

§ 1.138

PACA Branch, that individuals are responsibly connected, within the meaning of 7 U.S.C. 499a(b)(9), to the licensee during the period of the alleged violations. In any case in which there is no pending proceeding alleging a violation of the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act, 7 U.S.C. 499a *et seq.*, but there have been filed more than one petition for review of determination of responsible connection to the same licensee, such petitions for review shall be consolidated for hearing.

[61 FR 11504, Mar. 21, 1996, as amended at 68 FR 6340, Feb. 7, 2003]

§ 1.138 Consent decision.

At any time before the Judge files the decision, the parties may agree to the entry of a consent decision. Such agreement shall be filed with the Hearing Clerk in the form of a decision signed by the parties with appropriate space for signature by the Judge, and shall contain an admission of at least the jurisdictional facts, consent to the issuance of the agreed decision without further procedure and such other admissions or statements as may be agreed between the parties. The Judge shall enter such decision without further procedure, unless an error is apparent on the face of the document. Such decision shall have the same force and effect as a decision issued after full hearing, and shall become final upon issuance to become effective in accordance with the terms of the decision.

§ 1.139 Procedure upon failure to file an answer or admission of facts.

The failure to file an answer, or the admission by the answer of all the material allegations of fact contained in the complaint, shall constitute a waiver of hearing. Upon such admission or failure to file, complainant shall file a proposed decision, along with a motion for the adoption thereof, both of which shall be served upon the respondent by the Hearing Clerk. Within 20 days after service of such motion and proposed decision, the respondent may file with the Hearing Clerk objections thereto. If the Judge finds that meritorious objections have been filed, complainant's Motion shall be denied with supporting reasons. If meritorious objections are

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not filed, the Judge shall issue a decision without further procedure or hearing. Copies of the decision or denial of complainant's Motion shall be served by the Hearing Clerk upon each of the parties and may be appealed pursuant to § 1.145. Where the decision as proposed by complainant is entered, such decision shall become final and effective without further proceedings 35 days after the date of service thereof upon the respondent, unless there is an appeal to the Judicial Officer by a party to the proceeding pursuant to § 1.145: *Provided, however,* That no decision shall be final for purposes of judicial review except a final decision of the Judicial Officer upon appeal.

§ 1.140 Conferences and procedure.

(a) *Purpose and scope.* (1) Upon motion of a party or upon the Judge's own motion, the Judge may direct the parties or their counsel to attend a conference at any reasonable time, prior to or during the course of the hearing, when the Judge finds that the proceeding would be expedited by a conference. Reasonable notice of the time, place, and manner of the conference shall be given. The Judge may order each of the parties to furnish at or subsequent to the conference any or all of the following:

- (i) An outline of the case or defense;
 - (ii) The legal theories upon which the party will rely;
 - (iii) Copies of or a list of documents which the party anticipates introducing at the hearing; and
 - (iv) A list of anticipated witnesses who will testify on behalf of the party.
- At the discretion of the party furnishing such list of witnesses, the names of the witnesses need not be furnished if they are otherwise identified in some meaningful way such as a short statement of the type of evidence they will offer.

(2) The Judge shall not order any of the foregoing procedures that a party can show is inappropriate or unwarranted under the circumstances of the particular case.

(3) At the conference, the following matters shall be considered:

- (i) The simplification of issues;
- (ii) The necessity of amendments to pleadings;

(iii) The possibility of obtaining stipulations of facts and of the authenticity, accuracy, and admissibility of documents, which will avoid unnecessary proof;

(iv) The limitation of the number of expert or other witnesses;

(v) Negotiation, compromise, or settlement of issues;

(vi) The exchange of copies of proposed exhibits;

(vii) The identification of documents or matters of which official notice may be requested;

(viii) A schedule to be followed by the parties for completion of the actions decided at the conference; and

(ix) Such other matters as may expedite and aid in the disposition of the proceeding.

(b) *Reporting.* A conference will not be stenographically reported unless so directed by the Judge.

(c) *Manner of Conference.* (1) The conference shall be conducted by telephone or correspondence unless the Judge determines that conducting the conference by audio-visual telecommunication:

(i) Is necessary to prevent prejudice to a party;

(ii) Is necessary because of a disability of any individual expected to participate in the conference; or

(iii) Would cost less than conducting the conference by telephone or correspondence. If the Judge determines that a conference conducted by audio-visual telecommunication would measurably increase the United States Department of Agriculture's cost of conducting the conference, the conference shall be conducted by personal attendance of any individual who is expected to participate in the conference, by telephone, or by correspondence.

(2) If the conference is not conducted by telephone or correspondence, the conference shall be conducted by audio-visual telecommunication unless the Judge determines that conducting the conference by personal attendance of any individual who is expected to participate in the conference:

(i) Is necessary to prevent prejudice to a party;

(ii) Is necessary because of a disability of any individual expected to participate in the conference; or

(iii) Would cost less than conducting the conference by audio-visual telecommunication.

(d) *Order.* Actions taken as a result of a conference shall be reduced to a written appropriate order, unless the Judge concludes that a stenographic report shall suffice, or, if the conference takes place within 7 days of the beginning of the hearing, the Judge elects to make a statement on the record at the hearing summarizing the actions taken.

(e) *Related matters.* Upon motion of a respondent, the Judge may order the attorney for the complainant to produce and permit the respondent to inspect and copy or photograph any relevant written or recorded statements or confessions made by such respondent within the possession, custody or control of the complainant.

[42 FR 743, Jan. 4, 1977, as amended at 60 FR 8455, Feb. 14, 1995]

§ 1.141 Procedure for hearing.

(a) *Request for hearing.* Any party may request a hearing on the facts by including such request in the complaint or answer, or by a separate request, in writing, filed with the Hearing Clerk within the time in which an answer may be filed. A petition for review shall be deemed a request for a hearing. Failure to request a hearing within the time allowed for the filing of the answer shall constitute a waiver of such hearing. Waiver of hearing shall not be deemed to be a waiver of the right to request oral argument before the Judicial Officer upon appeal of the Judge's decision. In the event the respondent denies any material fact and fails to file a timely request for a hearing, the matter may be set down for hearing on motion of the complainant or upon the Judge's own motion.

(b) *Time, place, and manner.* (1) If any material issue of fact is joined by the pleadings, the Judge, upon motion of any party stating that the matter is at issue and is ready for hearing, shall set a time, place, and manner for hearing as soon as feasible after the motion is filed, with due regard for the public interest and the convenience and necessity of the parties. The Judge shall file with the Hearing Clerk a notice stating