

U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

Kay Coles James,

Director.

[FR Doc. 04-28545 Filed 12-29-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6325-39-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 959

[Docket No. FV05-959-1 IFR]

Onions Grown in South Texas; Decreased Assessment Rate

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Interim final rule with request for comments.

SUMMARY: This rule decreases the assessment rate established for the South Texas Onion Committee (Committee) for the 2004-05 and subsequent fiscal periods from \$0.03 to \$0.02 per 50-pound equivalent of onions handled. The Committee locally administers the marketing order which regulates the handling of onions grown in South Texas. Authorization to assess onion handlers enables the Committee to incur expenses that are reasonable and necessary to administer the program. The fiscal period began August 1 and ends July 31. The assessment rate will remain in effect indefinitely unless modified, suspended, or terminated.

DATES: Effective January 3, 2005. Comments received by February 28, 2005, 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 to the Docket Clerk, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., STOP 0237, Washington, DC 20250-0237; fax: (202) 720-8938; e-mail: moab.docketclerk@usda.gov; or Internet: <http://www.regulations.gov>. 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, or can be viewed at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/moab.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Belinda G. Garza, Regional Manager, Texas Marketing Field Office, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, 1313 E. Hackberry; McAllen, Texas 78501; telephone: (956) 682-2833, fax: (956)

682-5942; or George Kelhart, Technical Advisor, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., STOP 0237, Washington, DC 20250-0237; telephone: (202) 720-2491, fax: (202) 720-8938.

Small businesses may request information on complying with this regulation by contacting Jay Guerber, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., STOP 0237, Washington, DC 20250-0237; telephone: (202) 720-2491, fax: (202) 720-8938, or e-mail: Jay.Guerber@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This rule is issued under Marketing Agreement No. 143 and Order No. 959, both as amended (7 CFR part 959), regulating the handling of onions grown in South Texas, 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 (USDA) is issuing this rule in conformance with Executive Order 12866.

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12988, Civil Justice Reform. Under the marketing order now in effect, South Texas 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 August 1, 2004, and continue 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 USDA 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 USDA 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 USDA's ruling on the petition, provided an action is filed not later than

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

This rule decreases the assessment rate established for the Committee for the 2004-05 and subsequent fiscal periods from \$0.03 to \$0.02 per 50-pound equivalent of onions handled.

The South Texas onion marketing order provides authority for the Committee, with the approval of USDA, 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 South Texas onions. 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.

For the 2003-04 and subsequent fiscal periods, the Committee recommended, and USDA approved, an assessment rate that would continue in effect from fiscal period to fiscal period unless modified, suspended, or terminated by USDA upon recommendation and information submitted by the Committee or other information available to USDA.

The Committee met on June 3, 2004, and unanimously recommended 2004-05 fiscal period expenditures of \$145,291 and an assessment rate of \$0.03 per 50-pound equivalent of onions. The Committee subsequently met on October 28, 2004, and unanimously recommended a revised budget of \$141,819 and a reduced assessment rate of \$0.02 per 50-pound equivalent of onions. In comparison, last year's budgeted expenditures were \$139,661. The recommended assessment rate is \$0.01 lower than the rate currently in effect. The decrease in the assessment rate is primarily due to the 2005 onion crop expected to be larger than previously estimated (5 million 50-pound equivalents vs. 4 million 50-pound equivalents). The reduced assessment rate and budget will lower handler costs by about \$50,000 and will keep the Committee's reserves at an acceptable level. At the current rate of assessment, assessment and interest income would exceed anticipated expenses by about \$11,000, and the projected reserve on July 31, 2005, would exceed the level authorized by the order.

The major expenditures recommended by the Committee for the 2004-05 fiscal period include \$76,819 for personnel and office expenses, \$30,000 for compliance, and \$35,000 for

promotion expenses. Budgeted expenses for these items in 2003–04 were \$74,661, \$30,000, and \$35,000, respectively.

The assessment rate recommended by the Committee was derived by considering anticipated expenses and production levels of South Texas onions, and additional pertinent factors. In its recommendation, the Committee utilized an estimate of 5 million 50-pound equivalents of assessable onions for the 2004–05 fiscal period. If realized, this will provide estimated assessment revenue of \$100,000 from all handlers. In addition, it is anticipated that \$41,819 will be provided by interest income and reserve funds. When combined, revenue from these sources will be adequate to cover budgeted expenses. Funds in the reserve (currently \$277,746) will be kept within the maximum of approximately two fiscal periods' expenses as required by § 959.43 of the order.

The assessment rate established in this rule will continue in effect indefinitely unless modified, suspended, or terminated by USDA 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 USDA. Committee meetings are open to the public and interested persons may express their views at these meetings. USDA 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 2004–05 budget and those for subsequent fiscal periods will be reviewed and, as appropriate, approved by USDA.

Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis

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. Accordingly, AMS has prepared this initial regulatory flexibility analysis.

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 113 producers of onions in the production area and approximately 37 handlers subject to regulation under the marketing order. Small agricultural producers are defined by the Small Business Administration (SBA) (13 CFR 121.201) as those having annual receipts less than \$750,000, and small agricultural service firms are defined as those whose annual receipts are less than \$5,000,000.

Most of the handlers are vertically integrated corporations involved in producing, shipping, and marketing onions. For the 2003–04 marketing year, the industry's 37 handlers shipped onions produced on 14,436 acres with the average and median volume handled being 137,530 and 111,545 fifty-pound equivalents, respectively. In terms of production value, total revenues for the 37 handlers were estimated to be \$42.5 million, with average and median revenues being \$1.14 million and \$931,400, respectively.

The South Texas onion industry is characterized by producers and handlers whose farming operations generally involve more than one commodity, and whose income from farming operations is not exclusively dependent on the production of onions. Alternative crops provide an opportunity to utilize many of the same facilities and equipment not in use when the onion production season is complete. For this reason, typical onion producers and handlers either produce multiple crops or alternate crops within a single year.

Based on the SBA's definition of small entities, the Committee estimates that all of the 37 handlers regulated by the order would be considered small entities if only their spring onion revenues are considered. However, revenues from other productive enterprises would likely push a large number of these handlers above the \$5,000,000 annual receipt threshold. All of the 113 producers may be classified as small entities based on the SBA definition if only their revenue from spring onions is considered. When revenues from all sources are considered, a majority of the producers would not be considered small entities because receipts would exceed \$750,000.

This rule decreases the assessment rate established for the Committee and collected from handlers for the 2004–05

and subsequent fiscal periods from \$0.03 to \$0.02 per 50-pound equivalent of onions handled. The Committee unanimously recommended 2004–05 expenditures of \$141,819 and an assessment rate of \$0.02 per 50-pound equivalent of onions handled. The recommended assessment rate is \$0.01 lower than the rate currently in effect. The quantity of assessable onions for the 2004–05 fiscal period is estimated at 5 million 50-pound equivalents. Thus, the \$0.02 rate should provide \$100,000 in assessment income. Income derived from handler assessments, along with interest income and funds from the Committee's authorized reserve, will be adequate to cover budgeted expenses.

The major expenditures recommended by the Committee for the 2004–05 fiscal period include \$76,819 for personnel and office expenses, \$30,000 for compliance, and \$35,000 for promotion expenses. Budgeted expenses for these items in 2003–04 were \$74,661, \$30,000, and \$35,000, respectively.

The Committee reviewed and unanimously recommended 2004–05 expenditures of \$141,819, which include a decrease in administrative expenses. The assessment rate of \$0.02 per 50-pound equivalent of assessable onions recommended by the Committee was determined by considering anticipated expenses and production levels of South Texas onions. The Committee utilized an estimate of 5 million 50-pound equivalents of assessable onions for the 2004–05 fiscal period, which, if realized, will provide estimated assessment revenue of \$100,000 from all handlers. In addition, it is anticipated that \$41,819 will be provided by interest income and reserve funds. When combined, revenue from these sources will be adequate to cover budgeted expenses.

The Committee discussed alternative expenditure levels, but determined that the recommended expenses were reasonable and necessary to adequately cover program operations. Other assessment rates were not considered because the Committee had substantially lowered its assessment rate the previous fiscal year.

A review of historical information and preliminary information pertaining to the upcoming fiscal period indicates that the season average f.o.b. price for the 2004–05 fiscal period could range between \$9.25 and \$19.05 per 50-pound equivalent of onions (range of Texas f.o.b. onion prices for 2001 through 2003). Therefore, the estimated assessment revenue for the 2004–05 fiscal period as a percentage of total

f.o.b. revenue could range between .10 and .22 percent.

This action decreases the assessment obligation imposed on handlers. Assessments are applied uniformly on all handlers, and some of the costs may be passed on to producers. However, decreasing the assessment rate reduces the burden on handlers, and may reduce the burden on producers. In addition, the Committee's meeting was widely publicized throughout the South Texas 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 October 28, 2004, 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 action imposes no additional reporting or recordkeeping requirements on either small or large South Texas 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.

USDA 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: <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.

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 2004–05 fiscal period began on August 1, 2004, and the marketing order requires that the rate of assessment for each fiscal period apply to all assessable onions handled during such fiscal period; (2) this action decreases the assessment rate for

assessable onions beginning with the 2004–05 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 60-day comment period, and all comments timely received will be considered prior to finalization of this rule.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 959

Marketing agreements, Onions, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

■ For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR part 959 is amended as follows:

PART 959—ONIONS GROWN IN SOUTH TEXAS

■ 1. The authority citation for 7 CFR part 959 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 601–674.

■ 2. Section 959.237 is revised to read as follows:

§ 959.237 Assessment rate.

On and after August 1, 2004, an assessment rate of \$0.02 per 50-pound equivalent is established for South Texas onions.

Dated: December 23, 2004.

A.J. Yates,
Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service.

[FR Doc. 04–28631 Filed 12–29–04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–02–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 25

[Docket No. NM296; Special Conditions No. 25–278–SC]

Special Conditions: Dassault Aviation Model Falcon Fan Jet, Falcon Fan Jet Series D, –Series E, –Series F airplanes; and Mystere-Falcon Model 20–C5, –20–D5, –20–E5, –20–F5, and –200 Series Airplanes; High Intensity Radiated Fields (HIRF)

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Final special conditions; request for comments.

SUMMARY: These special conditions are issued for Dassault Aviation Model Falcon Fan Jet, Falcon Fan Jet series D, –series E, –series F airplanes; and Mystere-Falcon Model 20–C5, –20–D5,

–20–E5, –20–F5, and –200 series airplanes modified by Premier Air Center. These airplanes will have novel and unusual design features when compared to the state of technology envisioned in the airworthiness standards for transport category airplanes. The modification incorporates the installation of a Universal EFI–890 Electronic Flight Display System, the Collins Attitude-Heading Reference System, and a Computer Instruments Corporation (CIC) Air Data System. The applicable airworthiness regulations do not contain adequate or appropriate safety standards for the protection of these systems from the effects of high-intensity-radiated fields (HIRF). These special conditions contain the additional safety standards that the Administrator considers necessary to establish a level of safety equivalent to that established by the existing airworthiness standards.

DATES: The effective date of these special conditions is December 20, 2004. Comments must be received on or before January 31, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Comments on these special conditions may be mailed in duplicate to: Federal Aviation Administration, Transport Airplane Directorate, Attn: Rules Docket (ANM–113), Docket No. NM296, 1601 Lind Avenue SW., Renton, Washington, 98055–4056; or delivered in duplicate to the Transport Airplane Directorate at the above address. Comments must be marked: Docket No. NM296.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Greg Dunn, FAA, Airplane and Flight Crew Interface Branch, ANM–111, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service, 1601 Lind Avenue SW., Renton, Washington, 98055–4056; telephone (425) 227–2799; facsimile (425) 227–1149.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

The FAA has determined that notice and opportunity for prior public comment is impracticable because these procedures would significantly delay certification of the airplanes and thus delivery of the affected aircraft. In addition, the substance of these special conditions has been subject to the public comment process in several prior instances with no substantive comments received. The FAA therefore finds that good cause exists for making these special conditions effective upon issuance; however, we invite interested persons to participate in this rulemaking by submitting written comments, data, or views. The most helpful comments reference a specific portion of the