shall provide that--

(A) two nominees shall be submitted for each appointment to the Board;

(B) Nominations for each appointment of a producer or an importer shall be made by domestic producers or importers, respectively

(i) in the case of producers, through an election process which utilizes existing organizations of avocado producers established pursuant to a State statute, with approval by the Secretary; and

(ii) in the case of importers, nominations are submitted by importers under such procedures as the Secretary determines appropriate; and

(C) in any case in which producers or importers fail to nominate individuals for an appointment to the Board, the Secretary may appoint an individual to fill the vacancy on a basis provided in the order or other regulations of the Secretary.

(4) Alternates

The order shall provide for the selection of alternate members of the Board by the Secretary in accordance with procedures specified in the order.

(5) Terms

The order shall provide that--

(A) each term of appointment to the Board shall be for 3 years, except that, of the initial appointments, four of the appointments shall be for 2-year terms, four of the appointments shall be for 3-year terms, and four of the appointments shall be for 4-year terms; and

(B) no member of the Board may serve more than 2 consecutive terms of 3 years, except that any member serving an initial term of 4 years may serve an additional term of 3 years.

(6) Replacement

(A) Disqualification from Board service

The order shall provide that if a member or alternate of the Board who was appointed as a domestic producer or importer ceases to belong to the group for which such member was appointed, such member or alternate shall be disqualified from serving on the Board.

(B) Manner of filling vacancy

A vacancy arising as a result of disqualification or any other reason before the expiration of the term of office of an incumbent member or alternate of the Board shall be filled in a manner provided in the order.

(7) Compensation

The order shall provide that members and alternates of the Board shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for the reasonable expenses incurred in performing duties as members or alternates of the Board.

(c) General responsibilities of the Avocado Board

The order shall define the general responsibilities of the Avocado Board, which shall include the responsibility to--

- (1) administer the order in accordance with the terms and provisions of the order;
- (2) meet, organize, and select from among the members of the Board a chairperson, other officers, and committees and subcommittees, as the Board determines to be appropriate;
- (3) recommend to the Secretary rules and regulations to effectuate the terms and provisions of the order;
- (4) employ such persons as the Board determines are necessary, and set the compensation and define the duties of the persons;
- (5)(A) develop budgets for the implementation of the order and submit the budgets to the Secretary for approval under subsection (d) of this section; and
(B) propose and develop (or receive and evaluate), approve, and submit to the Secretary for approval under subsection (d) of this section plans or projects for Hass avocado promotion, industry information, consumer information, or related research;
- (6)(A) implement plans and projects for Hass avocado promotion, industry information, consumer information, or related research, as provided in subsection (d) of this section; or
(B) contract or enter into agreements with appropriate persons to implement the plans and projects, as provided in subsection (e) of this section, and pay the costs of the implementation, or contracts and agreement, with funds received under the order;
- (7) evaluate on-going and completed plans and projects for Hass avocado promotion, industry information, consumer information, or related research and comply with the independent evaluation provisions of the Commodity Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 1996 (subtitle B of title V of [Public Law 104-127](#) [[7 U.S.C.A. § 7411](#) et seq.]);
- (8) receive, investigate, and report to the Secretary complaints of violations of the order;
- (9) recommend to the Secretary amendments to the order;
- (10) Invest, pending disbursement under a plan or project, funds collected through assessments authorized under this chapter only in
 - (A) obligations of the United States or any agency of the United States;
 - (B) general obligations of any State or any political subdivision of a State;

(C) any interest-bearing account or certificate of deposit of a bank that is a member of the Federal Reserve System; or

(D) obligations fully guaranteed as to principal and interest by the United States, except that income from any such invested funds may be used only for a purpose for which the invested funds may be used;

(11) borrow funds necessary for the startup expenses of the order; and

(12) provide the Secretary such information as the Secretary may require.

(d) Budgets; plans and projects

(1) Submission of budgets

The order shall require the Board to submit to the Secretary for approval budgets, on a fiscal year basis, of the anticipated expenses and disbursements of the Board in the implementation of the order, including the projected costs of Hass avocado promotion, industry information, consumer information, and related research plans and projects.

(2) Plans and projects

(A) Promotion and consumer information

The order shall provide--

(i) for the establishment, implementation, administration, and evaluation of appropriate plans and projects for advertising, sales promotion, other promotion, and consumer information with respect to Hass avocados, and for the disbursement of necessary funds for the purposes described in this clause; and

(ii) that any plan or project referred to in clause (i) shall be directed toward increasing the general demand for Hass avocados in the domestic marketplace.

(B) Industry information

The order shall provide for the establishment, implementation, administration, and evaluation of appropriate plans and projects that will lead to the development of new markets, maintain and expand existing markets, lead to the development of new marketing strategies, or increase the efficiency of the Hass avocado industry, and activities to enhance the image of the Hass avocado industry, and for the disbursement of necessary funds for the purposes described in this subparagraph.

(C) Research

The order shall provide for--

(i) the establishment, implementation, administration, and evaluation of plans and projects for market development research, research with respect to the sale, distribution, marketing, use, quality, or nutritional value of Hass avocados, and other research with respect to Hass avocado marketing, promotion, industry information or consumer information;

(ii) the dissemination of the information acquired through the plans and projects; and

(iii) the disbursement of such funds as are necessary to carry out this subparagraph.

(D) Submission to Secretary

The order shall provide that the Board shall submit to the Secretary for approval a proposed plan or project for Hass avocados promotion, industry information, consumer information, or related research, as described in subparagraphs (A) , (B), and (C).

(3) Approval by Secretary

A budget, plan, or project for Hass avocados promotion, industry information, consumer information, or related research may not be implemented prior to approval of the budget, plan, or project by the Secretary. Not later than 45 days after receipt of such a budget, plan, or project, the Secretary shall notify the Board whether the Secretary approves or disapproves the budget, plan, or project. If the Secretary fails to provide such notice before the end of the 45-day period, the budget, plan, or project shall be deemed to be approved and may be implemented by the Board.

(e) Contracts and agreements

(1) Promotion, consumer information, industry information and related research plans and projects

(A) In general

To ensure the efficient use of funds, the order shall provide that the Board, with the approval of the Secretary, shall enter into a contract or an agreement with an avocado organization established by State statute in a State with the majority of Hass avocado production in the United States, for the implementation of a plan or project for promotion, industry information, consumer information, or related research with respect to Hass avocados, and for the payment of the cost of the contract or agreement with funds received by the Board under the order.

(B) Requirements

The order shall provide that any contract or agreement entered into under this paragraph shall provide that--

(i) the contracting or agreeing party shall develop and submit to the Board a plan or project, together with a budget that includes the estimated costs to be incurred for the plan or project;

(ii) the plan or project shall become effective on the approval of the Secretary; and

(iii) The contracting party or agreeing party shall

(I) keep accurate records of all transactions of the party;

(II) account for funds received and expended;

(III) make periodic reports to the Board of activities conducted; and

(IV) make such other reports as the Board or the Secretary shall require.

(2) Other contracts and agreements

The order shall provide that the Board, with the approval of the Secretary, may enter into a contract or agreement for administrative services. Any contract or agreement entered into under this paragraph shall include provisions comparable to the provisions described in paragraph (1)(B).

(f) Books and records of Board

(1) In general

The order shall require the Board to--

(A) maintain such books and records (which shall be available to the Secretary for inspection and audit) as the Secretary may require;

(B) prepare and submit to the Secretary, from time to time, such reports as the Secretary may require; and

(C) account for the receipt and disbursement of all the funds entrusted to the Board, including all assessment funds disbursed by the Board to a State organization of avocado producers established pursuant to State law.

(2) Audits

The Board shall cause the books and records of the Board to be audited by an independent auditor at the end of each fiscal year. A report of each audit shall be submitted to the Secretary.

(g) Control of administrative costs

(1) System of cost controls

The order shall provide that the Board shall, as soon as practicable after the order becomes effective and after consultation with the Secretary and other appropriate persons, implement a system of cost controls based on normally accepted business practices that--

(A) will ensure that the costs incurred by the Board in administering the order in any fiscal year shall not exceed 10 percent of the projected level of assessments to be collected by the Board for that fiscal year; and

(B) cover the minimum administrative activities and personnel needed to properly administer and enforce the order, and conduct, supervise, and evaluate plans and projects under the order.

(2) Use of existing personnel and facilities

The Board shall use, to the extent possible, the resources, staffs, and facilities of existing organizations, as provided in subsection (e)(1)(A) of this section.

(h) Assessments

(1) Authority

(A) In general

The order shall provide that each first handler shall remit to the Board, in the manner provided in the order, an assessment collected from the producer, except to the extent that the sale is excluded from assessments under paragraph (6). In the case of imports, the assessment shall be levied upon imports and remitted to the Board by Customs.

(B) Published lists

To facilitate the payment of assessments under this paragraph, the Board shall publish lists of first handlers required to remit assessments under the order and exempt handlers.

(C) Making determinations

(i) First handler status

The order shall contain provisions regarding the determination of the status of a person as a first handler or exempt handler.

(ii) Producer-handlers

For purposes of paragraph (3), a producer-handler shall be considered the first handler of those Hass avocados that are produced by that producer-handler and packed by that producer-handler for sale at wholesale or retail.

(iii) Importers

The assessment on imported Hass avocados shall be paid by the importer to Customs at the time of entry into the United States and shall be remitted by Customs to the Board. Importation occurs when Hass avocados originating outside the United States are released from custody of Customs and introduced into the stream of commerce within the United States. Importers include persons who hold title to foreign-produced Hass avocados immediately upon release by Customs, as well as any persons who act on behalf of others, as agents, brokers, or consignees, to secure the release of Hass avocados from Customs and the introduction of the released Hass avocados into the current of commerce.

(2) Assessment rates

With respect to assessment rates, the order shall contain the following terms:

(A) Initial rate

The rate of assessment on Hass avocados shall be \$.025 per pound on fresh avocados or the equivalent rate for processed avocados on which an assessment has not been paid.

(B) Changes in the rate

(i) In general

Once the order is in effect, the uniform assessment rate may be increased or decreased not more than once annually, but in no event shall the rate of assessment be in excess of \$.05 per pound.

(ii) Requirements

Any change in the rate of assessment under this subparagraph--

(I) may be made only if adopted by the Board by an affirmative vote of at least seven members of the Board and approved by the Secretary as necessary to achieve the objectives of this chapter (after public notice and opportunity for comment in accordance with [section 553 of Title 5](#) and without regard to sections 556 and 557 of such title);

(II) shall be announced by the Board not less than 30 days prior to going into effect; and

(III) shall not be subject to a vote in a referendum conducted under [section 7805](#) of this title.

(3) Collection by first handlers

Except as provided in paragraph (1)(C)(iii), the first handler of Hass avocados shall be responsible for the collection of assessments from the producer under this subsection. As part of the collection of assessments, the first handler shall maintain a separate record of the Hass avocados of each producer whose Hass avocados are so handled, including the Hass avocados produced by the first handler.

(4) Timing of submitting assessments

The order shall provide that each person required to remit assessments under this subsection shall remit to the Board the assessment due from each sale of Hass avocados that is subject to an assessment within such time

period after the sale (not to exceed 60 days after the end of the month in which the sale took place) as is specified in the order.

(5) Claiming an exemption from collecting assessments

To claim an exemption under [section 7802\(6\)](#) of this title as an exempt handler for a particular fiscal year, a person shall submit an application to the Board--

(A) stating the basis for such exemption; and

(B) certifying such person will not purchase Hass avocados in the United States on which an assessment has not been paid for the current fiscal year.

(6) Exclusion

An order shall exclude from assessments under the order any sale of Hass avocados for export from the United States.

(7) Use of assessment funds

The order shall provide that assessment funds shall be used for payment of costs incurred in implementing and administering the order, with provision for a reasonable reserve, and to cover the administrative costs incurred by the Secretary in implementing and administering this chapter, including any expenses incurred by the Secretary in conducting referenda under this chapter, subject to subsection (i) of this section.

(8) Assessment funds for State association

The order shall provide that a State organization of avocado producers established pursuant to State law shall receive an amount equal to the product obtained by multiplying the aggregate amount of assessments attributable to the pounds of Hass avocados produced in such State by 85 percent. The State organization shall use such funds and any proceeds from the investment of such funds for financing domestic promotion, research, consumer information, and industry information plans and projects, except that no such funds shall be used for the administrative expenses of such State organization.

(9) Assessment funds for importers associations

(A) In general

The order shall provide that any importers association shall receive a credit described in subparagraph (B) if such association is--

(i) established pursuant to State law that requires detailed State regulation comparable to that applicable to the State organization of United States avocado producers, as determined by the Secretary; or

(ii) certified by the Secretary as meeting the requirements applicable to the Board as to budgets, plans, projects, audits, conflicts of interest, and reimbursements for administrative costs incurred by the Secretary.

(B) Credit

An importers association described in subparagraph (A) shall receive 85 percent of the assessments paid on Hass avocados imported by the members of such association.

(C) Use of funds

(i) In general

Importers associations described in subparagraph (A) shall use the funds described in subparagraph (B) and proceeds from the investment of such funds for financing promotion, research, consumer information, and industry information plans and projects in the United States.

(ii) Administrative expenses

No funds described in subparagraph (C) shall be used for the administrative expenses of such importers association.

(i) Reimbursement of Secretary expenses

The order shall provide for reimbursing the Secretary--

(1) for expenses not to exceed \$25,000 incurred by the Secretary in connection with any referendum conducted under [section 7805](#) of this title;

(2) for administrative costs incurred by the Secretary for supervisory work of up to two employee years annually after an order or amendment to any order has been issued and made effective; and

(3) for costs incurred by the Secretary in implementation of the order issued under [section 7803](#) of this title, for enforcement of the chapter and the order, for subsequent referenda conducted under [section 7805](#) of this title, and in defending the Board in litigation arising out of action taken by the Board.

(j) Prohibition on brand advertising and certain claims

(1) Prohibitions

Except as provided in paragraph (2), a program or project conducted under this chapter shall not--

(A) make any reference to private brand names;

(B) make false, misleading, or disparaging claims on behalf of Hass avocados; or

(C) make false, misleading, or disparaging statements with respect to the attributes or use of any competing products.

(2) Exceptions

Paragraph (1) does not preclude the Board from offering its programs and projects for use by commercial parties, under such terms and conditions as the Board may prescribe as approved by the Secretary. For the purposes of this subsection, a reference to State of origin does not constitute a reference to a private brand name with regard to any funds credited to, or disbursed by the Board to, a State organization of avocado producers established pursuant to State law. Furthermore, for the purposes of this section, a reference to either State of origin or country of origin does not constitute a reference to a private brand name with regard to any funds credited to, or disbursed by the Board to, any importers association established or certified in accordance with subsection (h)(9)(A) of this section.

(k) Prohibition on use of funds to influence Governmental action

(1) In general

Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (2), the order shall prohibit any funds collected by the Board under the order from being used in any manner for the purpose of influencing legislation or government action or policy.

(2) Exception

Paragraph (1) shall not apply to the development or recommendation of amendments to the order.

(l) Prohibition of conflict of interest

The Board may not engage in, and shall prohibit the employees and agents of the Board from engaging in, any action that would be a conflict of interest.

(m) Books and records; reports

(1) In general

The order shall provide that each first handler, producer, and importer subject to the order shall maintain, and make available for inspection, such books and records as are required by the order and file reports at the time, in the manner, and having the content required by the order, to the end that such information is made available to the Secretary and the Board as is appropriate for the administration or enforcement of this chapter, the order, or any regulation issued under this chapter.

(2) Confidentiality requirement

(A) In general

Information obtained from books, records, or reports under paragraph (1) shall be kept confidential by all officers and employees of the Department of Agriculture and by the staff and agents of the Board.

(B) Suits and hearings

Information described in subparagraph (A) may be disclosed to the public only--

(i) in a suit or administrative hearing brought at the request of the Secretary, or to which the Secretary or any officer of the United States is a party, involving the order; and

(ii) to the extent the Secretary considers the information relevant to the suit or hearing.

(C) General statements and publications

Nothing in this paragraph may be construed to prohibit--

(i) the issuance of general statements, based on the reports, of the number of persons subject to the order or statistical data collected from the reports, if the statements do not identify the information furnished by any person; or

(ii) the publication, by direction of the Secretary, of the name of any person who violates the order, together with a statement of the particular provisions of the order violated by the person.

(3) Lists of importers

(A) Review

The order shall provide that the staff of the Board shall periodically review lists of importers of Hass avocados to determine whether persons on the lists are subject to the order.

(B) Customs Service

On the request of the Secretary or the Board, the Commissioner of the United States Customs Service shall

provide to the Secretary or the Board lists of importers of Hass avocados.

(n) Consultations with industry experts

(1) In general

The order shall provide that the Board may seek advice from and consult with experts from the production, import, wholesale, and retail segments of the Hass avocado industry to assist in the development of promotion, industry information, consumer information, and related research plans and projects.

(2) Special committees

(A) In general

For the purposes described in paragraph (1), the order shall authorize the appointment of special committees composed of persons other than Board members.

(B) Consultation

A committee appointed under subparagraph (A) shall consult directly with the Board.

(o) Other terms of the order

The order shall contain such other terms and provisions, consistent with this chapter, as are necessary to carry out this chapter (including provision for the assessment of interest and a charge for each late payment of assessments under subsection (h) of this section).

§ 7805. Referenda

(a) Requirements for initial referendum

(1) Referendum required

During the 60-day period immediately preceding the proposed effective date of an order issued under [section 7803\(b\)\(3\)](#) of this title, the Secretary shall conduct a referendum among producers and importers required to pay assessments under the order, as provided in [section 7804\(h\)\(1\)](#) of this title.

(2) Approval of order needed

The order shall become effective only if the Secretary determines that the order has been approved by a simple majority of all votes cast in the referendum.

(b) Votes permitted

(1) In general

Each producer and importer eligible to vote in a referendum conducted under this section shall be entitled to cast one vote if they satisfy the eligibility requirements as defined in paragraph (2).

(2) Eligibility

For purposes of paragraph (1), producers and importers, as these terms are defined in [section 7802](#) of this title, shall be considered to be eligible to vote if they have been producers or importers with sales of Hass avocados during a period of at least 1 year prior to the referendum.

(c) Manner of conducting referenda

(1) In general

Referenda conducted pursuant to this chapter shall be conducted in a manner determined by the Secretary.

(2) Advance registration

A producer or importer of Hass avocados who chooses to vote in any referendum conducted under this chapter shall register with the Secretary prior to the voting period, after receiving notice from the Secretary concerning the referendum under paragraph (4).

(3) Voting

A producer or importer of Hass avocados who chooses to vote in any referendum conducted under this chapter shall vote in accordance with procedures established by the Secretary. The ballots and other information or reports that reveal or tend to reveal the identity or vote of voters shall be strictly confidential.

(4) Notice

The Secretary shall notify all producers and importers at least 30 days prior to the referendum conducted under this chapter. The notice shall explain the procedure established under this subsection.

(d) Subsequent referenda

If an order is approved in a referendum conducted under subsection (a) of this section, effective beginning on the date that is 3 years after the date of the approval, the Secretary--

(1) at the discretion of the Secretary, may conduct at any time a referendum of producers and importers required to pay assessments under the order, as provided in [section 7804\(h\)\(1\)](#) of this title, subject to the voting requirements of subsections (b) and (c) of this section, to ascertain whether eligible producers and importers favor suspension, termination, or continuance of the order; or

(2) shall conduct a referendum of eligible producers and importers if requested by the Board or by a representative group comprising 30 percent or more of all producers and importers required to pay assessments under the order, as provided in [section 7804\(h\)\(1\)](#) of this title, subject to the voting requirements of subsections (b) and (c) of this section, to ascertain whether producers and importers favor suspension, termination, or continuance of the order.

(e) Suspension or termination

If, as a result of a referendum conducted under subsection (d) of this section, 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--

(1) not later than 180 days after the referendum, suspend or terminate, as appropriate, collection of assessments under the order; and

(2) suspend or terminate, as appropriate, activities under the order as soon as practicable and in an orderly manner.

[§ 7806. Petition and review](#)

(a) Petition and hearing

(1) Petition

A person subject to an order may file with the Secretary a petition--

(A) 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

(B) requesting a modification of the order or an exemption from the order.

(2) Hearing

The petitioner shall be given the opportunity for a hearing on a petition filed under paragraph (1), in accordance with regulations issued by the Secretary. Any such hearing shall be conducted in accordance with [section 7808\(b\)\(2\)](#) of this title and be held within the United States judicial district in which the residence or principal place of business of the person is located.

(3) Ruling

After a hearing under paragraph (2), the Secretary shall make a ruling on the petition, which shall be final if in accordance with law.

(4) Limitation

Any petition filed under this subsection challenging an order, any provision of the order, or any obligation imposed in connection with the order, shall be filed within 2 years after the effective date of the order, provision, or obligation subject to challenge in the petition.

(b) Review

(1) Commencement of action

The district courts of the United States in any district in which a person who is a petitioner under subsection (a) of this section resides or conducts business shall have jurisdiction to review the ruling of the Secretary on the petition of the person, if a complaint requesting the review is filed no later than 20 days after the date of the entry of the ruling by the Secretary.

(2) Process

Service of process in proceedings under this subsection shall be conducted in accordance with the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

(3) Remand

If the court in a proceeding under this subsection determines that the ruling of the Secretary on the petition of the person is not in accordance with law, the court shall remand the matter to the Secretary with directions--

(A) to make such ruling as the court shall determine to be in accordance with law; or

(B) to take such further action as, in the opinion the court, the law requires.

(c) Enforcement

The pendency of proceedings instituted under this section shall not impede, hinder, or delay the Attorney General or the Secretary from obtaining relief under [section 7807](#) of this title.

§ 7807. Enforcement

(a) Jurisdiction

A district court of the United States shall have jurisdiction to enforce, and to prevent and restrain any person from violating, this chapter or an order or regulation issued by the Secretary under this chapter.

(b) Referral to Attorney General

A civil action brought under subsection (a) of this section shall be referred to the Attorney General for appropriate action, except that the Secretary is not required to refer to the Attorney General a violation of this chapter, or an order or regulation issued under this chapter, if the Secretary believes that the administration and enforcement of this chapter would be adequately served by administrative action under subsection (c) of this section or suitable written notice or warning to the person who committed or is committing the violation.

(c) Civil penalties and orders

(1) Civil penalties

(A) In general

A person who violates a provision of this chapter, or an order or regulation issued by the Secretary under this chapter, or who fails or refuses to pay, collect, or remit any assessment or fee required of the person under an order or regulation issued under this chapter, may be assessed by the Secretary--

(i) a civil penalty of not less than \$1,000 nor more than \$10,000 for each violation; and

(ii) in the case of a willful failure to remit an assessment as required by an order or regulation, an additional penalty equal to the amount of the assessment.

(B) Separate offenses

Each violation shall be a separate offense.

(2) Cease and desist orders

In addition to or in lieu of a civil penalty under paragraph (1), the Secretary may issue an order requiring a person to cease and desist from continuing a violation of this chapter, or an order or regulation issued under this chapter.

(3) Notice and hearing

No penalty shall be assessed, or cease and desist order issued, by the Secretary under this subsection unless the Secretary gives the person against whom the penalty is assessed or the order is issued notice and opportunity for a hearing before the Secretary with respect to the violation. Any such hearing shall be conducted in accordance with [section 7808\(b\)\(2\)](#) of this title and shall be held within the United States judicial district in which the residence or principal place of business of the person is located.

(4) Finality

The penalty assessed or cease and desist order issued under this subsection shall be final and conclusive unless the person against whom the penalty is assessed or the order is issued files an appeal with the appropriate district court of the United States in accordance with subsection (d) of this section.

(d) Review by district court

(1) Commencement of action

(A) In general

Any person against whom a violation is found and a civil penalty is assessed or a cease and desist order is issued under subsection (c) of this section may obtain review of the penalty or order by, within the 30-day period beginning on the date the penalty is assessed or the order is issued--

(i) filing a notice of appeal in the district court of the United States for the district in which the person resides or conducts business, or in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia; and

(ii) sending a copy of the notice by certified mail to the Secretary.

(B) Copy of record

The Secretary shall promptly file in the court a certified copy of the record on which the Secretary found that the person had committed a violation.

(2) Standard of review

A finding of the Secretary shall be set aside under this subsection only if the finding is found to be unsupported by substantial evidence.

(e) Failure to obey an order

(1) In general

A person who fails to obey a cease and desist order issued under subsection (c) of this section after the order has become final and unappealable, or after the appropriate United States district court had entered a final judgment in favor of the Secretary of not more than \$10,000 for each offense, after opportunity for a hearing and for judicial review under the procedures specified in subsections (c) and (d) of this section.

(2) Separate violations

Each day during which the person fails to obey an order described in paragraph (1) shall be considered as a separate violation of the order.

(f) Failure to pay a penalty

(1) In general

If a person fails to pay a civil penalty assessed under subsection (c) or (e) of this section after the penalty has become final and unappealable, or after the appropriate United States district court has entered final judgment in favor of the Secretary, the Secretary shall refer the matter to the Attorney General for recovery of the amount assessed in any United States district court in which the person resides or conducts business.

(2) Scope of review

In an action by the Attorney General under paragraph (1), the validity and appropriateness of a civil penalty shall not be subject to review.

(g) Additional remedies

The remedies provided in this chapter shall be in addition to, and not exclusive of, other remedies that may be available.

§ 7808. Investigations and power to subpoena

(a) Investigations

The Secretary may conduct such investigations as the Secretary considers necessary for the effective administration of this chapter, or to determine whether any person has engaged or is engaging in any act that constitutes a violation of this chapter or any order or regulation issued under this chapter.

(b) Subpoenas, oaths, and affirmations

(1) Investigations

For the purpose of conducting an investigation under subsection (a) of this section, the Secretary may administer oaths and affirmations, subpoena witnesses, compel the attendance of witnesses, take evidence, and require the production of any records that are relevant to the inquiry. The production of the records may be required from any place in the United States.

(2) Administrative hearings

For the purpose of an administrative hearing held under [section 7806\(a\)\(2\)](#) or [7807\(c\)\(3\)](#) of this title, the presiding officer may administer oaths and affirmations, subpoena witnesses, compel the attendance of witnesses, take evidence, and require the production of any records that are relevant to the inquiry. The attendance of witnesses and the production of the records may be required from any place in the United States.

(c) Aid of courts

(1) In general

In the case of contumacy by, or refusal to obey a subpoena issued under subsection (b) of this section to, any person, the Secretary may invoke the aid of any court of the United States within the jurisdiction of which the investigation or proceeding is conducted, or where the person resides or conducts business, in order to enforce a subpoena issued under subsection (b) of this section.

(2) Order

The court may issue an order requiring the person referred to in paragraph (1) to comply with a subpoena referred to in paragraph (1).

(3) Failure to obey

Any failure to obey the order of the court may be punished by the court as a contempt of court.

(4) Process

Process in any proceeding under this subsection may be served in the United States judicial district in which the person being proceeded against resides or conducts business, or wherever the person may be found.

§ 7809. Confidentiality

(a) Prohibition

No information regarding names of voters or how a person voted in a referendum conducted under this chapter shall be made public.

(b) Penalty

Any person who knowingly violates subsection (a) of this section or the confidentiality terms of an order, as described in [section 7804\(m\)\(2\)](#) of this title, shall be subject to a fine of not less than \$1,000 nor more than \$10,000 or to imprisonment for not more than 1 year, or both. If the person is an officer or employee of the Department of Agriculture or the Board, the person shall be removed from office.

(c) Additional prohibition

No information obtained under this chapter may be made available to any agency or officer of the Federal Government for any purpose other than the implementation of this chapter or an investigatory or enforcement action necessary for the implementation of this chapter.

(d) Withholding information from Congress prohibited

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to authorize the withholding of information from Congress.

§ 7810. Authority for Secretary to suspend or terminate order

(a) Grounds for suspension or termination

If the Secretary finds that an order, or any provision of the order, obstructs or does not tend to effectuate the policy of this chapter specified in [section 7801\(b\)](#) of this title, the Secretary shall terminate or suspend the operation of the order or provision under such terms as the Secretary determines are appropriate.

(b) Effect of lack of approval of order

If, as a result of a referendum, the Secretary determines that the order is not approved, the Secretary shall, within 180 days after making the determination, suspend, or terminate, as appropriate, collection of assessments under the order, and suspend or terminate, as appropriate, activities under the order in an orderly manner as soon as possible.

§ 7811. Rules of construction

(a) Termination or suspension not an order

The termination or suspension of an order, or a provision of an order, shall not be considered an order under the meaning of this chapter.

(b) Rights

This chapter--

(1) may not be construed to provide for control of production or otherwise limit the right of individual Hass avocado growers, handlers and importers to produce, handle, or import Hass avocados; and

(2) shall be construed to treat all persons producing, handling, and importing Hass avocados fairly and to implement any order in an equitable manner.

(c) Other programs

Nothing in this chapter may be construed to preempt or supersede any other program relating to Hass avocado

promotion, research, industry information, and consumer information organized and operated under the laws of the United States or of a State.

§ 7812. Regulations

The Secretary may issue such regulations as are necessary to carry out this chapter and the powers vested in the Secretary by this chapter, including regulations relating to the assessment of late payment charges and interest.

§ 7813. Authorization of appropriations

(a) In general

There are authorized to be appropriated for each fiscal year such sums as are necessary to carry out this chapter.

(b) Administrative expenses

Funds appropriated under subsection (a) of this section may not be used for the payment of the expenses or expenditures of the Board in administering a provision of an order.

Current through P.L. 109-65 (excluding P.L. 109-58, 109-59) approved 09-20-05

Rules and Regulations

Federal Register

Vol. 67, No. 173

Friday, September 6, 2002

This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains regulatory documents having general applicability and legal effect, most of which are keyed to and codified in the Code of Federal Regulations, which is published under 50 titles pursuant to 44 U.S.C. 1510.

The Code of Federal Regulations is sold by the Superintendent of Documents. Prices of new books are listed in the first FEDERAL REGISTER issue of each week.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 1219

[FV-01-705-FR]

RIN 0581-AB92

Hass Avocado Promotion, Research, and Information Order

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This final rule establishes the Hass Avocado Promotion, Research, and Information Order (Order). This industry-funded program is authorized under the Hass Avocado Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 2000 (Act). Under the Order, producers and importers will pay an initial assessment of 2.5 cents per pound on fresh Hass avocados produced in or imported into the United States for consumption in the United States. Exports of U.S. Hass avocados are exempt from assessment. Initially only fresh domestic and imported Hass avocados will be assessed. The Hass Avocado Board (Board) will be appointed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA or the Department) to conduct research, promotion, industry information, and consumer information needed for the maintenance, expansion, and development of domestic markets for Hass avocados.

DATES: Effective September 9, 2002. Collection and remittance of assessments and applicable reporting will begin on January 2, 2003.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Julie Morin, Research and Promotion Branch, FV, AMS, USDA, Stop 0244, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Room 2535-S, Washington, DC 20250-0244, telephone (202) 720-6930, fax (202) 205-2800, e-mail julie.morin@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This Order is issued under the Hass Avocado Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 2000 (Act) (7 U.S.C. 7801-7813), enacted on October 23, 2000.

Prior documents: Proposed rules on both the Order (66 FR 36870) and the referendum procedures (66 FR 36886) were published in the **Federal Register** on July 13, 2001, each with a 45-day comment period. Subsequently, the USDA published a notice in the **Federal Register** on August 28, 2001 (66 FR 4158), extending both comment periods by 15 days, to September 12, 2001. A second proposed rule on the Order (67 FR 7290) and a final rule on the referendum procedures (67 FR 7261) were published in the February 19, 2002, issue of the **Federal Register**. Corrections to both of these rulemakings were published in the March 25, 2002, issue of the **Federal Register** (67 FR 13563; 67 FR 13577). A referendum order was published in the April 9, 2002, issue of the **Federal Register** (67 FR 17018).

Question and Answer Overview

Why Is the Final Rule Being Published?

In a recent referendum, eligible producers and importers of Hass avocados voted in favor of implementing the Order. This action completes this rulemaking process.

What Is the Purpose of the Hass Avocado Program?

The purpose of the program is to increase consumption of Hass avocados in the United States.

Who Will Be Covered by the Program?

Producers and importers of Hass avocados will pay assessments under the program, and first handlers will be involved in the assessment collection process.

Who Will Sit on the Board?

The Act provides that there will be a 12-member Board consisting of seven domestic Hass avocado producers, two importers, and three additional members who can either be importers or domestic producers. The three "swing" seats will be allocated to producers and importers so as to assure as nearly as possible that the composition of the Board reflects the proportion of domestic production and imports supplying the United States market. The

proportion will be based on the average volume of domestic production and imports in the United States over the previous three years. Each member will have an alternate.

How Will Members of the Board Be Selected?

The Order provides for a nomination and election process to identify industry members who are interested and willing to serve on the Board. In the initial nomination process, the California Avocado Commission (Commission) will conduct an election to determine who will be nominated for each domestic producer seat. USDA will conduct an election among importers to determine who will be nominated to fill the importer seats. Two names must be submitted for each member and each alternate position. From the names submitted, USDA will appoint the members and alternates of the Board.

Executive Orders 12866 and 12988

This rule has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866 and, therefore, has not been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget.

This rule has been reviewed under E.O. 12988, Civil Justice Reform. It is not intended to have retroactive effect. Section 1212 of the Act states that the Act may not be construed to preempt or supersede any other program relating to Hass avocado promotion, research, industry information, and consumer information organized and operated under the laws of the United States or of a state.

Under Section 1207 of the Act, a person subject to the Order may file a petition with USDA stating that the Order, any provision for the Order, or any obligation imposed in connection with the Order, is not established in accordance with law, and requesting a modification of the Order or an exemption from the Order. Any petition filed challenging the Order, any provision of the Order, or any obligation imposed in connection with the Order, shall be filed within two years after the effective date of the Order, provision, or obligation subject to challenge in the petition. The petitioner will have the opportunity for a hearing on the petition. Thereafter, USDA will issue a ruling on the petition. The Act provides that the district court of the United States in any district in which the

petitioner resides or conducts business shall have the jurisdiction to review a final ruling on the petition, if the petitioner files a complaint for that purpose not later than 20 days after the date of the entry of USDA's final ruling.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

In accordance with the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*), the Agency has examined the impact of this rule on small entities and prepared a final regulatory flexibility analysis that was included in the proposed rule published in the **Federal Register** on February 19, 2002. This analysis indicates that the Agency minimized the economic impacts of the Order provisions on small entities to the fullest extent reasonably possible while adhering to the program's objectives.

In addition, the Order provisions were carefully reviewed, and every effort was made to minimize any unnecessary information collection and recordkeeping costs or requirements. In accordance with OMB regulation (5 CFR (part 1320) which implements the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection and recordkeeping requirements that are imposed by this Order were submitted to OMB and approved under OMB control numbers 0581-0197 and 0505-0001. The information collection numbers differ from what was published in the February 19, 2002, proposed rule because the rule inadvertently omitted OMB number 0505-0001 for the background nomination form. Section 1219.77 is corrected to add this OMB control number.

Copies of the final regulatory flexibility analysis and the discussion of the information collection and recordkeeping requirements contained in this rulemaking can be obtained from Julie Morin at the address listed above or by e-mail at julie.morin@usda.gov.

Background

The Act authorizes the Department to establish a Hass avocado research, promotion, and information program. The program will be funded by an assessment levied on producers and importers of Hass avocados of 2.5 cents per pound of Hass avocados. The rate may be raised up to a maximum rate of 5 cents per pound. Exports of U.S. Hass avocados are exempt from assessment. The Act authorizes assessments on domestic Hass avocados and on imports of fresh, frozen, and processed Hass avocados. Initially, only fresh domestic and imported Hass avocados will be assessed.

The Board will use the funds to pay for research, promotion, industry information, and consumer information; administration, maintenance, and functioning of the Board; and expenses incurred by USDA in implementing and administering the Order, including referendum costs.

The Board will be composed of 12 voting members; 7 producers, 2 importers, and 3 producer and importers (swing seats). The three "swing" seats will be allocated to producers and importers so as to assure as nearly possible that the composition of the Board reflects the proportion of domestic production and imports supplying the United States market, based on the three-year average of domestic production and imports.

The producer assessment will be collected by first handlers, and the importer assessment will be collected by the U.S. Customs Service.

A state association of avocado producers (currently, the Commission) will receive 85 percent of the assessments paid by domestic producers, and importer associations will receive 85 percent of the assessments paid by their members. The state association could use the assessment funds to promote California Hass avocados in the United States, and the importer associations could use the assessments to promote Hass avocados on a country-of-origin basis in the United States. The funds remaining with the Board would be used to promote Hass avocados generically in the United States. The Board would also enter into contracts with the state association as provided for in the Act.

USDA issued a news release on January 8, 2001, requesting proposals for an initial Order or portions of an initial Order by February 7, 2001. A second news release, extending the deadline for submission of proposals to March 9, 2001, was issued on February 2, 2001.

An entire proposed Order was submitted by the Commission. In addition, proposals containing portions of an Order were submitted by the Asociacion de Productores y Empacadores Exportadores de Aguacate de Michoacan (APEAM); the Chilean Exporters Association (ASOEX), Chilean Fruit Growers Federation (FEDERUTA), and Comite de Paltas de Chile; and the New Zealand Avocado Growers Association (NZAGA) and the New Zealand Avocado Industry Council (NZAIC). USDA published a proposed rule on July 13, 2001, for comment. A second proposed rule was published on February 19, 2002. A referendum order that set the registration period from May

13-31, 2002, and voting period from June 24-July 12, 2002, was published on April 9, 2002. In the referendum, producers and importers of Hass avocados voted to implement the program.

The Order is summarized as follows: Sections 1219.1 through 1219.26 of the Order define certain terms, such as Hass avocado, handler, producer, and importer, which are used in the Order.

Sections 1219.30 through 1219.42 include provisions relating to the establishment, adjustment, and membership; nominations; appointment; term of office; vacancies; reimbursement; and the powers and duties of the Board.

The Board will be the body organized to administer the Order through the implementation of programs, plans, projects, budgets, and contracts to promote and disseminate information about Hass avocados, under the supervision of USDA. Further, the Board will be authorized to incur expenses necessary for the performance of its duties and to establish a reserve fund.

Sections 1219.50 through 1219.58 authorize the collection of assessments, specify who pays them and how, and specify persons who will be exempt from paying the assessment. The assessment rate may not exceed 5 cents per pound of Hass avocados. The assessment sections also outline the procedures to be followed by first handlers and importers for remitting assessments and establish interest charges for unpaid or late assessments.

Sections 1219.60 through 1219.65 concern reporting and recordkeeping requirements for persons subject to the Order; the confidentiality of information obtained from such books, records, or reports; and the maintenance of lists of importers and producers.

Sections 1219.70 through 1219.77 describe the rights of the Secretary of Agriculture; the authority for the Department to suspend or terminate the Order; proceedings after termination; the effect of termination or amendment; personal liability of Board members and staff; separability; amendments; and OMB control numbers.

General Findings

The Department conducted a referendum among producers and importers of Hass avocados from June 24 through July 12, 2002, to determine whether the Order would become effective. The representative period for establishing voter eligibility was from January 1, 2000, through December 31, 2001. It is determined that a majority of the eligible producers and importers

voting in the referendum favored implementation of the Order. After consideration of all relevant materials presented, including the proposals, comments received, and the referendum results, it is found that the Order is consistent with and effectuates the policy and purpose of the Act.

Pursuant to the provision in 5 U.S.C. 553, it is found and determined that good cause exists for not postponing the effective date of this action until 30 days after publication in the **Federal Register** because: (1) The Act requires implementation of the Order if the Order is approved by the Hass avocado industry; (2) the industry approved the Order in a recent referendum; (3) the Order cannot be fully implemented until this rule becomes effective and the Board is appointed; and (4) no useful purpose would be served by delaying the effective date of this action. Further, collection and remittance of assessments and applicable reporting will begin on January 2, 2003. If the Board is not in place on the effective date of the Order, the Order provides for the Department to receive assessments on the Board's behalf.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 1219

Administrative practice and procedure, Advertising, Consumer Information, Marketing agreements, Hass avocados, Promotion, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, Title 7 of chapter XI of the Code of Federal Regulations is amended as follows:

PART 1219—HASS AVOCADO PROMOTION, RESEARCH, AND INFORMATION

1. The authority citation for part 1219 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 7801–7813.

2. Subpart A is added to part 1219 to read as follows:

Subpart A—Hass Avocado Promotion, Research, and Information Order

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1219.4	Consumer information.
1219.5	Crop year.
1219.6	Customs.
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The Hass Avocado Board

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1219.60	Reports.
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1219.76	Amendments.
1219.77	OMB control numbers.

Subpart A—Hass Avocado Promotion, Research, and Information Order

Definitions

§ 1219.1 Act.

Act means the Hass Avocado Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 2000, Public Law 106–387, 7

U.S.C. 7801–7813, and any amendments thereto.

§ 1219.2 Association.

Association means an avocado organization established by State statute in a State with the majority of Hass avocado production in the United States.

§ 1219.3 Conflict of interest.

Conflict of interest means a situation in which a Board member or employee has a direct or indirect financial interest in a person who performs a service for, or enters into a contract with, the Board for anything of economic value.

§ 1219.4 Consumer information.

Consumer information means any action or program that disseminates or otherwise provides information to consumers and other persons, on the use, nutritional attributes, and other information that will assist consumers and other persons in the United States in making evaluations and decisions regarding the purchase, preparation, and use of Hass avocados.

§ 1219.5 Crop year.

Crop year means the period from November 1 of one year through October 31 of the following year, or such other one-year period recommended by the Board and approved by the Secretary.

§ 1219.6 Customs.

Customs means the United States Customs Service.

§ 1219.7 Department.

Department means the United States Department of Agriculture.

§ 1219.8 Exempt handler.

Exempt handler means a person who would otherwise be considered a first handler, except that all Hass avocados purchased by the person have already been subject to assessments under the Order. A person who handles both Hass avocados that have already been subject to assessments under the Order and Hass avocados that have not been subject to assessments under the Order is a first handler.

§ 1219.9 First handler.

First handler means a person operating in the Hass avocado marketing system that sells domestic or imported Hass avocados for consumption in the United States and who is responsible for remitting assessments to the Board. For the purposes of the Order, the term means the first person who handles Hass avocados for sale (except a common or contract carrier of Hass avocados owned by another person),

including a producer who handles Hass avocados for sale of the producer's own production.

§ 1219.10 Fiscal period or marketing year.

Fiscal period or marketing year means the period beginning on November 1 of any year and extending through the last day of October of the following year, or such other consecutive 12-month period as shall be recommended by the Board and approved by the Secretary.

§ 1219.11 Handle.

Handle means to pack, process, transport, purchase, or in any other way to place or cause Hass avocados to which one has title or possession to be placed in the current of commerce. Such term shall not include the transportation or delivery of Hass avocados by the producer thereof to a handler.

§ 1219.12 Hass avocado.

Hass avocado means the fruit grown in or imported into the United States of the species *Persea americana* Mill., or other type of avocados that, in the determination of the Board, with approval of the Secretary, is so similar to the Hass variety avocado as to be indistinguishable to consumers in fresh form. The term shall include all fruit in fresh, frozen, or any other processed form.

§ 1219.13 Hass Avocado Board.

Hass Avocado Board or the Board means the administrative body established pursuant to § 1219.40.

§ 1219.14 Importer.

Importer means any person who imports Hass avocados into the United States. The term includes a person who holds title to Hass avocados produced outside of the United States immediately upon release by Customs, as well as any person who acts on behalf of others, as an agent, broker, or consignee, to secure the release of Hass avocados from Customs and the introduction of the released Hass avocados into the current of commerce and who is listed in the import records of Customs as the importer of record for such Hass avocados.

§ 1219.15 Industry information.

Industry information means information, programs, and activities that are designed to increase efficiency in processing, enhance the development of new markets and marketing strategies, increase marketing efficiency, and enhance the image of Hass avocados and the Hass avocado industry in the United States.

§ 1219.16 Marketing.

Marketing means any activity related to the sale or other disposition of Hass avocados in any channel of commerce.

§ 1219.17 Order.

Order means this subpart.

§ 1219.18 Part and subpart.

Part means the Order and all rules, regulations, and supplemental orders issued pursuant to the Act and the Order. The Order itself shall be a *subpart* of such part.

§ 1219.19 Person.

Person means any individual, group of individuals, firm, partnership, corporation, joint stock company, association, cooperative, or any other legal entity.

§ 1219.20 Producer.

Producer means any person who is engaged in the business of producing Hass avocados in the United States for commercial use, who owns, or shares the ownership and risk of loss, of such Hass avocados.

§ 1219.21 Programs, plans, and projects.

Programs, plans, and projects means those research, promotion, and information programs, plans, studies, or projects established pursuant to § 1219.50.

§ 1219.22 Promotion.

Promotion means any action to advance the image, desirability, or marketability of Hass avocados in the United States, including paid advertising, sales promotion, and publicity. Promotion activities are designed to improve the competitive position and stimulate sales of Hass avocados in the domestic marketplace.

§ 1219.23 Research.

Research means any type of test, study, or analysis relating to market research, market development, and market efforts, or relating to the use, quality, or nutritional value of Hass avocados, other related food science research, or research designed to advance the knowledge, image, desirability, usage, or marketability of Hass avocados in the United States.

§ 1219.24 Secretary.

Secretary means the Secretary of Agriculture of the United States or any other officer or employee of the Department to whom authority has heretofore been delegated, or to whom authority may hereafter be delegated, to act in the Secretary's stead.

§ 1219.25 State.

State means any of the several 50 States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

§ 1219.26 United States.

United States means collectively the several 50 States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

The Hass Avocado Board

§ 1219.30 Establishment and membership.

(a) A Hass Avocado Board, called the Board elsewhere in this part, is hereby established to administer the terms and provisions of this subpart. The Board shall consist of 12 members nominated by the Hass avocado industry and appointed by the Secretary as provided in this subpart, each of whom shall have an alternate nominated and appointed in the same manner as members of the Board are nominated and appointed. Board members and alternates shall be domiciled in the United States.

(b) The membership of the Board shall be divided as follows:

(1) Seven members and their alternates shall be producers of Hass avocados that are subject to assessments under this subpart;

(2) Two members and their alternates shall be importers of Hass avocados that are subject to assessments under this subpart; and

(3) Three members shall be producers of Hass avocados that are subject to assessments under this subpart or importers of Hass avocados that are subject to assessments under this subpart. Producers and importers shall be allocated to these positions so as to assure as nearly as possible that the composition of the 12-member Board reflects the proportion of domestic production and imports supplying the United States market. Such proportion shall be based on the Secretary's determination of the average volume of domestic production and the average volume of imports into the United States market over the previous three years, based on all information available to the Secretary.

(c) Three years after the assessment of funds commences pursuant to this

subpart, and at the end of each three-year period thereafter, the Board shall review the production of domestic Hass avocados in the United States and the volume of imported Hass avocados on the basis of the amount of assessments collected from producers and importers over the immediately preceding three-year period and, if warranted, recommend to the Secretary the reapportionment of the positions authorized in paragraph (b)(3) of this section to reflect changes in the proportion of domestic Hass avocado production to the volume of imported Hass avocados, to the extent possible in the Act. Any adjustment under this paragraph shall be subject to the review and approval of the Secretary.

(d) For purposes of this section, *importer* means a person who is involved in, as a substantial activity, the importation of Hass avocados for sale or marketing in the United States (either directly or as an agent, broker, or consignee of any person that produces Hass avocados outside of the United States for sale in the United States), who is subject to assessments under the Order, and who is listed by Customs as the importer of record for such Hass avocados. A substantial activity means that the volume of a person's Hass avocado imports must exceed the volume of the person's production or handling of domestic Hass avocados.

§ 1219.31 Initial nomination and appointment of producer members and alternates.

(a) The Association will nominate producer members and alternates to serve on the Board in accordance with the following procedures.

(1) The Association shall establish a list of producers in the United States who are eligible to serve on the Board and notify all producers that they may nominate persons to serve as members and alternates on the Board.

(2) After names are received from the producers, the Association shall prepare a ballot with the names of all persons nominated and mail it to all producers to allow them the opportunity to vote for the persons who will represent their interests on the Board.

(3) After tabulating the vote, the Association shall announce the results and submit two names for each producer member and two names for each alternate producer member to the Secretary from the persons receiving the highest number of votes.

(b) The Secretary shall select the producer members and alternates of the Board from the names submitted by the Association. Following the selection of the producer members, the Secretary

shall select the alternate producer members. In selecting the alternate members, the Secretary shall consider the names submitted by the Association for each alternate member position along with the individuals whose names were submitted by the Association for each Board member position but were not selected for that position.

§ 1219.32 Initial nomination and appointment of importer members and alternates.

(a) The Department will conduct the nomination process for the initial importer members and alternates on the Board in accordance with the following procedures.

(1) The Department shall notify all known importers and importer organizations that they may nominate persons to serve as importer members and alternates on the Board.

(2) After names are received from the importers and importer organizations, the Department shall prepare a ballot with the names of all persons nominated and mail it to all known importers to allow them the opportunity to vote for the persons who will represent their interests on the Board.

(3) After tabulating the vote, the Department shall announce the results and submit two names for each importer member and two names for each alternate importer member to the Secretary from the persons receiving the highest number of votes.

(b) The Secretary shall select the importer members and alternates of the Board from the nominees elected by importers. Following the selection of the importer members, the Secretary shall select the alternate importer members. In selecting the alternate members, the Secretary shall consider the names for each alternate member position along with the individuals who were elected by importers for each Board member position but were not selected for that position.

§ 1219.33 Subsequent nomination and appointment of Board members and alternates.

The Board's staff shall announce at least 150 days in advance of the expiration of members' and alternates' terms that such terms are expiring and shall solicit nominations in accordance with procedures recommended by the Board and approved by the Secretary. Nominations for such positions should be submitted to the Secretary no less than 90 days prior to the expiration of the terms.

§ 1219.34 Failure to nominate.

In any case in which producers or importers fail to nominate individuals

for appointment to the Board, the Secretary may appoint individuals to fill vacancies from the appropriate segments of the industry.

§ 1219.35 Term of office.

The members and alternate members of the Board shall serve for terms of three years, except the members of the initial Board shall serve terms as follows: Four members and four alternates shall serve for two-year terms; four members and four alternates shall serve for three-year terms; and four members and four alternates shall serve for four-year terms. No member shall serve more than two consecutive three-year terms. Members and alternates serving initial two-year or four-year terms may serve for one additional three-year term. A Board member may serve as an alternate during the years the member is ineligible for a member position. Each term of office will end on October 31, with new terms of office beginning on November 1.

§ 1219.36 Vacancies.

(a) In the event any member or alternate of the Board ceases to be a member of the category of members from which the member was appointed to the Board, such member or alternate shall be disqualified from serving on the Board and the position shall automatically become vacant.

(b) If a member of the Board consistently refuses to perform the duties of a member of the Board, or if a member of the Board engages in acts of dishonesty or willful misconduct, the Board may recommend to the Secretary that the member be removed from office. If the Secretary finds that the recommendation of the Board shows adequate cause, the member shall be removed from office.

(c) Should any Board member position become vacant in the event of the death, removal, resignation, or disqualification, the alternate of that member shall automatically assume the position of said member. The alternate shall serve until the end of the member's normal term. If there is no alternate member to assume the position of member, the successor member and alternate shall be nominated and selected in the manner specified in §§ 1219.31, 1219.32, or 1219.33.

(d) Should any alternate member become vacant in the event of death, removal, resignation, or disqualification, the Board may nominate persons to serve for the unexpired term of such alternate member. The nomination shall be conducted at a regularly scheduled Board meeting as soon as practicable after the vacancy occurs. The Board may

solicit the names of nominees from producers and importers prior to the meeting and from the floor of the meeting. All nominees must meet the qualifications for nomination. The Board shall submit two nominees for each vacancy to the Secretary. A vacancy will not be required to be filled if the unexpired term is less than six months.

§ 1219.37 Alternate members.

An alternate member of the Board, during the absence of the member for whom the person is the alternate, shall act in the place and stead of such member and perform such duties as assigned. In the event of the death, removal, resignation, or disqualification of any member, the alternate for that member shall automatically assume the position of said member. In the event that both a member of the Board and the alternate are unable to attend a meeting, the Board may not designate any other alternate to serve in such member's or alternate's place and stead for the meeting.

§ 1219.38 Powers and duties.

The Board shall have the following powers and duties in addition to the responsibilities and authorities specified in other sections of this subpart:

- (a) To administer the Order in accordance with its terms and conditions and to collect assessments;
- (b) To develop and recommend to the Secretary for approval such bylaws as may be necessary for the functioning of the Board and such rules as may be necessary to administer the Order, including activities authorized to be carried out under the Order;
- (c) To meet, organize, and select from among the members of the Board a chairperson, other officers, committees, and subcommittees, at the start of each fiscal period, and at such other times as the Board determines to be appropriate;
- (d) To recommend to the Secretary rules and regulations to effectuate the terms and conditions of this subpart;
- (e) To employ such persons, other than the members, as the Board considers necessary to assist the Board in carrying out its duties and to determine the compensation and specify the duties of such persons;
- (f) To appoint from its members an executive committee and to delegate to the committee authority to administer the terms and provisions of this subpart under the direction of the Board and within the policies determined by the Board and approved by the Secretary;
- (g) To develop budgets for the implementation of this subpart and

submit the budgets to the Secretary for approval and to propose and develop (or receive and evaluate), approve, and submit to the Secretary for approval programs, plans, and projects for Hass avocado promotion, industry information, consumer information, or related research;

(h) To develop and implement after the approval by the Secretary programs, plans, and projects for Hass avocado promotion, industry information, consumer information, or related research, to contract or enter into agreements with appropriate persons to implement the programs, plans, and projects, and to pay the costs of the implementation of contracts and agreements with funds collected under this subpart.

(i) To maintain such records and books and prepare and submit such reports and records from time to time to the Secretary as the Secretary may prescribe; to make appropriate accounting with respect to the receipt and disbursement of all funds entrusted to it; and to keep records that accurately reflect the actions and transactions of the Board;

(j) To work to achieve an effective, continuous, and coordinated program of promotion, research, consumer information, and industry information designed to strengthen the Hass avocado industry's position in the domestic marketplace; to maintain and expand existing domestic markets and uses for Hass avocados; to create new domestic markets; and to carry out programs, plans, and projects designed to provide maximum benefits to the Hass avocado industry;

(k) To evaluate on-going and completed programs, plans, and projects for Hass avocado promotion, industry information, consumer information, or related research and to comply with the independent evaluation provisions of the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 [7 U.S.C. 7401 *et seq.*];

(l) To receive, investigate, and report to the Secretary complaints of violations of the Order;

(m) To recommend to the Secretary amendments to this Order;

(n) To invest, pending disbursement under a program, plan, or project, funds collected through assessments authorized under this Act only in:

- (1) Obligations of the United States or any agency of the United States;
- (2) General obligations of any State or any political subdivision of a State;
- (3) Any interest-bearing account or certificate of deposit of a bank that is a member of the Federal Reserve System; or

(4) Obligations fully guaranteed as to principal and interest by the United States, except that income from any such invested funds may be used only for a purpose for which the invested funds may be used;

(o) To borrow funds necessary for the startup expenses of the Order;

(p) To cause the books of the Board to be audited by a qualified independent auditor at the end of each fiscal period and to submit a report of the audit directly to the Secretary;

(q) To give the Secretary the same notice of meetings and teleconferences of the Board and its committees as is given to members in order that the Secretary's representative(s) may attend or participate in the meetings;

(r) To act as intermediary between the Secretary and any producer, first handler, or importer;

(s) To periodically prepare and make public reports of its activities carried out, and at least once each fiscal period, to make public an accounting of funds received and expended; and

(t) To notify Hass avocado producers, first handlers, and importers of all Board meetings through news releases or other means.

§ 1219.39 Board procedure.

(a) At a properly convened meeting of the Board, seven (7) members, including alternates acting in place of members of the Board, shall constitute a quorum: *Provided*, that such alternates shall serve only when the member is absent from a meeting. Any action of the Board shall require the concurring votes of a majority of those present and voting. At assembled meetings, all votes shall be cast in person.

(b) In lieu of voting at a properly convened meeting and, when in the opinion of the chairperson of the Board such action is considered necessary, the Board may take action if supported by one vote more than 50 percent of the members by mail, telephone, electronic mail, facsimile, or other means of communication. Such alternative means for the Board taking action may be undertaken for various reasons. These reasons include the need to address matters of an emergency nature when there is not enough time to call an assembled meeting of the Board. All telephone votes shall be confirmed promptly in writing. In that event, all members must be notified and provided an opportunity to vote. Any action so taken shall have the same force and effect as though such action had been taken at a properly convened meeting of the Board. All votes shall be recorded in the Board minutes.

(c) All Board members and alternates and the Secretary will be notified at least 10 days in advance of all Board meetings, except the chairperson of the Board can waive the 10-day requirement in matters of an emergency nature.

(d) Each member of the Board will be entitled to one vote on any matter put to the Board, and the motion will carry if supported by one vote more than 50 percent of the total votes represented by the Board members present.

(e) There shall be no voting by proxy.

(f) The chairperson shall be a voting member of the Board.

§ 1219.40 Committee procedure.

(a) The Board may establish committees as deemed necessary to carry out the purposes and objectives of the Order.

(b) The chairperson of the Board shall appoint all committee chairpersons and shall appoint all members of each committee after consultation with the committee chairperson affected. Appointments are subject to approval by the Board and may be changed from time to time as determined by the chairperson of the Board with the concurrence of the Board.

(c) The chairperson of the Board may appoint committee members from among the Board members and alternates and from the industry in general.

(d) The rules and procedures under which committees conduct their activities shall be prescribed in the Board's bylaws.

(e) Committee members and the Secretary will be notified at least 10 days in advance of all committee meetings.

(f) It will be considered a quorum at a committee meeting when at least one more than half of those assigned to the committee are present.

(g) There shall be no voting by proxy on committees.

(h) The chairperson of the Board shall be an ex-officio member of all committees.

§ 1219.41 Compensation and expenses.

(a) The members and alternates of the Board and committee members shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, as approved by the Board, incurred by them in the performance of their duties.

(b) The Board shall have in place sufficient internal controls to prevent reimbursements or expenditures for unreasonable or otherwise controversial travel and meeting expenses.

§ 1219.42 Prohibited activities.

The Board may not engage in and shall prohibit its employees and agents from engaging in:

(a) Any action that would be a conflict of interest. For the purposes of this subpart, Board members and employees thereof must disclose any relationship with any organization or company that has a contract with the Board or operates a State promotion program. No member may vote on any matter in which the member or member's business entity has a financial interest.

(b) Using funds collected under this subpart for the purpose of influencing legislation or governmental action or policy, by local, national, and foreign governments, except to develop and make recommendations to the Secretary as provided for in this subpart.

(c) In a program, plan, or project conducted under this subpart:

(1) Making any reference to private brand names or making false, misleading, disparaging, or unwarranted claims on behalf of Hass avocados or

(2) Making any false, misleading, or disparaging statements with respect to the attributes or use of any agricultural product. This section shall not preclude the Board from offering its programs, plans, and projects for use by commercial parties under such terms and conditions as the Board may prescribe as approved by the Secretary.

(d) For the purposes of this section, a reference to State of origin or country of origin does not constitute a reference to a private brand name with regard to any funds credited to or disbursed by the Board to the Association or to any importer association established in accordance with § 1219.54.

Budgets, Expenses, and Assessments

§ 1219.50 Budgets, programs, plans, and projects.

(a) The Board shall submit to the Secretary, on a fiscal period basis, annual budgets of its anticipated expenses and disbursements of the Board in the administration of this subpart, including the projected costs of Hass avocado promotion, industry information, consumer information, and related research programs, plans, and projects. The first budget shall cover such period as may remain before the beginning of the next fiscal period. If such fiscal period is 90 days or less, the first budget shall cover such period, as well as the next fiscal period. Thereafter, the Board shall submit budgets for each succeeding fiscal period not less than 60 days before the beginning of such fiscal period.

(b) The Board shall receive and evaluate, or on its own initiative

develop programs, plans and projects for Hass avocado promotion, industry information, consumer information as well as related research. The Board shall submit to the Secretary for approval any program, plan, or project authorized in this subpart. Such programs, plans or projects shall provide for:

(1) The establishment, implementation, issuance, effectuation, administration, and evaluation of appropriate programs, plans, or projects for advertising, sales promotion, other promotion, and consumer information with respect to Hass avocados directed toward increasing the general demand for Hass avocados in the United States. Funds shall be available as necessary to carry out this section;

(2) The establishment, implementation, issuance, effectuation, administration, and evaluation of appropriate programs, plans, and projects designed to strengthen the position of the Hass avocado industry in the domestic marketplace; to maintain, develop, and expand markets for Hass avocados in the United States; to lead to the development of new marketing strategies; to advance the image and desirability of, increase the efficiency of, and encourage further development of the Hass avocado industry; and to provide for the disbursement of necessary funds for the purposes described in this section;

(3) The establishment, implementation, issuance, effectuation, administration, and evaluation of programs, plans, and projects for marketing development research; research on the sale, distribution, marketing, use, quality, and nutritional value of Hass avocados; and other research with respect to Hass avocado marketing, promotion, industry information, or consumer information, including the creation of new products thereof. Information acquired from such plans and projects shall be disseminated as appropriate. Funds shall be available as necessary to carry out this section; and

(4) The Board to enter into contracts or make agreements for the development and carrying out of research, promotion, and information, and pay for the costs of such contracts or agreements with funds collected pursuant to § 1219.54.

(c) A budget, program, plan, or project for Hass avocados promotion, industry information, consumer information, or related research may not be implemented prior to approval of the budget, program, plan, or project by the Secretary. If the Secretary fails to provide notice to the Board or approval or disapproval of a budget, program, plan, or project within 45 days after

receipt, such budget, program, plan, or project shall be deemed approved by the Secretary and may be implemented by the Board.

(d) The Board, from time to time, may seek advice and consult with experts from the production, import, wholesale, and retail segments of the Hass avocado industry to assist in the development of promotion, industry information, consumer information, and related research programs, plans, and projects. For these purposes, the Board may appoint special committees composed of persons other than Board members. A committee so appointed shall consult directly with the Board.

(e) Programs must be conducted throughout the year to reflect the periods when imported and domestic Hass avocados are in the U.S. marketplace.

(f) The Board shall consult with both the Association and importer associations on programs, plans, and projects for generic promotions.

§ 1219.51 Contracts and agreements.

(a) The Board shall enter into a contract or an agreement with the Association for the implementation of programs, plans, or projects for promotion, industry information, consumer information, or related research with respect to Hass avocados and for the payment of the cost of the contract or agreement with funds received by the Board under this subpart. The Board may disburse such funds as necessary for these purposes after such programs, plans, or projects have been submitted to and approved by the Secretary.

(b) Any contract or agreement entered into shall provide that the contracting or agreeing party shall develop and submit to the Board a program, plan or project, together with a budget that includes the estimated costs to be incurred for the program, plan or project, and such program, plan or project shall become effective on the approval of the Secretary. For such contract or agreement, the contracting or agreeing party shall:

- (1) Keep accurate records of all transactions of the party;
- (2) Account for funds received and expended;
- (3) Make periodic reports to the Board of activities conducted; and
- (4) Make such other reports as the Board or the Secretary shall require.

(c) The Secretary may audit the records of the contracting or agreeing party periodically.

(d) Contractors and subcontractors are subject to the provisions of § 1219.42.

(e) The Board may enter into contracts or agreements for administrative services, including contracts for employment, as may be required to conduct its business. To the extent appropriate to the contract involved, contracts or agreements entered into by the Board under the authority of this section shall conform to the provisions described in paragraph (b) of this section.

§ 1219.52 Control of administrative costs.

(a) As soon as practicable after September 9, 2002, and after consultation with the Secretary and other appropriate persons, the Board shall implement a system of cost controls based on normally accepted business practices to:

(1) Ensure that the costs incurred by the Board in administering this part in any fiscal period shall not exceed 10 percent of the projected level of assessments and other income received by the Board for generic promotion and research programs for that fiscal period; and

(2) Cover the minimum administrative activities and personnel needed to properly administer and enforce this subpart, and conduct, supervise, and evaluate programs, plans, and projects under this subpart.

(b) Reimbursements to the Secretary required under § 1219.53(b) are excluded from the limitation on spending.

(c) To the extent possible, the Board shall use the resources, staffs, and facilities of existing avocado organizations as provided in § 1219.54(a).

§ 1219.53 Budget and expenses.

(a) The Board is authorized to incur such expenses, including provision for a reasonable reserve for operating contingencies, as the Secretary finds are reasonable and likely to be incurred by the Board for its maintenance and functioning and to enable it to exercise its powers and perform its duties in accordance with the provisions of this subpart. Such expenses shall be paid from funds received by the Board, including assessments, contributions from any person not subject to assessments under this subpart, and other funds available to the Board.

(b) The Board shall reimburse the Department:

(1) For expenses not to exceed \$25,000 incurred by the Secretary in connection with any referendum conducted under the Act;

(2) For administrative costs incurred by the Secretary for supervisory work of up to two employee years annually after

the Order or amendment to the Order has been issued and made effective; and

(3) For costs incurred by the Secretary in implementation of the Order, for enforcement of the Act and the order, for subsequent referenda conducted under the Act, and in defending the Board in litigation arising out of action taken by the Board or otherwise in defense of the Order.

(c) The Board shall establish and maintain the minimum level of annual administrative expenses necessary to efficiently and effectively carry out the programs authorized by the Act. The Board shall include its annual administrative expenses as a separate item in its annual report. The Board shall adhere to its fiduciary responsibilities and ensure that all monies are spent in accordance with the Act and the Order.

(d) With the approval of the Secretary, the Board may borrow money for the payment of administrative expenses, subject to the same fiscal, budget, and audit controls as other funds of the Board. Any funds borrowed by the Board shall be expended only for startup costs and capital outlays and are limited to the first period of operation of the Board.

(e) The Board may accept voluntary contributions, but these shall only be used to pay expenses incurred in the conduct of programs, plans, and projects. The contributions shall be free from any encumbrance by the donor, and the Board shall retain complete control of their use.

§ 1219.54 Assessments.

(a) Except as provided in § 1219.55, the initial rate of assessment shall be 2.5 cents per pound on fresh Hass avocados produced and handled in the United States and on fresh Hass avocados imported into the United States. An equivalent rate shall be assessed on processed and frozen Hass avocados on which an assessment has not been paid. Such equivalent rate will be assessed on processed or frozen Hass avocados upon the recommendation of the Board with the approval of the Secretary. The rate of assessment may be increased or decreased as recommended by the Board and approved by the Secretary. Such an increase or decrease may occur not more than once annually. Any change in the assessment rate shall be announced by the Board at least 30 days prior to going into effect and shall not be subject to a vote in a referendum. The maximum assessment rate authorized is 5 cents per pound. No more than one assessment shall be made on any Hass avocados.

(b) *Domestic assessments.* The collection of assessments on domestic Hass avocados will be the responsibility of the first handler.

(1) In the case of a producer acting as the producer's own first handler, the producer will be required to collect and remit the assessments due to the Board.

(2) Each first handler shall collect from the producer and pay to the Board an assessment of 2.5 cents per pound in accordance with this subpart. Assessments shall be remitted by each first handler to the Board or its agent within 30 days after the end of the month in which the sale or non-sale transfer subject to assessment under this subpart took place.

(3) The first handler shall maintain a separate record of the domestic Hass avocados of each producer whose domestic Hass avocados are handled, including the domestic Hass avocados owned by the handler and domestic Hass avocados that are exported.

(4) Assessment of other types of fresh avocados may be added at the recommendation of the Board with the approval of the Secretary.

(c) *Import assessments.* Each importer of fresh Hass avocados shall pay an assessment to the Board through Customs on fresh Hass avocados imported for marketing in the United States.

(1) The assessment rate for imported fresh Hass avocados shall be the same or equivalent to the rate for fresh Hass avocados produced and handled in the United States.

(2) The import assessment shall be uniformly applied to imported fresh Hass avocados that are identified by the number 0804.40.00.10 in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States or any other numbers to identify fresh Hass avocados. Assessments on other types of imported fresh avocados or on processed Hass avocados, such as prepared, preserved, or frozen Hass avocados or Hass avocado paste, puree, and oil will be added at the recommendation of the Board with the approval of the Secretary.

(3) The assessments due on imported Hass avocados shall be paid when they are released from custody by Customs and introduced into the stream of commerce in the United States.

(d) All assessment payments and reports will be submitted to the Board's office. All final payments for a crop year are to be received no later than November 30 of that year, unless the Board determines that assessments due from the first handler shall be paid to the Board at a different time and manner, with approval of the Secretary.

(e) A late payment charge prescribed by the Secretary shall be imposed on any first handler who fails to remit to the Board the total amount for which any such handler is liable on or before the due date. In addition to the late payment charge, an interest charge shall be imposed on the outstanding amount for which the handler is liable. The rate of interest shall be prescribed by the Secretary. The timeliness of a payment to the Board shall be based on the date the payment is actually received by the Board.

(f) Regulations issued by the Secretary may provide for different first handler payment schedules of assessments on domestic Hass avocados, so as to recognize differences in marketing or purchasing practices and procedures.

(g) Persons failing to remit total assessments due in a timely manner may also be subject to actions under federal debt collection procedures.

(h) The Board may authorize other organizations to collect assessments on its behalf with approval of the Secretary.

(i) The collection of assessments shall commence on or after a date established by the Secretary and shall continue until terminated by the Secretary. If the Board is not constituted on the date the first assessments are to be remitted, the Secretary shall have the authority to receive assessments on behalf of the Board and may hold such assessments in an interest-bearing account until the Board is constituted and the funds are transferred to the Board.

(j) To facilitate the payment of assessments under this section, the Board shall publish lists of first handlers required to remit assessments under this subpart and exempt handlers.

(k) The Association shall receive an amount of assessment funds equal to 85 percent of the assessments paid on Hass avocados produced in such State. Such funds shall be remitted to such State organization no later than 30 days after such funds are received by the Board. In addition, such funds and any proceeds from the investment of such funds shall be used by the Association to finance promotion, research, consumer information, and industry information programs, plans, and projects in the United States. However, no such funds shall be used for any administrative expenses incurred by the Association.

(l) An association of Hass avocado importers established pursuant to § 1219.58 shall receive an amount of assessment funds equal to 85 percent of the assessments paid on Hass avocados imported by its members. Such funds shall be remitted to such importer association no later than 30 days after such funds are received by the Board. In

addition, such funds and any proceeds from the investment of such funds shall be used by the importer association to finance promotion, research, consumer information, and industry information programs, plans, and projects in the United States. However, no such funds shall be used for any administrative expenses incurred by the importer association.

(m) In general, assessment funds received by the Board shall be used:

(1) For payment of costs incurred in implementing and administering this subpart;

(2) To provide for a reasonable reserve to be maintained from assessments to be available for contingencies; and

(3) To cover the administrative costs incurred by the Secretary in implementing and administering this Act, as set forth in § 1219.53(b).

(n) The Board may establish an operating monetary reserve which may carry over to subsequent fiscal periods: *Provided that*, the funds in the reserve do not exceed one fiscal period's budget. Subject to approval by the Secretary, reserve funds may be used to defray any expenses authorized under this part.

§ 1219.55 Exemption from assessment.

(a) Any sale of Hass avocados for export from the United States is exempt from assessment.

(b) The Board may require persons receiving an exemption from assessments to provide to the Board reports on the disposition of exempt Hass avocados.

§ 1219.56 Adjustment of accounts.

Whenever the Board or the Secretary determines through an audit of a person's reports, records, books, or accounts or by some other means that additional money is due to the Board, the person shall be notified of the amount due. The person shall then remit any amount due the Board by the next date for remitting assessments. Overpayments shall be credited to the account of the person remitting the overpayment and shall be applied against any amounts due in succeeding months unless the person requests a refund of the overpayment.

§ 1219.57 Patents, copyrights, trademarks, publications, and product formulations.

(a) Any patents, copyrights, trademarks, inventions, information, publications, and product formulations developed through the use of funds received by the Board under this subpart shall be the property of the U.S. Government as represented by the Board, and shall, along with any rents,

royalties, residual payments, or other income from the rental, sale, leasing, franchising, or other uses of such patents, copyrights, trademarks, inventions, information, publications, or product formulations, inure to the benefit of the Board; shall be considered income subject to the same fiscal, budget, and audit controls as other funds of the Board; and may be licensed subject to approval of the Secretary. Section 1219.72 describes the procedures for termination.

(b) Should patents, copyrights, trademarks, inventions, publications, or product formulations be developed through the use of funds collected by the Board under this subpart and funds contributed by another organization or person, ownership and related rights to such patents, copyrights, trademarks, inventions, publications, or product formulations shall be determined by agreement between the Board and the party contributing funds towards the development of such patent, copyright, trademark, invention, publication, or product formulation in a manner consistent with paragraph (a) of this section.

§ 1219.58 Importer associations.

(a) An association of avocado importers is eligible to receive assessment funds and any proceeds from the investment of such funds only if such importer association is:

(1) Established pursuant to State law that requires detailed State regulation comparable to that applicable to the State organization of domestic avocado producers, as determined by the Secretary; or

(2) Certified by the Secretary as meeting the requirements applicable to the Board as to its operations and obligations, including budgets, programs, plans, projects, audits, conflicts of interest, and reimbursements for administrative costs incurred by the Secretary.

(b) An importer association may represent any importers of Hass avocados including importers of Hass avocados from a particular foreign country. An importer association may be composed of importers as well as representatives of foreign avocado exporting industries. An importer association should establish its own bylaws and may use existing organizations for the establishment of the association and coordination of the association's promotion and research efforts.

(c) For the purposes of the Order, the information required for certification of the importer associations by the

Secretary may include, but is not limited to, the following:

(1) Evidence of incorporation under any state law with all appropriate legal requirements;

(2) Evidence that the association is composed of importers that are located in any state and subject to assessments under the Order, no matter where the association has been incorporated or in which state the importers reside;

(3) Certification of the association's ability and willingness to further the aims and objectives of the Order;

(4) Evidence of stability and permanency; and

(5) A description of the functions of the association.

Books, Records, and Reports

§ 1219.60 Reports.

(a) Each first handler of domestic Hass avocados, producer, and importer subject to this subpart shall report to the administrative staff of the Board, at such times and in such manner as the Board may prescribe, such information as may be necessary for the Board to perform its duties.

(b) First handler reports shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following:

(1) Number of pounds of domestic Hass avocados received during the reporting period;

(2) Number of pounds on which assessments were collected;

(3) Assessments collected during the reporting period;

(4) Name and address of person(s) from whom the first handler collected the assessments on each pound handled;

(5) Date collection was made on each pound handled;

(6) Record of assessments paid, including a statement from the handler that assessments have been paid on all domestic Hass avocados handled during the reporting period; and

(7) Number of pounds exported.

(c) Each importer subject to this subpart may be required to report the following:

(1) Number of pounds of Hass avocados imported during the reporting period;

(2) Number of pounds on which an assessment was paid;

(3) Name and address of the importer;

(4) Date collection was made on each pound imported and to whom payment was made; and

(5) Record of each importation of Hass avocados during such period, giving quantity, variety, date, and port of entry.

§ 1219.61 Books and records.

Each producer, first handler, and importer subject to this subpart shall

maintain and make available for inspection by the employees and agents of the Board and the Secretary, such books and records as are necessary to carry out the provisions of this subpart, and the regulations issued thereunder, including such records as are necessary to verify any reports required. Books and records shall be retained for at least two years beyond the fiscal period of their applicability.

§ 1219.62 Books and records of the Board.

(a) The Board shall maintain such books and records as the Secretary may require. Such books and records shall be made available upon request by the Secretary for inspection and audit.

(b) The Board shall prepare and submit to the Secretary, from time to time, such reports as the Secretary may require.

(c) The Board shall account for the receipt and disbursement of all the funds entrusted to the Board.

(d) The Board shall cause the books and records of the Board to be audited by an independent auditor at the end of each fiscal period. A report of each audit shall be submitted to the Secretary.

§ 1219.63 Confidential treatment.

(a) All information obtained from the books, records, or reports under the Act, this subpart, and the regulations issued thereunder shall be kept confidential and shall not be disclosed to the public by any person, including all current and former officers, employees, staff and agents of the Department, the Board, and contracting and subcontracting agencies or agreeing parties having access to such information. Only those persons having a specific need for such information to effectively administer the provisions of this subpart shall have access to such information. Only such information so obtained as the Secretary deems relevant shall be disclosed, and then only in a judicial proceeding or administrative hearing brought at the direction, or upon the request, of the Secretary, or to which the Secretary or any officer of the United States is a party, and involving this subpart. Nothing in this subpart shall be deemed to prohibit:

(1) The issuance of general statements based upon the reports of the number of persons subject to this subpart or statistical data collected from such reports, if such statements do not identify the information furnished by any person; or

(2) The publication, by direction of the Secretary, of the name of any person who has been adjudged to have violated this subpart, together with a statement

of the particular provisions of this subpart violated by such person.

(b) Any disclosure of any confidential information by any employee or agent of the Board shall be considered willful misconduct.

(c) No information on how a person voted in a referendum conducted under the Act shall be made public.

§ 1219.64 List of importers.

The administrative staff of the Board shall periodically review the list of importers of Hass avocados to determine whether persons on the list are subject to this subpart.

§ 1219.65 List of producers.

The administrative staff of the Board shall periodically review the list of producers of Hass avocados to determine whether the persons on the list are subject to this subpart. On the request of the Secretary or the Board, the Association shall provide to the Secretary or the administrative staff of the Board the list of producers of Hass avocados.

Miscellaneous

§ 1219.70 Right of the Secretary.

All fiscal matters, programs, plans, and projects, contracts, rules or regulations, reports, or other substantive actions proposed and prepared by the Board shall be submitted to the Secretary for approval.

§ 1219.71 Suspension or termination.

(a) The Secretary shall suspend or terminate this part or subpart or a provision thereof if the Secretary finds that the part or subpart or a provision thereof obstructs or does not tend to effectuate the purposes of the Act, or if the Secretary determines that this part or subpart or a provision thereof is not favored by persons voting in a referendum conducted pursuant to the Order or the Act.

(b) The Secretary shall suspend or terminate this subpart at the end of the marketing year whenever the Secretary determines that its suspension or termination is approved or favored by a majority of the producers and importers voting who, during a representative period determined by the Secretary, have been engaged in the production or importation of Hass avocados.

(c) If, as a result of a referendum, the Secretary determines that this subpart is not approved, the Secretary shall:

(1) Suspend or terminate, as appropriate, the collection of assessments not later than 180 days after making such determination; and

(2) Suspend or terminate, as appropriate, all activities under this

subpart in an orderly manner as soon as practicable.

§ 1219.72 Proceedings after termination.

(a) Upon the termination of this subpart, the Board shall recommend to the Secretary not more than five of its members to serve as trustees for the purpose of liquidating the affairs of the Board. Such persons, upon designation by the Secretary, shall become trustees of all of the funds and property owned, in possession of or under control of the Board, including claims for any funds unpaid or property not delivered or any other claim existing at the time of such termination.

(b) The said trustees shall:

(1) Continue in such capacity until discharged by the Secretary;

(2) Carry out the obligations of the Board under any contracts or agreements entered into by it pursuant to the Order;

(3) From time to time account for all receipts and disbursements and deliver all property on hand, together with all books and records of the Board and of the trustees, to such person or persons as the Secretary may direct; and

(4) Upon the request of the Secretary, execute such assignments or other instruments necessary and appropriate to vest in such persons title and right to all of the funds, property, and claims vested in the Board or the trustees pursuant to the Order.

(c) Any person to whom funds, property, or claims have been transferred or delivered pursuant to the Order shall be subject to the same obligations imposed upon the Board and the trustees.

(d) Any residual funds not required to defray the necessary expenses of liquidation shall be returned to the persons who contributed such funds, or paid assessments, or, if not practicable, shall be turned over to the Secretary to be distributed to authorized Hass avocado producer and importer organizations in the interest of continuing Hass avocado promotion, research, and information programs.

§ 1219.73 Effect of termination or amendment.

Unless otherwise expressly provided by the Secretary, the termination of this subpart or any regulation issued thereunder, or the issuance of any amendment to either thereof, shall not:

(a) Affect or waive any right, duty, obligation, or liability which shall have arisen or which may thereafter arise in connection with any provision of this subpart or any such rule or regulation issued thereunder; or

(b) Release or extinguish any violation of this subpart or of any rule or regulation issued thereunder; or

(c) Affect or impair any rights or remedies of the United States, or of the Secretary or of any person, with respect to any such violation.

§ 1219.74 Personal liability.

No member, alternate member, employee, or agent of the Board shall be held personally responsible, either individually or jointly with others, in any way whatsoever, to any person for errors in judgment, mistakes, or other acts, either of Association or omission, as such member, alternate, employee, or agent, except for acts of dishonesty or willful misconduct.

§ 1219.75 Separability.

If any provision of this subpart is declared invalid or the applicability thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the validity of the remainder of this subpart, or the applicability thereof to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

§ 1219.76 Amendments.

Amendments to this subpart may be proposed, from time to time, by the Board or by any interested persons affected by the provisions of the Act, including the Secretary. Except for changes in the assessment rate, the provisions of the Act applicable to the Order are applicable to any amendment of the Order.

§ 1219.77 OMB control numbers.

The control numbers assigned to the information collection requirements in this part by the Office of Management and Budget pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, are OMB control numbers 0581-0197 and 0505-0001.

Dated: August 30, 2002.

A.J. Yates,

Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service.

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SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

13 CFR Part 121

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AGENCY: Small Business Administration (SBA).