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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

7 CFR Parts 319 and 354

[Docket No. 98-087-2]

Solid Wood Packing Material From China

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is hosting, in addition to the public hearing in Washington, DC, two more public hearings to accept oral comments from the public on an interim rule that will amend the regulations for importing logs, lumber, and other unmanufactured wood articles by adding treatment and documentation requirements for solid wood packing material imported from China.

PLACES, DATES, AND TIMES OF MEETINGS: The first meeting will be held at the Jackson Federal Building, North and South Auditorium, 4th Floor, 915 Second Avenue, Seattle, WA. This meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. local time and is scheduled to end at 5:00 p.m. local time, on Tuesday, November 3, 1998. Visitors must enter the Jackson Federal Building through the Second Avenue entrance.

The second meeting will be held at the Hyatt Regency Long Beach, Regency Ballroom ABC, 4th Floor, 200 South Pine Avenue, Long Beach, CA. This meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. local time and is scheduled to end at 5:00 p.m. local time, on Thursday, November 5, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Ronald Campbell, Import Specialist, Phytosanitary Issues Management Team, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road, Unit 140,

Riverdale, MD 20737-1236, (301) 734-6799.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On September 18, 1998, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) published an interim rule in the **Federal Register** (63 FR 50100-50111, Docket No. 98-087-1) that will amend the regulations for importing logs, lumber, and other unmanufactured wood articles by adding treatment and documentation requirements for solid wood packing material imported from China. This change means that wooden pallets, crating, dunnage, and other wooden packing material imported into the United States from China will have to be heat treated, fumigated, or treated with preservatives prior to departure from China. This action will affect anyone who uses solid wood packing material in connection with exporting commodities from China to the United States. This action is necessary to control the risk that solid wood packing material from China could introduce dangerous plant pests, including forest pests, into the United States, a risk demonstrated by many recent incidents where exotic pests were detected in solid wood packing material from China. This interim rule is scheduled to become effective December 17, 1998.

In the preamble to the interim rule, we announced that there would be three public hearings on the interim rule—one in Washington, DC, on October 16, 1998, at the Jefferson Auditorium, U.S. Department of Agriculture, South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW., and two others on the west coast, dates and locations to be announced. This notice announces the dates and locations for the public hearings on the west coast.

All three public hearings will provide interested persons a full opportunity to present their views regarding this interim rule. The public hearings will begin at 9:00 a.m. local time and are scheduled to end at 5:00 p.m. local time. However, the hearings may be terminated at any time after they begin if all persons desiring to speak have been heard. We ask that anyone who reads a statement provide two copies to the presiding officer at the hearing. If the number of speakers at the hearing warrants, the presiding officer may limit the time for each presentation so that everyone wishing to speak has the opportunity.

The purpose of the hearings is to give interested persons an opportunity for oral presentations of data, views, and arguments. Questions about the content of the interim rule may be part of the commenters' oral presentations. Neither the presiding officer nor any other representative of APHIS will respond to comments at the hearings. However, they will be able to answer questions to clarify or explain provisions of the interim rule.

Done in Washington, DC, this 6th day of October 1998.

Craig A. Reed,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 98-27369 Filed 10-9-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 906

[Docket No. FV98-906-1 FIR]

Oranges and Grapefruit Grown in Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas; Decreased Assessment Rate

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Department of Agriculture (Department) is adopting, as a final rule, without change, the provisions of an interim final rule which decreased the assessment rate, from \$0.125 to \$0.11 per 7/10 bushel carton, established for the Texas Valley Citrus Committee (Committee) under Marketing Order No. 906 for the 1998-99 and subsequent fiscal periods. The Committee is responsible for local administration of the marketing order which regulates the handling of oranges and grapefruit grown in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas. Authorization to assess orange and grapefruit handlers enables the Committee to incur expenses that are reasonable and necessary to administer the program. The fiscal period began on August 1 and ends July 31. The assessment rate will remain in effect indefinitely unless modified, suspended, or terminated.

EFFECTIVE DATE: November 12, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Belinda G. Garza, McAllen Marketing