

Notices

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

[Doc. No. AMS-FGIS-25-0155]

United States Standards for Rice

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is seeking public comment on whether the United States Standards for Rough Rice, Brown Rice for Processing, and Milled Rice should be opened for comments and suggestions for revisions. The Rice Standards were last opened for comment in 2015. Since then, rice production, quality assessment methods, and consumer preferences may have changed.

DATES: Submit comments on or before January 20, 2026.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit comments electronically through the Federal e-rulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>. Comments may also be submitted by mail to Jacob Thein, USDA, AMS, 10383 N Ambassador Drive, Kansas City, MO 64153. All comments should reference document number AMS-FGIS-25-0155, the date of submission, and the page number of this issue of the **Federal Register**. Instructions for submitting and reading comments online are detailed on the site. All comments received will be posted to *regulations.gov* without change, including any personal information provided, and will be made available for public inspection at the above physical address during regular business hours.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Jacob Thein, USDA AMS; telephone: (816) 702-3923; email: *Jacob.D.Thein@usda.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 203(c) of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, 7 U.S.C. 1622(c), directs and authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture "to develop and improve standards of quality, condition, quantity, grade, and packaging and recommend and demonstrate such standards in order to encourage uniformity and consistency in commercial practices." AMS is committed to carrying out this authority in a manner that facilitates the marketing of agricultural commodities. The United States Standards for Rough Rice, Brown Rice for Processing, and Milled Rice (Rice Standards) appear in the Code of Federal Regulations in §§ 868.201 through 868.316 of title 7.

Background

Official USDA grade standards and associated voluntary, fee-for-service grading programs are authorized under the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended (7 U.S.C. 1621, *et seq.*). The primary purpose of USDA grade standards, including the Rice Standards, is to divide the population of a commodity into uniform groups (of similar quality, value, etc.) to facilitate marketing. In concert, the Federal voluntary, fee-for-service grading programs are designed to provide an independent, objective determination as to whether a given product is in conformance with the applicable USDA grade standard. USDA quality grades provide a simple, effective means of describing product that is easily understood by both buyers and sellers.

The Rice Standards were first developed in 1927, and periodic revisions were made to reflect industry improvements or changes in the marketplace. The current Rice Standards were last updated in 2009 to move information previously provided on the grade line of the official certificate for Mixed rice to the "Results" section of the inspection certificate (74 FR 55441). Prior to that, the last substantial revisions occurred in 2002 with the addition of a new milling degree, *i.e.*, "hard milled," to the existing milling requirements and the elimination of the reference to "lightly milled" from the milling requirements (67 FR 61249 and 67 FR 62313).

Request for Comments

AMS is soliciting comments including data, recommendations, and other information from stakeholders about

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potential changes to the U.S. Standards for Rough Rice, Brown Rice for Processing, and Milled Rice. Comments may include any current and/or ongoing research or industry practice that has relevance to the Rice Standards. AMS also invites comments about how those changes would be implemented in the Federal voluntary, fee-for-service grading programs.

After reviewing the recommendations and information submitted in response to this notice, AMS will determine if it will propose official changes to the standards. If changes are proposed, a proposed rule with the updated Rice Standards will be published in the **Federal Register** for public comment period. Any comments outside the scope of this request for comments will not be considered. Commenters are encouraged to support their views with data and other information.

AMS invites responses to the following questions:

1. Should rough rice, brown rice, and milled rice that has an "Aromatic" odor be considered to have a commercially objectionable foreign odor (COFO) since the aroma is not found in more traditional varieties of rice?

Refer to the Rice Inspection Handbook (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/publications/content/fgis-pdf-handbooks>), sections 3.3, 4.3, 5.3 (Special Grades and Special Grade Requirements); sections 3.15, 4.15, 5.15 (Odor); and sections 3.35, 4.36, 5.39 (Aromatic Milled Rice).

2. Are the Sample Grade moisture limits for Brown rice (14.5 percent) and Milled rice (15.0 percent) acceptable as currently provided in the handbook?

Refer to the Rice Inspection Handbook, sections 4.2 and 5.2 (Grades and Grade Requirements), and sections 4.12 and 5.12 (Moisture).

3. Should the grading criteria for broken kernels removed by the 5 plate, the 6 plate, and the 6 sieve be removed from table 5.1 (Grades and Grade Requirements for Milled Rice: Long Grain, Medium Grain, Short Grain, and Mixed Milled Rice)?

Refer to the Rice Inspection Handbook, table 5.1 (Grades and Grade Requirements for Milled Rice: Long Grain, Medium Grain, Short Grain, and Mixed Milled Rice) and section 5.30 (Broken Kernels Removed by a 5 & 6 Plate or Through a 6 Sieve).

4. Should Paddy Kernels be inspected as a count only, a percentage only, or be

left as currently provided in the handbook for Brown Rice for Processing?

Refer to the Rice Inspection Handbook, section 4.2 (Grades and Grade Requirements), section 4.22 (Paddy Kernels), section 5.2 (Grades and Grade Requirements), section 5.23 (Paddy Kernels), and section 5.24 (Seeds).

Melissa Bailey,

Associate Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

[Doc. No. AMS-SC-25-0057]

United States Standards for Grades of Orange Juice

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Interim final notice.

SUMMARY: The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is revising the U.S. Standards for Grades of Orange Juice (U.S. OJ Standards). This Interim Final Notice (IFN) revises the limits for Grade B Brix allowances in Pasteurized Orange Juice (POJ) under the U.S. OJ Standards to reference the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Standard of Identity (SOI) for POJ.

DATES:

Effective date: This notice is effective November 18, 2025.

Comment date: To be considered, written comments on this interim final notice must be received on or before January 20, 2026.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit written comments to the USDA, Specialty Crops Inspection Division, 100 Riverside Parkway, Suite 101, Fredericksburg, VA 22406; fax: (540) 361-1199; or, at <https://www.regulations.gov>. Comments should reference the date and page number of this issue of the **Federal Register**. Comments will be posted without change, including any personal information provided. All comments received within the comment period will become part of the public record maintained by the Agency and will be made available to the public via <https://www.regulations.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Dana N. White at the address above, by phone (202) 720-5021; fax (540) 361-1199; or email to Dana.White@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 203(c) of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C. 1621-1627), as amended, directs, and authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture "to develop and improve standards of quality, condition, quantity, grade, and packaging, and recommend and demonstrate such standards in order to encourage uniformity and consistency in commercial practices."

AMS is committed to carrying out this authority in a manner that facilitates the marketing of agricultural commodities and distributes copies of official standards available upon request. The U.S. Standards for Grades of Fruits and Vegetables that no longer appear in the Code of Federal Regulations are maintained by AMS at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/grades-standards>. AMS is revising the U.S. OJ Standards using the procedures provided for in part 36 of title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (7 CFR part 36). After consideration of the public comments to this IFN, AMS will either conclude that the IFN revisions, as provided for or with minor modifications, should be adopted and publish a description of the changes or actions in a final notice, or if AMS determines the IFN revisions are not warranted, or otherwise are not in the public interest, the agency will either publish in the **Federal Register** a notice withdrawing the IFN, or will revise the IFN and again seek public input.

Background

AMS is revising the U.S. OJ Standards at § 52.1557 Requirements for Grades, Table VII—Pasteurized Orange Juice. Specifically, this IFN will remove the existing Brix minimums for Grade B unsweetened and sweetened POJ and insert a reference to the FDA's SOI regulations for POJ at 21 CFR 146.140(a).

Historically, to maintain consistency in the domestic orange juice industry, AMS has based its Brix allowances for POJ under the U.S. OJ Standards on the FDA's SOI for POJ. Accordingly, USDA's current minimum requirements for Grade B Brix allowances in POJ under the U.S. OJ Standards, are based on the FDA's current SOI requirements. Therefore, for industry consistency, any changes to the FDA's SOI Brix minimum requirements would result in corresponding changes to the U.S. OJ Standards. Additionally, some state regulations, including Florida—the second largest orange juice producer in the United States—require that Florida orange juice meet the U.S. OJ Standards. Generally, the domestic orange juice industry relies on the U.S. OJ Standards

for contract requirements related to acceptable POJ standards.

On August 16, 2023, in response to a petition from the Florida Citrus Processors Association and Florida Citrus Mutual, the FDA issued a request for information seeking comment on potentially amending the SOI for POJ by reducing the minimum soluble solids content (*i.e.*, sugar content) from 10.5° to 10° Brix (88 FR 55607). The Florida industry requested this change as they struggle to meet the current requirement due to the devastating effects of citrus greening disease (infected trees produce a lower Brix level). FDA has published a proposed rule that would amend the SOI for POJ by lowering the minimum orange juice soluble solids content from 10.5° to 10° Brix (90 FR 37817). Should FDA finalize its proposed amendment to the SOI for POJ, USDA would need to amend its U.S. OJ Standards accordingly. However, if the USDA changes are not made concurrently with the FDA's changes, Florida producers would be bound by a higher Brix level under the U.S. OJ Standards and not realize the relief granted by FDA's reduced Brix minimums. This inconsistency would likely cause significant disruption to producers, undue economic hardship, and negative impacts on commerce.

Accordingly, this revision to the U.S. OJ Standards, effective immediately, would remove the specific Brix allowances for Grade B POJ, and instead, would incorporate the FDA's POJ SOI regulation to ensure USDA and FDA's Brix allowances for POJ remain consistent. This alignment of the U.S. OJ Standards with FDA's SOI will prevent any future discrepancy between the agencies' respective brix minimums for POJ.

While the revisions to the U.S. standard for POJ will be effective immediately upon publication of this IFN, there will be a 60-day comment period for interested parties to submit comments to the agency on the revisions. After consideration of the public comments, AMS will either conclude that the IFN revisions to the U.S. OJ Standards, as provided for in this IFN or with minor modifications, should become affirmed and publish a description of the minor changes, if any, through a final notice, or if AMS determines the IFN revisions are not warranted, or otherwise are not in the public interest, the agency will either publish in the **Federal Register** a notice withdrawing the IFN, or will revise the IFN and again seek public input.

The agency finds that it is unnecessary to first seek notice and comment on these revisions prior to