

Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA

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PART 36—PROCEDURES BY WHICH THE AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE DEVELOPS, REVISES, SUSPENDS, OR TERMINATES VOL- UNTARY OFFICIAL GRADE STANDARDS

Sec.

36.1 General information.

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

SOURCE: 62 FR 43439, Aug. 13, 1997, unless otherwise noted.

§ 36.1 General information.

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS or agency) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) facilitates the fair and efficient marketing of agricultural products by promulgating voluntary official grade standards for dairy, fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, livestock, meats and meat products, eggs, poultry and rabbit products, tobacco, wool, mohair, and other agricultural products. AMS standards provide a uniform language for describing the quality of various agricultural commodities in the marketplace. These standards may cover (but are not limited to) terms, classes, sizes (including quantities of packaged consumer agricultural commodities), dimensions, capacities, quality levels, performance criteria, inspection requirements, marking requirements, testing equipment, test procedures, and installation procedures.

(a) Grade standards are officially designated as U.S. Grade Standards and the AMS assigns each grade standard an appropriate identification number. AMS develops, revises, suspends, or terminates official grade standards under procedures that allows for input by interested parties.

(b) These procedures set forth the process by which AMS will develop, revise, suspend, or terminate the U.S. standards.

(c) Communications about AMS standards in general should be ad-

ressed to the Administrator, Attention: Functional Committee for Standards. Communications about specific standards (such as a request to develop or revise a standard) should be addressed to the Director of the appropriate Division (Dairy, Fruit and Vegetable, Livestock and Seed, Poultry, or Tobacco). All communications should include in the address: Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090-6456.

§ 36.2 Initiating action on grade standards.

The Agency will develop, revise, suspend, or terminate grade standards if it determines that such action is in the public interest. Any standardization action should reflect the broad interest of individuals or an industry involved in manufacturing, producing, packaging, distributing, testing, consuming, or using the product; or the interest of a Federal, State, or local agency. Proposed actions should always be based on sound technical and marketing information and should include careful consideration of the factors that determine a commodity's quality and condition and that will allow trained personnel to determine objectively conformance or non-conformance.

(a) AMS encourages interested parties to participate in the review, development, and revision of grade standards. Interested parties include growers, producers, processors, shippers, distributors, consumers, individuals or groups, trade associations, companies, and State or Federal agencies. Such groups and individuals may at any time recommend that AMS develop, revise suspend, or terminate a grade standard. Requests for Agency action should be in writing, preferably accompanied by a draft of the suggested change.

(1) The Agency, in cooperation with interested parties, as applicable, will:

(i) Determine the need for new or revised standards;

(ii) Collect technical, marketing, or other appropriate data;

(iii) Conduct research regarding new or revised standards, as appropriate; and,

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(iv) Draft the proposed standards;

(2) [Reserved]

(b) If the Agency determines that new standards are needed, existing standards need to be revised, or the suspension or termination of existing standards is justified, it will undertake the action, with input from all interested parties.

§ 36.3 Public notification of grade standards action.

After developing a standardization proposal, the Agency will publish a notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER describing new or changes to existing standards or to suspend or terminate existing standards. AMS will simultaneously issue a news release about these actions. AMS will also distribute copies of the full text of the proposals to anyone requesting a copy or to anyone the Agency believes may be interested, including other Federal, State, or local government agencies, and on the Internet. For other than minor editorial or technical changes, the notice will provide at least 60 days for interested parties to submit comments to the Agency.

(a) All comments received within the comment period will be part of the public record maintained by the Agency, will be available to the public for review, and will be considered by the Agency before final action is taken on the proposal.

(1) Based on the comments received, the Agency's knowledge of standards, grading, marketing, and other technical factors, and any other relevant information AMS will decide whether the proposed actions should be implemented.

(2) If AMS concludes that the actions as proposed or with minor modifications should be adopted, AMS will publish a description of the changes or actions in a FEDERAL REGISTER notice. The Agency, through the appropriate AMS Divisions, will make the grade standards and related information available in printed form and electronic media.

(3) If the Agency determines that proposed changes are not warranted, or otherwise are not in the public interest, the Agency will either publish in the FEDERAL REGISTER a notice with-

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drawing the proposal, or will revise the proposal and again seek public input.

(b) [Reserved]

PART 37—PROGRAM TO ASSESS ORGANIC CERTIFYING AGENCIES

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

SOURCE: 64 FR 30867, June 9, 1999, unless otherwise noted.

§ 37.1 Definitions.

Words used in this part in the singular form shall be deemed to impart the plural, and vice versa, as the case may demand. For the purposes of such regulations, unless the context otherwise requires, the following terms shall be construed, respectively, to mean:

Assessment services. The services provided by the Meat Grading and Certification Branch in accordance with the regulations that may result in assessment of an organic certification program that certifies agricultural commodities to established specifications or standards.

Act. The Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (Title II of the act of Congress approved August 14, 1946, 60 Stat. 1087, as amended by Pub. L. 272, 84th Cong., 69 Stat. 553, 7 U.S.C. 1621-1627).

Agricultural commodity. Any agricultural commodity or product, raw or processed, that is used for human or animal consumption or use.

Agricultural Marketing Service. The Agricultural Marketing Service of the Department.

Applicant. Any person who applies for service under the regulations.