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7 CFR Subtitle A (1-1-05 Edition)

§ 3.1 Purposes of the act and regulations.

The principal purposes of the act and of the regulations in this part are to provide means of:

(a) Settling, by compromise, adjustment or cancellation relatively small debts long past due and owing to the Government arising from loans or payments made under farm programs administered by the Department;

(b) recovering by the Department of substantial sums which are found uncollectible when the indebtednesses are treated as full obligations, and which otherwise would probably never be collected;

(c) clearing the accounts of balances so small as not to warrant continued efforts of collection; and

(d) the clearing of the accounts of the records of indebtedness made uncollectible by reason of the death or disappearance of the debtors.

The existence of the act will neither serve as grounds for any relaxation in the general collection policy of the Department nor should it serve as grounds for any lessening of the efforts of farmers to pay their indebtedness.

§ 3.2 Definitions.

(a) *Department* means Department of Agriculture.

(b) *Indebtedness* with respect to any person, means a debt to the Government under each of the acts and programs listed in § 3.10.

(c) *Compromise* means final liquidation of the indebtedness through the immediate payment of a portion thereof, and acceptance by the United States of such payment in full satisfaction of the indebtedness.

(d) *Adjustment* means the scaling down of the amount of the indebtedness including interest, conditioned upon the payment of the adjusted amount at some specified future time or times; such adjustment is not to be considered as effective as a settlement under this act until the provisions of the adjustment arrangement have been carried out.

(e) *Cancellation* means the complete discharge, without payment, of the indebtedness and the debtor.

[10 FR 807, Jan. 23, 1945, as amended at 11 FR 11984, Oct. 15, 1946. Redesignated at 13 FR 6903, Nov. 24, 1948; 55 FR 38662, Sept. 20, 1990]

§ 3.3 Settlement of indebtedness.

(a) Indebtedness will be compromised, adjusted, or canceled, upon applicability by the debtor except in those cases where it is found that it is legally impossible for the debtor to make application, and upon the making of all the following findings:

(1) That said indebtedness has been due and payable for five years or more;

(2) That the debtor is unable to pay said indebtedness in full and has no reasonable prospect of being able to do so; officers of the Department shall not make such findings on the basis of mere unwillingness to pay on the part of the debtor, or mere financial disadvantage to him, but should find that the settlement is the most advantageous arrangement possible from the standpoint of the Government under the findings prescribed in this part. In no event shall cancellation be made unless, in addition to the foregoing requirements, there is an advantage in removing the indebtedness from the accounts.

(3) That the debtor has acted in good faith in an effort to meet his obligation; and

(4) That the principal amount of said indebtedness is not in excess of \$1,000.

(b) Indebtedness may also be canceled without application when any one of the following circumstances is found:

(1) The amount of said indebtedness, including interest, is less than \$10; such efforts of collection have been made as are warranted under the circumstances, and the cost of collection or of continued maintenance of accounts is deemed greater than the amount of the indebtedness;

(2) The debtor is deceased and there is no reasonable prospect of recovering from his estate;

(3) The debtor's whereabouts has remained unknown for two years and there is no reasonable prospect of obtaining collection; heads of agencies designated in § 3.5 will prescribe proce-

dures which will assure that cancellations on this ground will be made only after a diligent effort has been made to locate the debtor, including such contact with other agencies of the Department or otherwise as the amount of the indebtedness and the circumstances warrant;

(4) The debtor has been discharged of the indebtedness in any proceeding under "An act to establish a uniform system of bankruptcy throughout the United States."

(5) It is impossible or impracticable for legal or other reasons to obtain the debtor's application but all of the findings required by paragraph (a) of this section are made.

[10 FR 807, Jan. 23, 1945, as amended at 12 FR 441, Jan. 22, 1947. Redesignated at 13 FR 6903, Nov. 24, 1948, and amended at 21 FR 3213, May 16, 1956]

§ 3.4 Investigations and findings.

The heads of agencies designated in § 3.5 shall prescribe procedures for the conduct of investigations to determine the facts incident to the settlement of any indebtedness. These procedures should include, among other things, provisions for consultations with local authorities, businessmen, or local representatives of other Government agencies, or for obtaining the recommendations of committees or other groups or persons designated by each agency for assistance in its regular program, or otherwise. The file relating to each debtor shall contain the formal findings required by § 3.3, together with such evidence as has been obtained in support of such findings.

In order to effect uniformity in settlements, agency procedures should also provide that, where it appears from the application of the debtor or from investigation that the debtor is otherwise indebted to the United States, to the extent practicable consultation should be had (other than in cases under § 3.3(b)(1) and (4) with any other creditor agencies, to ascertain pertinent information as to the status of such other obligation or obligations. Such information shall be considered in connection with the settlement and for inclusion in the findings.