

Proposed Rules

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains notices to the public of the proposed issuance of rules and regulations. The purpose of these notices is to give interested persons an opportunity to participate in the rule making prior to the adoption of the final rules.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 985

[Docket No. FV03-985-2PR]

Spearmint Oil Produced in the Far West; Increased Assessment Rate

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: This rule would increase the assessment rate established for the Spearmint Oil Administrative Committee (Committee) for the 2003-2004 and subsequent marketing years from \$0.09 to \$0.10 per pound of spearmint oil handled. The Committee locally administers the marketing order, which regulates the handling of spearmint oil produced in the Far West. Authorization to assess spearmint oil handlers enables the Committee to incur expenses that are reasonable and necessary to administer the program. The marketing year begins June 1 and ends May 31. The assessment rate would remain in effect indefinitely unless modified, suspended, or terminated.

DATES: Comments must be received by May 12, 2003.

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, or E-mail: moab.docketclerk@usda.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: Susan M. Hiller, Northwest Marketing

Field Office, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, 1220 SW. Third Ave, Suite 385, Portland, OR 97204; Phone: (503) 326-2724; Fax: (503) 326-7440; 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 Order No. 985, as amended (7 CFR part 985), regulating the handling of spearmint oil produced in the Far West (Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and designated parts of Nevada and Utah), 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, Far West spearmint oil handlers are subject to assessments. Funds to administer the order are derived from such assessments. It is intended that the assessment rate as proposed herein would be applicable to all assessable spearmint oil beginning on June 1, 2003, 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 would increase the assessment rate established for the Committee for the 2003-2004 and subsequent marketing years from \$0.09 to \$0.10 per pound of spearmint oil handled.

The Far West spearmint oil 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 of Far West spearmint oil. 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 2000-2001 and subsequent marketing years, the Committee recommended, and USDA approved, an assessment rate that would continue in effect from marketing year to marketing year 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 February 26, 2003, and unanimously recommended 2003-2004 expenditures of \$173,700 and an assessment rate of \$0.10 per pound of spearmint oil handled. In comparison, last year's budgeted expenditures were \$191,300. The recommended assessment rate is \$0.01 higher than the \$0.09 per pound rate currently in effect. Because spearmint oil assessable poundage and assessment income have been lower than estimated

the last two marketing years, the Committee has had to use reserve funds to cover its budgeted expenses. To keep its reserve fund at an acceptable level, the Committee recommended the \$0.01 increase and reduced its expenses for 2003–2004.

The major expenditures recommended by the Committee for the 2003–2004 marketing year include \$138,400 for committee expenses, \$23,300 for administrative expenses, and \$12,000 for market research and promotion expenses. Budgeted expenses for these items in 2002–2003 were \$164,200, \$23,100, and \$4,000, respectively.

The Committee estimates that spearmint oil sales for the 2003–2004 marketing year will be approximately 1,697,200 pounds, which should provide \$169,720 in assessment income. Income derived from handler assessments, along with interest income and funds from the Committee's authorized reserve, should be adequate to cover budgeted expenses. The Committee estimates that its monetary reserve will be approximately \$72,394 at the beginning of the 2003–2004 marketing year. It is not anticipated that the reserve fund will exceed the maximum permitted by the order of approximately one marketing year's operational expenses (\$ 985.42).

The proposed assessment rate would 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 would be in effect for an indefinite period, the Committee would continue to meet prior to or during each marketing year 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 would evaluate Committee recommendations and other available information to determine whether modification of the assessment rate is needed. Further rulemaking would be undertaken as necessary. The Committee's 2003–2004 budget and those for subsequent marketing years would 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 7 spearmint oil handlers subject to regulation under the marketing order, and approximately 98 producers of Class 1 (Scotch) spearmint oil and approximately 100 producers of Class 3 (Native) spearmint oil in the regulated production area. Small agricultural service firms are defined by the Small Business Administration (SBA)(13 CFR 121.201) as those whose annual receipts are less than \$5,000,000, and small agricultural producers are defined as those having annual receipts less than \$750,000.

Based on SBA's definition of small entities, the Committee estimates that 2 of the 7 handlers regulated by the order could be considered small entities. Most of the handlers are large corporations involved in the international trading of essential oils and the products of essential oils. In addition, the Committee estimates that 11 of the 98 Scotch spearmint oil producers and 13 of the 100 Native spearmint oil producers could be classified as small entities under the SBA definition. Thus, a majority of handlers and producers of Far West spearmint oil may not be classified as small entities.

The Far West spearmint oil industry is characterized by producers whose farming operations generally involve more than one commodity, and whose income from farming operations is not exclusively dependent on the production of spearmint oil. A typical spearmint oil producing operation has enough acreage for rotation such that the total acreage required to produce the crop is about one-third spearmint and two-thirds rotational crops. Thus, the typical spearmint oil producer has to have considerably more acreage than is planted to spearmint during any given season. Crop rotation is an essential cultural practice in the production of spearmint oil for weed, insect, and disease control. To remain economically viable with the added costs associated with spearmint oil production, most spearmint oil-producing farms fall into the SBA category of large businesses.

This rule would increase the assessment rate established for the Committee and collected from handlers for the 2003–2004 and subsequent marketing years from \$0.09 to \$0.10 per pound of spearmint oil handled. The Committee unanimously recommended 2003–2004 expenditures of \$173,700 and an assessment rate of \$0.10 per pound. The proposed assessment rate is \$0.01 higher than the \$0.09 per pound rate currently in effect. The quantity of assessable spearmint oil for the 2003–2004 marketing year is estimated at 1,697,200 pounds. Thus, the \$0.10 rate should provide \$169,720 in assessment income. This, along with interest income and funds from the Committee's authorized reserve, would be adequate to cover budgeted expenses.

The major expenditures recommended by the Committee for the 2003–2004 marketing year include \$138,400 for committee expenses, \$23,300 for administrative expenses, and \$12,000 for market research and promotion expenses. Budgeted expenses for these items in 2002–2003 were \$164,200, \$23,100, and \$4,000, respectively.

The Committee reviewed and unanimously recommended 2003–2004 expenditures of \$173,700, which included a decrease to committee expenses, and increases in administrative and market research and promotion expenses. Prior to arriving at this budget, the Committee considered information from various sources, including the Committee's Executive Committee and the current marketing year's actual and anticipated expenditures. The proposed budget includes an expenditure reduction of \$17,600 and no further alternative expenditure levels were discussed. The Committee estimates that spearmint oil sales for the 2003–2004 marketing year will be approximately 1,697,200 pounds, which should provide \$169,720 in assessment income. This, together with interest and other income, is approximately \$280 below the anticipated expenses, which the Committee determined to be acceptable.

A review of historical information and preliminary information pertaining to the upcoming 2003–2004 marketing year indicates that the producer price for the 2003–2004 marketing year could be about \$9.13 per pound. Therefore, the estimated assessment revenue for the 2003–2004 marketing year as a percentage of total producer revenue could be about 1.1 percent.

This action would increase 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 marketing order. In addition, the Committee's meeting was widely publicized throughout the Far West spearmint oil industry and all interested persons were invited to attend the meeting and participate in Committee deliberations on all issues. Like all Committee meetings, the February 26, 2003, 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 Far West spearmint oil 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.

A 20-day comment period is provided to allow interested persons to respond to this proposed rule. Twenty days is deemed appropriate because: (1) The 2003–2004 marketing year begins on June 1, 2003, and the marketing order requires that the rate of assessment for each marketing year apply to all assessable spearmint oil handled during such marketing year; (2) the Committee needs to have sufficient funds to pay its expenses which are incurred on a continuous basis; and (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.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 985

Marketing agreements, Oils and fats, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Spearmint oil.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR part 985 is proposed to be amended as follows:

PART 985—MARKETING ORDER REGULATING THE HANDLING OF SPEARMINT OIL PRODUCED IN THE FAR WEST

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR part 985 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 601–674.

2. Section 985.141 is revised to read as follows:

§ 985.141 Assessment rate.

On and after June 1, 2003, an assessment rate of \$0.10 per pound is established for Far West spearmint oil. Unexpended funds may be carried over as a reserve.

Dated: April 16, 2003.

A.J. Yates,

Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service.

[FR Doc. 03–9844 Filed 4–21–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–02–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 2002–SW–17–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Eurocopter France Model AS 350B3, SA–365N, N1, AS–365N2, AS 365N3, and EC 155B Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: This document proposes adopting a new airworthiness directive (AD) for Eurocopter France (Eurocopter) AS 350B3, SA–365N, N1, AS–365N2, AS 365N3, and EC 155B helicopters. This proposal would require modifying the SIREN cargo hook and inspecting the cargo hook locking catch (locking catch) for corrosion. This proposal is prompted by the discovery of internal corrosion on a Siren locking catch that may weaken the locking catch. The actions specified by this proposed AD are intended to detect internal corrosion of the locking catch, which can cause the locking catch to return to an incomplete locking position, undetectable by the operator, and result in an unexpected cargo load release.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before June 23, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Office of the

Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2002–SW–17–AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137. You may also send comments electronically to the Rules Docket at the following address: 9-asw-adcomments@faa.gov. Comments may be inspected at the Office of the Regional Counsel between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Carroll Wright, Aviation Safety Engineer, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate, Regulations Group, Fort Worth, Texas 76193–0111, telephone (817) 222–5120, fax (817) 222–5961.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

Interested persons are invited to participate in the making of the proposed rule by submitting such written data, views, or arguments as they may desire. Communications should identify the Rules Docket number and be submitted in triplicate to the address specified above. All communications received on or before the closing date for comments will be considered before taking action on the proposed rule. The proposals contained in this document may be changed in light of the comments received.

Comments are specifically invited on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of the proposed rule. All comments submitted will be available, both before and after the closing date for comments, in the Rules Docket for examination by interested persons. A report summarizing each FAA-public contact concerned with the substance of this proposal will be filed in the Rules Docket.

Commenters wishing the FAA to acknowledge receipt of their mailed comments submitted in response to this proposal must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: “Comments to Docket No. 2002–SW–17–AD.” The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

Discussion

The Direction Generale De L'Aviation Civile (DGAC), the airworthiness authority for France, notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on Eurocopter Model AS 350 B3, AS–365N, N1, AS 365N2, AS 365N3, and EC 155 B helicopters fitted with Siren cargo hooks, part number (P/N) AS–21–5–7. The DGAC advises that corrosion was discovered on a locking catch, which might lead to untimely load release.