

appeal. The Administrator's, AMS, determination on an appeal shall be final.

[65 FR 43508, July 13, 2000, as amended at 65 FR 62579, Oct. 19, 2000]

§ 1230.632 Receiving ballots.

(a) *Producers.* A ballot shall be considered to be received on time if:

(1) It was cast in-person in the county FSA office prior to the close of business on the date of the last day of the in-person voting period; or

(2) It was cast as an absentee ballot, having a postmarked date not later than the last day of the in-person voting period and was received in the county FSA office not later than the close of business, 5 business days after the last day of the in-person voting period.

(b) *Importers.* A ballot shall be considered to be received on time if it had a postmarked date not later than the date of the last day of the in-person voting period and was received in the FSA headquarters office in Washington, DC, not later than the close of business, 5 business days after the last day of the in-person voting period.

§ 1230.633 Canvassing ballots.

(a) *Producers.* (1) Counting the ballots. Under the supervision of FSA CED, acting on behalf of the Administrator, AMS, the in-person registration and certification form envelopes (Form LS-72-2) and the absentee "Pork Referendum" envelopes (Form LS-73-1) containing the "Pork Ballot" envelopes for producer voters will be checked against the In-Person Voter Registration List (Form LS-75) and the Absentee Voter Request List (Form LS-74), respectively, to determine properly registered voters. The ballots of producers voting in-person whose names are not on the In-Person Voter Registration List (Form LS-75), will be declared invalid. Likewise, the ballots of producers voting absentee whose names are not on the Absentee Voter Request List (Form LS-74) will be declared invalid. All ballots of challenged producer voters declared ineligible and invalid ballots will be kept separate from the other ballots and the envelopes containing these ballots will not be opened. The valid ballots will be counted on November 29, 2000, during

regular business hours on the 46th business day after the last day of the in-person voting period. FSA county office employees will remove the sealed "Pork Ballot" envelopes (Form LS-72-1) from the registration form envelopes and "Pork Referendum" envelopes (absentee voting) envelopes of all eligible producer voters and all challenged producer voters determined to be eligible. After removing all "Pork Ballot" envelopes, FSA county employees will shuffle the sealed "Pork Ballot" envelopes or otherwise mix them up so that ballots cannot be matched with producers' names. After shuffling the "Pork Ballot" envelopes, FSA county employees will open them and count the ballots. The ballots will be counted as follows:

(i) Number of eligible producers casting valid ballots;

(ii) Number of producers favoring continuation of the Pork Checkoff Program;

(iii) Number of producers favoring termination of the Pork Checkoff Program;

(iv) Number of challenged producer ballots deemed ineligible;

(v) Number of invalid ballots; and

(vi) Number of spoiled ballots.

(2) *Invalid ballots.* Ballots will be declared invalid if a producer voting in-person has failed to print his or her name and address on the In-Person Voter Registration List (Form LS-75) or if an absentee voter's name and address is not recorded on the Absentee Voter Request List (Form LS-74), or the registration form or ballot was incomplete or incorrectly completed.

(3) *Spoiled ballots.* Ballots will be considered spoiled if they are mutilated or marked in such a way that it cannot be determined whether the voter is voting "yes" or "no." Spoiled ballots shall not be considered as approving or disapproving the Pork Checkoff Program, or as a ballot cast in the referendum.

(4) *Confidentiality.* All ballots shall be confidential and the contents of the ballots not divulged except as the Secretary may direct. The public may witness the opening of the ballot box and the counting of the votes but may not interfere with the process.

(b) *Importers—(1) Counting the ballots.* FSA headquarters personnel, acting on behalf of the Administrator, AMS, will

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check the registration forms and ballots for all importer voters against the Importer Ballot Request List (Form LS-77) to determine properly registered voters. The ballots of importers voting whose names are not recorded on the Importer Ballot Request List (Form LS-77), will be declared invalid. All ballots of importer voters declared invalid will be kept separate from the other ballots and the envelopes containing these ballots will not be opened. The valid ballots will be counted on November 29, 2000, during regular office hours on the 46th business day after the date of the last day of the in-person voting period. FSA headquarter office employees will remove the sealed "Pork Ballot" envelope (Form LS-72-1) from the "Pork Referendum" envelopes (Form LS-73-1) of all eligible importer voters. After removing all "Pork Ballot" envelopes, FSA headquarter employees will shuffle the sealed "Pork Ballot" envelopes or otherwise mix them up so that ballots cannot be matched with importers' names. After shuffling the "Pork Ballot" envelopes, FSA headquarters employees will open the envelopes and count the ballots. The ballots will be counted as follows:

- (i) Number of eligible importers casting valid ballots;
- (ii) Number of importers favoring continuation of the Pork Checkoff Program;
- (iii) Number of importers favoring termination of the Pork Checkoff Program;
- (iv) Number of importer ballots deemed invalid; and
- (v) Number of spoiled ballots.

(2) *Invalid ballots.* Ballots will be declared invalid if an importer voter's name was not recorded on the Importer Ballot Request List (Form LS-77), or the registration form or ballot was incomplete or incorrectly completed.

(3) *Spoiled ballots.* Ballots will be considered spoiled if they were mutilated or marked in such a way that it cannot be determined whether the voter is voting "yes" or "no." Spoiled ballots shall not be considered as a ballot cast in the referendum.

(4) *Confidentiality.* All ballots shall be confidential and the contents of the ballots not divulged except as the Secretary may direct. The public can wit-

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ness the opening of the ballot box and the counting of the votes but can not interfere with the process.

§ 1230.634 FSA county office report.

The FSA county office will notify the FSA State office of the results of the referendum. Each FSA county office will transmit the results of the referendum in its county to the FSA State office. Such report will include the information listed in § 1230.633. The results of the referendum in each county will be made available to the public, after the results of the referendum are announced by the Secretary. A copy of the report of results will be posted for 30 days in the FSA county office in a conspicuous place accessible to the public and a copy will be kept on file in the FSA county office for a period of at least 12 months after the referendum.

§ 1230.635 FSA State office report.

Each FSA State office will transmit to the Administrator, FSA, a written summary of the results of the referendum received from all FSA county offices within the State. The summary shall include the information on the referendum results contained in the reports from all county offices within each State and be certified by the FSA State Executive Director. The FSA State office will maintain a copy of the summary where it will be available for public inspection for a period of not less than 12 months.

§ 1230.636 Results of the referendum.

(a) The Administrator, FSA, will submit the combined results of the FSA State offices' results of the producers' vote and the FSA headquarters office results of the importers' vote to the Administrator, AMS. The Administrator, AMS, will prepare and submit to the Secretary a report of the results of the referendum. The results of the referendum will be announced by the Department in an official press release and published in the FEDERAL REGISTER. State reports on producer balloting, FSA headquarters office report on importer balloting, and related papers will be available for public inspection in the office of the Marketing Programs Branch, Livestock and Seed Program, AMS, USDA, Room 2627, South