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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

[Docket No. PY-95-001]

Tentative Voluntary Poultry Grade Standards

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is announcing that it is approving the test marketing of USDA grade identified boneless/skinless poultry legs and drumsticks, based on tentative grade standards.

DATES: This test-market period begins March 30, 1995 and ends April 1, 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Larry W. Robinson, Chief, Grading Branch, Poultry Division, 202-720-3271.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Poultry grading is a voluntary program provided under the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended, and is offered on a fee-for-service basis. It is designed to assist the orderly marketing of poultry products. Quality in practical terms refers to the usability, desirability, and value of a product, as well as its marketability. Poultry grade standards identify and measure degrees of quality in poultry products. They permit important quality attributes to be evaluated uniformly and accurately; they provide a way for buyers and sellers to negotiate using a common language.

Once poultry has been graded according to these standards, it may be identified with the USDA grademark. Over the years, processors have found it advantageous to market grade-identified poultry products and consumers have come to rely on the USDA grademark as

assurance that they are getting the quality they want.

Poultry producers and processors are continually developing new, innovative products. Chicken and turkey, in particular, have been transformed into a myriad of boneless and/or skinless products, increasing poultry's share of the consumer's food dollar and responding to consumer demand for food with more built-in convenience and less fat. Current regulations (7 CFR Part 70) provide grade standards for boneless poultry breasts, thighs, and tenderloins (§ 70.231), as well as for skinless carcasses and parts (§ 70.232).

The Agency has received several industry requests to permit the grade identification of boneless/skinless poultry legs and drumsticks. These products are currently being marketed ungraded because there are no grade standards for them. The Agency has worked with members of the industry to develop tentative grade standards which will result in a high-quality product. The Agency is ready to move forward to a test marketing phase for boneless/skinless poultry legs and drumsticks.

The Agency recognizes that before new standards of quality can be established or current standards of quality can be amended, appropriate investigation is needed. This includes the test marketing of experimental packs of grade-identified poultry products to determine production requirements and consumer acceptance, and to permit the collection of other necessary data. Current regulations (§ 70.3) provide the Agency with the flexibility needed to permit such experimentation, so that new procedures and grading techniques may be tested.

The Agency is granting permission for the test marketing of grade-identified boneless/skinless poultry legs and drumsticks based on tentative standards for one year. At the expiration of this one-year period, the Agency will then evaluate the test results to determine if the current poultry grading regulations should be amended, through notice-and-comment rulemaking, to include the following tentative standards.

Tentative Poultry Grade Standards for Boneless/Skinless Poultry Legs and Drumsticks—A Quality

1. The leg or drum shall be cut as specified in § 70.210(e)(6).

2. The skin and bones shall be removed in a neat manner, without undue mutilation of adjacent muscle.

3. Boneless/skinless legs and drumsticks shall be free of tendons extending more than one-half inch beyond the meat tissue, cartilage, blood clots, bruises, and discolorations other than slight discolorations, provided they do not detract from the appearance of the product.

4. Minor flesh abrasions on the outer muscle surface due to preparation techniques and trimming are permitted provided the outer surface remains smooth with no angular cuts or tears. Holes resulting from the removal of the patella (knee cap) are permitted, provided the bulk of the thigh and drum remain intact and connected.

5. Trimming on the inner muscle surface is permitted, provided it results in a relatively smooth appearance.

6. Trimming is permitted around the outer edges of the muscle, provided the trimming results in a portion that approximates the same symmetrical appearance and meat yield of the original part.

7. Boneless/skinless drumsticks may be further separated by a single cut parallel to the tibiotarsus and labeled as boneless/skinless drumstick halves.

Dated: March 22, 1995.

Kenneth C. Clayton,

Acting Administrator.

[FR Doc. 95-7724 Filed 3-29-95; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 95-023-1]

Receipt of Petition for Determination of Nonregulated Status for Genetically Engineered Cotton

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has received a petition from the Monsanto Company seeking a determination of nonregulated status for cotton lines designated as 1445 and 1698 that have been genetically engineered for tolerance to