

are estimated at 7,400,000 hundredweight which should provide \$37,000 in assessment income. Income derived from handler assessments, along with funds from the Committee's authorized reserve, will be adequate to cover budgeted expenses. Funds in the reserve at the beginning of the 1996-97 fiscal period are estimated at \$55,245. Funds in the reserve will be kept within the maximum permitted by the order.

While this rule will impose some additional costs on handlers, the costs are in the form of uniform assessments on all handlers. Some of the additional costs may be passed on to producers. However, these costs will be offset by the benefits derived by the operation of the marketing order. Therefore, the AMS has determined that this rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities.

The assessment rate established in this rule will continue in effect indefinitely unless modified, suspended, or terminated by the Secretary upon recommendation and information submitted by the Committee or other available information.

Although this assessment rate is effective for an indefinite period, the Committee will continue to meet prior to or during each fiscal period to recommend a budget of expenses and consider recommendations for modification of the assessment rate. The dates and times of Committee meetings are available from the Committee or the Department. Committee meetings are open to the public and interested persons may express their views at those meetings. The Department will evaluate Committee recommendations and other available information to determine whether modification of the assessment rate is needed. Further rulemaking will be undertaken as necessary. The Committee's 1996-97 budget and those for subsequent fiscal periods will be reviewed and, as appropriate, approved by the Department.

After consideration of all relevant material presented, including the information and recommendation submitted by the Committee and other available information, it is hereby found that this rule, as hereinafter set forth, will tend to effectuate the declared policy of the Act.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553, it is also found and determined upon good cause that it is impracticable, unnecessary, and contrary to the public interest to give preliminary notice prior to putting this rule into effect, because: (1) The Committee needs to have sufficient funds to pay its expenses which are

incurred on a continuous basis; (2) the 1996-97 fiscal period begins on July 1, 1996, and the marketing order requires that the rate of assessment for each fiscal period apply to all assessable potatoes handled during such fiscal period; (3) handlers are aware of this action which was unanimously recommended by the Committee at a public meeting and is similar to other assessment rate actions issued in past years; and (4) this interim final rule provides a 30-day comment period, and all comments timely received will be considered prior to finalization of this rule.

#### List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 947

Marketing agreements, Potatoes, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR part 947 is amended as follows:

#### **PART 947—IRISH POTATOES GROWN IN MODOC AND SISKIYOU COUNTIES, CALIFORNIA, AND IN ALL COUNTIES IN OREGON, EXCEPT MALHEUR COUNTY**

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR part 947 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 601-674.

2. A new subpart—Assessment Rates and a new §947.247 are added to read as follows:

Note: This section will appear in the Code of Federal Regulations.

#### **Subpart—Assessment Rates**

##### **§947.247 Assessment rate.**

On and after July 1, 1996, an assessment rate of \$0.005 per hundredweight is established for Oregon-California potatoes.

Dated: May 24, 1996.

Robert C. Keeney,

*Director, Fruit and Vegetable Division.*

[FR Doc. 96-13699 Filed 5-30-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

#### **7 CFR Part 953**

[Docket No. FV96-953-1IFR]

#### **Southeastern Potatoes; Assessment Rate**

**AGENCY:** Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Interim final rule with request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** This interim final rule establishes an assessment rate for the Southeastern Potato Committee

(Committee) under Marketing Order No. 953 for the 1996-97 and subsequent fiscal periods. The Committee is responsible for local administration of the marketing order which regulates the handling of Irish potatoes grown in two southeastern States (Virginia and North Carolina). Authorization to assess potato handlers enables the Committee to incur expenses that are reasonable and necessary to administer the program.

**DATES:** Effective on June 1, 1996.

Comments received by July 1, 1996, will be considered prior to issuance of a final rule.

**ADDRESSES:** Interested persons are invited to submit written comments concerning this rule. Comments must be sent in triplicate to the Docket Clerk, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room 2523-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, FAX 202-720-5698. Comments should reference the docket number and the date and page number of this issue of the Federal Register and will be available for public inspection in the Office of the Docket Clerk during regular business hours.

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Martha Sue Clark, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room 2523-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, telephone 202-720-9918, FAX 202-720-5698.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This rule is issued under Marketing Agreement No. 104 and Order No. 953, both as amended (7 CFR part 953), regulating the handling of Irish potatoes grown in two southeastern States (Virginia and North Carolina), hereinafter referred to as the "order." The order is effective under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, as amended (7 U.S.C. 601-674), hereinafter referred to as the "Act."

The Department of Agriculture (Department) is issuing this rule in conformance with Executive Order 12866.

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12778, Civil Justice Reform. Under the marketing order now in effect, Virginia-North Carolina potato handlers are subject to assessments. Funds to administer the order are derived from such assessments. It is intended that the assessment rate as issued herein will be applicable to all assessable potatoes beginning June 1, 1996, and continuing until amended, suspended, or terminated. This rule will not preempt any State or local laws, regulations, or policies, unless they present an irreconcilable conflict with this rule.

The Act provides that administrative proceedings must be exhausted before parties may file suit in court. Under section 608c(15)(A) of the Act, any handler subject to an order may file with the Secretary a petition stating that the order, any provision of the order, or any obligation imposed in connection with the order is not in accordance with law and request a modification of the order or to be exempted therefrom. Such handler is afforded the opportunity for a hearing on the petition. After the hearing the Secretary would rule on the petition. The Act provides that the district court of the United States in any district in which the handler is an inhabitant, or has his or her principal place of business, has jurisdiction to review the Secretary's ruling on the petition, provided an action is filed not later than 20 days after the date of the entry of the ruling.

Pursuant to requirements set forth in the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA), the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has considered the economic impact of this rule on small entities.

The purpose of the RFA is to fit regulatory actions to the scale of business subject to such actions in order that small businesses will not be unduly or disproportionately burdened. Marketing orders issued pursuant to the Act, and the rules issued thereunder, are unique in that they are brought about through group action of essentially small entities acting on their own behalf. Thus, both statutes have small entity orientation and compatibility.

There are approximately 150 producers of Southeastern potatoes in the production area and approximately 60 handlers subject to regulation under the marketing order. Small agricultural producers have been defined by the Small Business Administration (13 CFR 121.601) as those having annual receipts of less than \$500,000, and small agricultural service firms are defined as those whose annual receipts are less than \$5,000,000. The majority of Southeastern potato producers and handlers may be classified as small entities.

The Southeastern potato marketing order provides authority for the Committee, with the approval of the Department, to formulate an annual budget of expenses and collect assessments from handlers to administer the program. The members of the Committee are producers and handlers of Southeastern potatoes. They are familiar with the Committee's needs and with the costs for goods and services in their local area and are thus in a position to formulate an appropriate budget and assessment rate. The

assessment rate is formulated and discussed in a public meeting. Thus, all directly affected persons have an opportunity to participate and provide input.

The Committee met on April 18, 1996, and unanimously recommended 1996-97 expenditures of \$12,000, the same as last year, and an assessment rate of \$0.0075 per hundredweight. The assessment rate of \$0.0075 is \$0.0025 higher than last year's established rate. The major expenditures include \$7,800 for the manager's and secretarial salaries and \$900 for travel expenses.

The assessment rate recommended by the Committee was based on last year's shipments of 1,549,268 hundredweight of Southeastern potatoes, which should provide \$11,619.51 in assessment income. Income derived from handler assessments, along with funds from the Committee's authorized reserve, will be adequate to cover budgeted expenses. Funds in the reserve at the beginning of the 1996-97 fiscal period are estimated at \$8,877. Funds in the reserve will be kept within the maximum permitted by the order.

While this rule will impose some additional costs on handlers, the costs are in the form of uniform assessments on all handlers. Some of the additional costs may be passed on to producers. However, these costs will be offset by the benefits derived by the operation of the marketing order. Therefore, the AMS has determined that this rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities.

The assessment rate established in this rule will continue in effect indefinitely unless modified, suspended, or terminated by the Secretary upon recommendation and information submitted by the Committee or other available information.

Although this assessment rate is effective for an indefinite period, the Committee will continue to meet prior to or during each fiscal period to recommend a budget of expenses and consider recommendations for modification of the assessment rate. The dates and times of Committee meetings are available from the Committee or the Department. Committee meetings are open to the public and interested persons may express their views at these meetings. The Department will evaluate Committee recommendations and other available information to determine whether modification of the assessment rate is needed. Further rulemaking will be undertaken as necessary. The Committee's 1996-97 budget and those for subsequent fiscal periods will be

reviewed and, as appropriate, approved by the Department.

After consideration of all relevant material presented, including the information and recommendation submitted by the Committee and other available information, it is hereby found that this rule, as hereinafter set forth, will tend to effectuate the declared policy of the Act.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553, it is also found and determined upon good cause that it is impracticable, unnecessary, and contrary to the public interest to give preliminary notice prior to putting this rule into effect, and that good cause exists for not postponing the effective date of this rule until 30 days after publication in the Federal Register because: (1) The Committee needs to have sufficient funds to pay its expenses which are incurred on a continuous basis; (2) the 1996-97 fiscal period begins on June 1, 1996, and the marketing order requires that the rate of assessment for each fiscal period apply to all assessable Irish potatoes handled during such fiscal period; (3) handlers are aware of this action which was unanimously recommended by the Committee at a public meeting and is similar to the assessment rate action issued last year; and (4) this interim final rule provides a 30-day comment period, and all comments timely received will be considered prior to finalization of this rule.

#### List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 953

Marketing agreements, Potatoes, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR part 953 is amended as follows:

#### **PART 953—IRISH POTATOES GROWN IN SOUTHEASTERN STATES**

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR part 953 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 601-674.

2. A new subpart—Assessment Rates and a new § 953.253 are added to read as follows:

Note: This section will appear in the Code of Federal Regulations.

#### **Subpart—Assessment Rates**

##### **§ 953.253 Assessment rate.**

On and after June 1, 1996, an assessment rate of \$0.0075 per hundredweight is established for Southeastern potatoes.

Dated: May 22, 1996.

Robert C. Keeney,

Director, Fruit and Vegetable Division.

[FR Doc. 96-13617 Filed 5-30-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

## 7 CFR Part 958

[Docket No. FV96-958-2IFR]

### Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions; Assessment Rate

**AGENCY:** Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Interim final rule with request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** This interim final rule establishes an assessment rate for the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee (Committee) under Marketing Order No. 958 for the 1996-97 and subsequent fiscal periods. The Committee is responsible for local administration of the marketing order which regulates the handling of onions grown in designated counties in Idaho, and Malheur County, Oregon.

Authorization to assess onion handlers enables the Committee to incur expenses that are reasonable and necessary to administer the program.

**DATES:** Effective on July 1, 1996. Comments received by July 1, 1996, will be considered prior to issuance of a final rule.

**ADDRESSES:** Interested persons are invited to submit written comments concerning this rule. Comments must be sent in triplicate to the Docket Clerk, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room 2523-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, FAX 202-720-5698. Comments should reference the docket number and the date and page number of this issue of the Federal Register and will be available for public inspection in the Office of the Docket Clerk during regular business hours.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Martha Sue Clark, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room 2523-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, telephone 202-720-9918, FAX 202-720-5698, or Robert J. Curry, Northwest Marketing Field Office, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, Green-Wyatt Federal Building, room 369-1220 Southwest Third Avenue, Portland, OR 97204, telephone 503-326-2724, FAX 503-326-7440.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This rule is issued under Marketing Agreement No. 130 and Order No. 958, both as amended (7 CFR part 958), regulating

the handling of onions grown in designated counties in Idaho, and Malheur County, Oregon. The order is effective under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, as amended (7 U.S.C. 601-674), hereinafter referred to as the "Act."

The Department of Agriculture (Department) is issuing this rule in conformance with Executive Order 12866.

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12778, Civil Justice Reform. Under the marketing order now in effect, Idaho-Eastern Oregon onion handlers are subject to assessments. Funds to administer the order are derived from such assessments. It is intended that the assessment rate as issued herein will be applicable to all assessable onions beginning July 1, 1996, and continuing until amended, suspended, or terminated. This rule will not preempt any State or local laws, regulations, or policies, unless they present an irreconcilable conflict with this rule.

The Act provides that administrative proceedings must be exhausted before parties may file suit in court. Under section 608c(15)(A) of the Act, any handler subject to an order may file with the Secretary a petition stating that the order, any provision of the order, or any obligation imposed in connection with the order is not in accordance with law and request a modification of the order or to be exempted therefrom. Such handler is afforded the opportunity for a hearing on the petition. After the hearing the Secretary would rule on the petition. The Act provides that the district court of the United States in any district in which the handler is an inhabitant, or has his or her principal place of business, has jurisdiction to review the Secretary's ruling on the petition, provided an action is filed not later than 20 days after the date of the entry of the ruling.

Pursuant to requirements set forth in the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA), the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has considered the economic impact of this rule on small entities.

The purpose of the RFA is to fit regulatory actions to the scale of business subject to such actions in order that small businesses will not be unduly or disproportionately burdened. Marketing orders issued pursuant to the Act, and the rules issued thereunder, are unique in that they are brought about through group action of essentially small entities acting on their own behalf. Thus, both statutes have small entity orientation and compatibility.

There are approximately 550 producers of Idaho-Eastern Oregon

onions in the production area and approximately 34 handlers subject to regulation under the marketing order. Small agricultural producers have been defined by the Small Business Administration (13 CFR 121.601) as those having annual receipts of less than \$500,000. The majority of Idaho-Eastern Oregon onion producers and handlers may be classified as small entities.

The Idaho-Eastern Oregon onion marketing order provides authority for the Committee, with the approval of the Department, to formulate an annual budget of expenses and collect assessments from handlers to administer the program. The members of the Committee are producers and handlers of Idaho-Eastern Oregon onions. They are familiar with the Committee's needs and with the costs of goods and services in their local area and are thus in a position to formulate an appropriate budget and assessment rate. The assessment rate is formulated and discussed in a public meeting. Thus, all directly affected persons have an opportunity to participate and provide input.

The Committee met on March 21, 1996, and unanimously recommended 1996-97 expenditures of \$1,115,993 and an assessment rate of \$0.10 per hundredweight of onions. In comparison, last year's budgeted expenditures were \$1,111,447. The assessment rate of \$0.10 is the same as last year's established rate. Major expenditures recommended by the Committee for the 1996-97 year include \$10,000 for Committee expenses, \$123,593 for salary expenses, \$62,400 for travel and office expenses, \$60,000 each for research and export, \$725,000 for promotion, and \$75,000 for a contingency fund. Budgeted expenses for these items in 1995-96 were \$10,000, \$121,431, \$61,600, \$59,340, \$60,000, \$724,076, and \$75,000, respectively.

The assessment rate recommended by the Committee was derived by dividing anticipated expenses by expected shipments of Idaho-Eastern Oregon onions. Onion shipments for the year are estimated at 8,800,000 hundredweight, which should provide \$880,000 in assessment income. Income derived from handler assessments, along with funds from interest income and the Committee's authorized reserve, will be adequate to cover budgeted expenses. Funds remaining in the reserve at the end of the 1995-96 fiscal period should be about \$1,011,613. Funds in the reserve will be kept within the maximum permitted by the order.

While this rule will impose some additional costs on handlers, the costs