

hundredweight of onions. Therefore, the estimated assessment revenue for the 2000–2001 fiscal period (\$768,000) as a percentage of the projected total F.O.B. revenue (\$52,800,000) would be 0.0145 percent. This figure indicates that the \$0.08 assessment rate recommended by the Committee would have a relatively insignificant impact on the Idaho-Eastern Oregon onion industry.

This action would decrease the assessment obligation imposed on handlers. While assessments impose some additional costs on handlers, the costs are minimal and uniform on all handlers. Some of the additional costs may be passed on to producers.

However, these costs would be offset by the benefits derived by the operation of the order. In addition, the Committee's meeting was widely publicized throughout the Idaho-Eastern Oregon onion industry and all interested persons were invited to attend the meeting and participate in Committee deliberations on all issues. Like all Committee meetings, the April 6, 2000, meeting was a public meeting and all entities, both large and small, were able to express views on this issue. Finally, interested persons are invited to submit information on the regulatory and informational impacts of this action on small businesses.

This proposed rule would impose no additional reporting or recordkeeping requirements on either small or large onion handlers. As with all Federal marketing order programs, reports and forms are periodically reviewed to reduce information requirements and duplication by industry and public sector agencies.

The Department has not identified any relevant Federal rules that duplicate, overlap, or conflict with this rule.

A small business guide on complying with fruit, vegetable, and specialty crop marketing agreements and orders may be viewed at the following web site: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/moab.html>. Any questions about the compliance guide should be sent to Jay Guerber at the previously mentioned address in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section.

A 30-day comment period is provided to allow interested persons the opportunity to respond to this request for information and comments. Thirty days is deemed appropriate because: (1) The Committee needs to have sufficient funds to pay its expenses which are incurred on a continuous basis; (2) the 2000–2001 fiscal period begins on July 1, 2000, and the order requires that the rate of assessment for each fiscal period apply to all assessable onions handled

during such fiscal period; (3) this action decreases the assessment rate for assessable onions beginning with the 2000–2001 fiscal period; and (4) 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.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 958

Onions, Marketing agreements, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR part 958 is proposed to be amended as follows:

PART 958—ONIONS GROWN IN CERTAIN DESIGNATED COUNTIES IN IDAHO, AND MALHEUR COUNTY, OREGON

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR part 958 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 601–674.

2. Section 958.240 is revised to read as follows:

§ 958.240 Assessment rate.

On and after July 1, 2000, an assessment rate of \$0.08 per hundredweight is established for Idaho-Eastern Oregon onions.

Dated: May 9, 2000.

Eric M. Forman,

Acting Deputy Administrator, Fruit and Vegetable Programs.

[FR Doc. 00–12153 Filed 5–12–00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–02-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 1220

[No. LS–00–04]

Soybean Promotion and Research: Amend the Order to Adjust Representation on the United Soybean Board

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed Rule.

SUMMARY: This proposed rule would adjust the number of members for certain States on the United Soybean Board (Board) to reflect changes in production levels that have occurred since the last time the Board was reapportioned in 1997. These adjustments are required by the Soybean Promotion and Research Order (Order). The results of the adjustments would be an additional member for Kansas and

one less member for Maryland. As a result of these changes, the total Board membership will remain at 62 members. These changes to the Board would be effective with the Secretary's 2001 appointments.

DATES: Written comments must be received by July 14, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Send two copies of comments to Ralph L. Tapp, Chief, Marketing Programs Branch; Livestock and Seed Program; Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), USDA, Room 2627–S; STOP 0251; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250–0251. Comments may also be sent by e-mail to Ralph.Tapp@usda.gov or by fax to 202/720–1125. State that your comment refers to Docket No. LS–00–04. Comments received may be inspected at this location between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ralph L. Tapp, Chief, Marketing Programs Branch, 202/720–1115, fax 202/270–1125, or e-mail Ralph.Tapp@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Executive Orders 12866 and 12988, and Regulatory Flexibility Act and the Paperwork Reduction Act

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

This rule was reviewed under Executive Order 12988, Civil Justice Reform. It is not intended to have a retroactive effect. This rule would not preempt any State or local laws, regulations, or policies unless they present an irreconcilable conflict with this rule.

The Soybean Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Act (Act) provides that administrative proceedings must be exhausted before parties may file suit in court. Under § 1971 of the Act, a person subject to the Order may file a petition with the Secretary 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 requesting a modification of the Order or an exemption from the Order. The petitioner is afforded the opportunity for a hearing on the petition. After a hearing, the Secretary would rule on the petition. The Act provides that the district courts of the United States in any district in which such person is an inhabitant, or has their principal place of business, has jurisdiction to review the Secretary's ruling on the petition, if a complaint for this purpose is filed

within 20 days after the date of the entry of the ruling.

Effect on Small Entities

AMS has determined that this rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities as defined by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*), because it only adjusts representation on the Board to reflect changes in production levels that have occurred since the Board was reapportioned in 1997. As such, these changes will not impact on persons subject to the program. There are an estimated 600,813 soybean producers who pay assessments and an estimated 10,000 first purchasers who collect assessments, most of whom would be considered small entities under the criteria established by the Small Business Administration (13 CFR 121.201).

Background and Proposed Changes

The Act (7 U.S.C. 6301–6311) provides for the establishment of a coordinated program of promotion and research designed to strengthen the soybean industry’s position in the marketplace, and to maintain and expand domestic and foreign markets and uses for soybeans and soybean products. The program is financed by an assessment of 0.5 percent of the net market price of soybeans sold by

producers. Pursuant to the Act, an Order was made effective July 9, 1991. The Order established a Board of 60 members. For purposes of establishing the Board, the United States was divided into 31 geographic units. Representation on the Board from each unit was determined by the level of production in each unit. The Secretary appointed the initial Board on July 11, 1991. The Board is composed of soybean producers.

Section 1220.201(c) of the Order provides that at the end of each 3-year period, the Board shall review soybean production levels in the geographic units throughout the United States. The Board may recommend to the Secretary modification in the levels of production necessary for Board membership for each unit. At its March 2000 meeting the Board voted to recommend to the Secretary that no modification be made.

Section 1220.201(d) of the Order provides that at the end of each 3-year period, the Secretary must review the volume of production of each unit and adjust the boundaries of any unit and the number of Board members from each such unit as necessary to conform with the criteria set forth in § 1220.201(e): (1) To the extent practicable, States with annual average soybean production of less than 3,000,000 bushels shall be grouped into geographically contiguous units, each of

which has a combined production level equal to or greater than 3,000,000 bushels, and each such group shall be entitled to at least one member on the Board; (2) units with at least 3,000,000 bushels, but fewer than 15,000,000 bushels shall be entitled to one Board member; (3) units with 15,000,000 bushels or more but fewer than 70,000,000 bushels shall be entitled to two Board members; (4) units with 70,000,000 bushels or more but fewer than 200,000,000 bushels shall be entitled to three Board members; and (5) units with 200,000,000 bushels or more shall be entitled to four Board members.

Current representation on the Board (62), and the number of geographical units (30), have been based on average production levels for the years 1992–1996 (excluding crops in years that production was the highest and that production was the lowest) as reported by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) of the Department.

Proposed representation on the Board (62) is based on average production levels for the years 1995–1999 (excluding crops in years that production was the highest and that production was the lowest) as reported by NASS.

The number of geographical units would remain at 30. This proposed rule would adjust representation on the Board as follows:

State	1995–1999 Average production level (bushels)	Current representation	Proposed representation
Kansas	75,800,000	2	3
Maryland	14,753,000	2	1

There are no adjustments to the other States or regions.

Board adjustment as proposed by this rulemaking would be effective, if adopted, with the 2001 nominations and appointments.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 1220

Administrative practice and procedure, Advertising, Agricultural research, Marketing agreements, Soybeans and soybean products, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, it is proposed that Title 7, part 1220 be amended as follows:

PART 1220—SOYBEAN PROMOTION, RESEARCH, AND CONSUMER INFORMATION

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR Part 1220 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 6301–6311.
2. In § 1220.201, the table immediately following paragraph (a) is revised to read as follows:

§ 1220.201 Membership of board.

(a) * * *

Unit	Number of members
Illinois	4
Iowa	4
Minnesota	4
Indiana	4
Missouri	3
Ohio	3
Arkansas	3
Nebraska	3
South Dakota	3
Kansas	3
Mississippi	2
Louisiana	2
Tennessee	2
North Carolina	2

Unit	Number of members
Kentucky	2
Michigan	2
North Dakota	2
Wisconsin	2
Maryland	1
Virginia	1
Georgia	1
South Carolina	1
Alabama	1
Delaware	1
Texas	1
Pennsylvania	1
Oklahoma	1
New Jersey	1
Eastern Region (New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Florida, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, West Virginia, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico)	1

Unit	Number of members
Western Region (Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Idaho, Utah, Arizona, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, California, Hawaii, and Alaska)	1

* * * * *

Dated: May 9, 2000.

Barry L. Carpenter,

Deputy Administrator, Livestock and Seed Program.

[FR Doc. 00-12154 Filed 5-12-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 1240

[FV-00-702 PR]

Honey Research, Promotion, and Consumer Information Order; Procedure for the Conduct of Referenda in Connection With the Honey Research, Promotion, and Consumer Information Order

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed rule with request for comments.

SUMMARY: The purpose of this proposed rule is to amend the procedures which the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA or the Department) would use in conducting a referendum to determine whether honey producers, producer-packers, importers, and handlers subject to the Honey Research, Promotion, and Consumer Information Act (Act) favor implementation of changes to the Honey Research, Promotion, and Consumer Information Order (Order) based on the 1998 amendments to the Act. These procedures, as amended, would also be used in any subsequent referenda under the Act.

DATES: Comments must be received by June 14, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit written comments concerning the proposed rule to the Docket Clerk, Research and Promotion Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, Stop 0244, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 2535 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-0244.

Comments should be submitted in triplicate and will be made available for public inspection at the above address during regular business hours, or on the

internet at www.ams.usda.gov/fv/rpdocketlist.htm. Comments may also be submitted electronically to: malinda.farmer@usda.gov. All comments should reference the docket number and the date and page number of this issue of the **Federal Register**. A copy of this rule may be found at the above internet address. Pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA), also send comments regarding the accuracy of the burden estimate, ways to minimize the burden, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology, or any other aspect of this collection of information, to the above address. Comments concerning the information collection under the PRA should also be sent to the Desk Officer for Agriculture, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, DC 20503.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Karen T. Comfort, Research and Promotion Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, Stop 0244, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 2535 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-0244; telephone (202) 720-9915; facsimile (202) 205-2800.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Honey Research, Promotion, and Consumer Information Act (Act) (Pub. L. 98-590; enacted October 30, 1984; 7 U.S.C. 4601-4613, as amended) was amended by Congress on June 23, 1998. The amendments to the Act were made by the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (Pub. L. 105-185, enacted June 23, 1998).

A proposed rule on amending the Honey Research, Promotion, and Consumer Information Order (Order) (7 CFR Part 1240) in conformance with the 1998 amendments to the Act was published in the **Federal Register** on February 28, 2000 (65 FR 10600). Before the amendments to the Order can be implemented, a referendum must be conducted among producers, producer-packers, importers, and handlers as provided in section 4613(d) of the Act.

Question and Answer Overview

Why Are Rules Being Proposed for a Referendum on the Amendments to the Honey Research, Promotion, and Consumer Information Order?

On June 23, 1998, the Act was amended by the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (Pub. L. 105-185, enacted June 23, 1998). The amendments to the Act authorize amendments to the Order. Before the Order can be amended, producers, producer-packers, handlers,

and importers must be allowed to vote in a national referendum on whether they wish the amendments to become effective. This proposed rule would amend existing referendum procedures to allow handlers to vote in the referendum and make other changes related to the amendments to the Act. Under the current referendum procedures, only producers, producer-packers in their capacity as producers, and importers are eligible to vote. Publishing this proposed rule provides the opportunity for public input on the revised procedures before they are implemented.

How Long Do I Have To Comment on the Proposed Rule?

You have 30 days to comment on this proposed rule. Your written comments must be received by June 14, 2000. You can mail, fax, or e-mail your comments. Additionally, you have 60 days to provide written comments to OMB on the paperwork burden associated with this proposal. Those comments must be received by July 14, 2000.

Who Is Eligible To Vote in the Referendum?

Most honey producers, producer-packers, importers, and handlers who produced, handled, or imported honey or honey products during calendar years 1998 and 1999 would be eligible to vote in the referendum. However, certain producers, producer-packers, handlers, and importers would not be eligible to vote. If you produced, produced and handled, or imported less than 6,000 pounds of honey or honey products per year and you distributed that honey directly through local retail outlets such as roadside stands, farmers markets, or groceries, you would be ineligible to vote in the referendum unless you voluntarily paid assessments.

How Will the Vote in the Referendum Be Tabulated?

In order for the amendments to become effective, they must be approved by a majority of the voters in the referendum and those voters must represent 50 percent or more of the honey produced, handled, and imported by the voters in the referendum.

If I Am a Producer, How Will My Vote Be Counted?

If you are a producer, you will be entitled to one vote which includes the number of pounds of honey you produced in 1998 and 1999.