

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

[Docket No. FV96-981-1NC]

Notice of Request for Extension and Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35), this notice announces the Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) intention to request an extension for and revision to a currently approved information collection for Almonds Grown in California, Marketing Order 981.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by July 1, 1996, to be assured of consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS: Contact Kathleen M. Finn, Marketing Specialist, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, room 2530-S., P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090-6456; Tel: (202) 720-1509, Fax (202) 720-5698.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Almonds Grown in California, Marketing Order 981.

OMB Number: 0581-0071.

Expiration Date of Approval: August 31, 1996.

Type of Request: Extension and revision of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: Marketing order programs provide an opportunity for producers of fresh fruits, vegetables and specialty crops, in a specified production area, to work together to solve marketing problems that cannot be solved individually. Order regulations help

ensure adequate supplies of high quality product and adequate returns to producers. Under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937 (AMAA), as amended (7 U.S.C. 601-674), marketing order programs are established if favored in referendum among producers. The handling of the commodity is regulated. The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to oversee the orders' operations and issue regulations recommended by a committee of representatives from each commodity industry.

The information collection requirements in this request are essential to carry out the intent of the AMAA, to provide the respondents the type of service they request, and to administer the California almond marketing order program, which has been operating since 1950.

The California almond marketing order authorizes the issuance of quality and market allocation regulations, as well as inspection requirements. Regulatory provisions apply to almonds shipped within and outside of the production area, except those specifically exempt. The order also has authority for production and marketing research and development projects, including paid advertising. Handlers who advertise may receive credit for their advertising expenses according to specific guidelines.

The order, and rules and regulations issued thereunder, authorize the Almond Board of California (Board), the agency responsible for local administration of the order, to require handlers and growers to submit certain information. Much of this information is compiled in aggregate and provided to the industry to assist in marketing decisions.

The Board has developed forms as a means for persons to file required information with the Board relating to almond supplies, shipments, dispositions, and other information needed to effectively carry out the purpose of the Act and order. As shipments of California almonds are normally year-round, these forms are utilized accordingly. A USDA form is used to allow growers to vote on amendments to or continuance of the marketing order. In addition, almond growers and handlers who are nominated by their peers to serve as

representatives on the Board must file nomination forms with the Secretary.

These forms require the minimum information necessary to effectively carry out the requirements of the order, and their use is necessary to fulfill the intent of the Act as expressed in the order.

The information collected is used only by authorized representatives of the USDA, including AMS, Fruit and Vegetable Division regional and headquarter's staff, and authorized employees of the Board. Authorized Board employees and the industry are the primary users of the information and AMS is the secondary user.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 0.2549 hours per response.

Respondents: California almond growers, handlers and accepted users of inedible almonds.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 7,658.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: .7714.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 2,345 hours.

Comments are invited on: (1) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the functioning of the California almond marketing order program and USDA's oversight of that program; (2) the accuracy of the collection burden estimate and the validity of methodology and assumptions used in estimating the burden on respondents; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information requested; and (4) ways to minimize the burden, including use of automated or electronic technologies.

Comments should reference OMB No. 0581-0071 and the California Almond Marketing Order No. 981, and be sent to USDA in care of Kathleen Finn at the address above. All comments received will be available for public inspection during regular business hours at the same address.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Dated: April 23, 1996.

Robert C. Keeney,

Director, Fruit and Vegetable Division.

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