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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 982

[Docket No. FV03-982-1 IFR]

Hazelnuts Grown in Oregon and Washington; Establishment of Final Free and Restricted Percentages for the 2002-2003 Marketing Year

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Interim final rule with request for comments.

SUMMARY: This rule establishes final free and restricted percentages for domestic inshell hazelnuts for the 2002-2003 marketing year under the Federal marketing order for hazelnuts grown in Oregon and Washington. The final free and restricted percentages are 18.4392 and 81.5608 percent, respectively. The percentages allocate the quantity of domestically produced hazelnuts that may be marketed in the domestic inshell market. The percentages are intended to stabilize the supply of domestic inshell hazelnuts to meet the limited domestic demand for such hazelnuts and provide reasonable returns to producers. This rule was recommended unanimously by the Hazelnut Marketing Board (Board), which is the agency responsible for local administration of the marketing order.

DATES: *Effective Date:* This interim final rule is effective March 13, 2003. This interim final rule applies to all 2002-2003 marketing year restricted hazelnuts until they are properly disposed of in accordance with marketing order requirements. Comments received by May 12, 2003 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, or E-mail: moab.docketclerk@usda.gov. All 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:

Teresa L. Hutchinson, Northwest Marketing Field Office, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, 1220 SW Third Avenue, suite 385, Portland, OR 97204; telephone: (503) 326-2724, Fax: (503) 326-7440; or George J. 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 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. 115 and Marketing Order No. 982, both as amended (7 CFR Part 982), regulating the handling of hazelnuts grown in Oregon and Washington, 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. It is intended that this action apply to all merchantable hazelnuts handled during the 2002-2003 marketing year (July 1, 2002, through June 30, 2003). 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. A 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 establishes marketing percentages that allocate the quantity of inshell hazelnuts that may be marketed in domestic markets. The Board is required to meet prior to September 20 of each marketing year to compute its marketing policy for that year, and compute and announce an inshell trade demand if it determines that volume regulations would tend to effectuate the declared policy of the Act. The Board also computes and announces preliminary free and restricted percentages for that year.

The inshell trade demand is the amount of inshell hazelnuts that handlers may ship to the domestic market throughout the marketing season. The order specifies that the inshell trade demand be computed by averaging the preceding three "normal" years' trade acquisitions of inshell hazelnuts, rounded to the nearest whole number. The Board may increase the three-year average by up to 25 percent, if market conditions warrant an increase. The Board's authority to recommend volume regulations and the computations used to determine the percentages are specified in § 982.40 of the order.

The quantity to be marketed is broken down into free and restricted percentages to make available hazelnuts which may be marketed in domestic inshell markets (free) and hazelnuts which must be exported, shelled, or

otherwise disposed of by handlers (restricted). Prior to September 20 of each marketing year, the Board must compute and announce preliminary free and restricted percentages. The preliminary free percentage releases 80 percent of the adjusted inshell trade demand to the domestic market. The purpose of releasing only 80 percent of the inshell trade demand under the preliminary percentage is to guard against an underestimate of crop size. The preliminary free percentage is expressed as a percentage of the total supply subject to regulation (supply) and is based on the preliminary crop estimate.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) has estimated hazelnut production at 18,000 tons for the Oregon and Washington area. The majority of domestic inshell hazelnuts are marketed in October, November, and December. By November, the marketing season is well under way.

At its August 29, 2002, meeting, the Board adjusted the NASS crop estimate up to 19,887 tons by taking deducting the average crop disappearance over the preceding three years (5.23 percent) and adding the undeclared carryin (2,828 tons.) to the 18,000 ton production estimate. Disappearance is the difference between orchard-run production (crop estimate) and the available supply of merchantable product available for sale by handlers. Disappearance consists of (1) unharvested hazelnuts, (2) culled product (nuts that are delivered to

handlers but later discarded), or (3) product used on the farm, sold locally, or otherwise disposed of by producers. The Board computed the adjusted inshell trade demand of 3,133 tons by taking the difference between the average of the past three years' sales (3,563 tons) and the declared carry-in from last year's crop (430 tons).

The Board computed and announced preliminary free and restricted percentages of 12.6012 percent and 87.3988 percent, respectively, at its August 29, 2002, meeting. The Board computed the preliminary free percentage by multiplying the adjusted trade demand by 80 percent and dividing the result by the adjusted crop estimate (3,133 tons × 80 percent/19,887 tons = 12.6012 percent.) The preliminary free percentage thus initially released 2,506 tons of hazelnuts from the 2002 supply for domestic inshell use, and the preliminary restricted percentage withheld 17,381 tons for the export and shelled (kernel) markets.

Under the order, the Board must meet again on or before November 15 to recommend interim final and final percentages. The Board uses current crop estimates to calculate interim final and final percentages. The interim final percentages are calculated in the same way as the preliminary percentages and release the remaining 20 percent (to total 100 percent of the inshell trade demand) previously computed by the Board. Final free and restricted percentages may release up to an

additional 15 percent of the average of the preceding three years' trade acquisitions to provide an adequate carryover into the following season (i.e., desirable carryout). The order requires that the final free and restricted percentages shall be effective 30 days prior to the end of the marketing year, or earlier, if recommended by the Board and approved by USDA. Revisions in the marketing policy can be made until February 15 of each marketing year, but the inshell trade demand can only be revised upward, consistent with § 982.40(e).

The Board met on November 15, 2002, and reviewed and approved an amended marketing policy and recommended the establishment of final free and restricted percentages. The Board decided that market conditions were such that immediate release of an additional 15 percent for desirable carryout would not adversely affect the 2002–2003 domestic inshell market. Accordingly, no interim final free and restricted percentages were recommended. Final free and restricted percentages were recommended at 18.4392 and 81.5608 percent, respectively. The final free percentage releases 3,667 tons of inshell hazelnuts from the 2002 supply for domestic use.

The final marketing percentages are based on the Board's final production estimate and the following supply and demand information for the 2002–2003 marketing year:

	Tons	
Inshell Supply:		
(1) Total production (crop estimate)	18,000	
(2) Less substandard, farm use (disappearance; 5.23 percent of Item 1)	941	
(3) Merchantable production (Board's adjusted crop estimate; Item 1 minus Item 2)	17,059	
(4) Plus undeclared carryin as of July 1, 2002, (subject to regulation)	2,828	
(5) Supply subject to regulation (Item 3 plus Item 4)	19,887	
Inshell Trade Demand:		
(6) Average trade acquisitions of inshell hazelnuts for three prior years	3,563	
(7) Less declared carryin as of July 1, 2002, (not subject to regulation)	430	
(8) Adjusted Inshell Trade Demand (Item 6 minus Item 7)	3,133	
(9) Desirable carryout on August 31, 2003 (15 percent of Item 6)	534	
(10) Adjusted Inshell Trade Demand plus desirable carryout (Item 8 plus Item 9)	3,667	
	Percentages	
(11) Final percentages (Item 10 divided by Item 5) × 100	18.4392	81.5608
(12) Final free in tons (Item 10)	3,667	
(13) Final restricted in tons (Item 5 minus Item 10)		16,220

In addition to complying with the provisions of the order, the Board also considered USDA's 1982 "Guidelines for Fruit, Vegetable, and Specialty Crop Marketing Orders" (Guidelines) when making its computations in the marketing policy. This volume control

regulation provides a method to collectively limit the supply of inshell hazelnuts available for sale in domestic markets. The Guidelines provide that the domestic inshell market has available a quantity equal to 110 percent of prior years' shipments before

allocating supplies for the export inshell, export kernel, and domestic kernel markets. This provides for plentiful supplies for consumers and for market expansion, while retaining the mechanism for dealing with oversupply situations. The established final

percentages will make available an additional 534 tons for desirable carryout. The total free supply for the 2002–2003 marketing year is 4,097 tons of hazelnuts, which is the sum of the final trade demand of 3,563 tons and the 534 ton desirable carryout. This amount is 115 percent of prior years' sales and exceeds the goal of the Guidelines.

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 action 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.

Small agricultural producers are defined by the Small Business Administration (13 CFR 121.201) as those having annual receipts of less than \$750,000, and small agricultural service firms are defined as those having annual receipts of less than \$5,000,000. There are approximately 750 producers of hazelnuts in the production area and approximately 20 handlers subject to regulation under the order. Average annual hazelnut revenue per producer is approximately \$36,500. This is computed by dividing NASS figures for the average value of production for 2000 and 2001 (\$27,369,500) by the number of producers. The level of sales of other crops by hazelnut producers is not known. In addition, based on Board records, about 95 percent of the handlers ship under \$5,000,000 worth of hazelnuts on an annual basis. In view of the foregoing, it can be concluded that the majority of hazelnut producers and handlers may be classified as small entities.

Board meetings are widely publicized in advance of the meetings and are held in a location central to the production area. The meetings are open to all industry members and other interested persons who are encouraged to participate in the deliberations and voice their opinions on topics under discussion. Thus, Board recommendations can be considered to represent the interests of small business entities in the industry.

Currently, U.S. hazelnut production is allocated among three market outlets: domestic inshell, export inshell, and kernel markets. Handlers and growers receive the highest return on domestic inshell, less for export inshell, and the least for kernels. Based on Board records of average shipments for 1992–2001, the percentage going to each of these markets was 13 percent (domestic inshell), 41 percent (export inshell), and 46 percent (kernels).

The inshell market can be characterized as having limited demand and being prone to oversupply and low grower prices in the absence of supply restrictions. This volume control regulation provides a method for the U.S. hazelnut industry to limit the supply of domestic inshell hazelnuts available for sale in the continental U.S. On average, 78 percent of domestic inshell hazelnut shipments occur between October 1 through November 30, primarily to supply holiday nut demand.

Many years of marketing experience led to the development of the current volume control procedures. These procedures have helped the industry solve its marketing problems by keeping inshell supplies in balance with domestic needs. Volume controls fully supply the domestic inshell market while preventing an oversupply of that market.

The estimated inshell trade demand (3,133 tons) and the high level of carryin (2,828 tons) were key market factors leading to the 18.4392 percent final free percentage. Hazelnut production in 2002 is only 2,500 tons more than in 1998, which was the shortest crop in the last ten years. Even if carryin had been zero, the amount that handlers typically ship into the domestic inshell market (*i.e.*, average trade acquisitions of 3,563 tons) equals about 18 percent of the supply (19,887 tons subject to regulation). Although the domestic inshell market is a relatively small proportion of total sales (13 percent of average shipments over the last ten years, and 10 percent of average shipments for the last two years), it remains a profitable market segment. The volume control provisions of the marketing order are designed to avoid oversupplying this particular market segment, because that would likely lead to substantially lower grower prices. The other market segments, export inshell and kernels, are expected to continue to provide good outlets for U.S. hazelnut production.

Since high production years typically follow low production years (a consistent pattern for hazelnuts), higher production is expected in 2003.

Recent production and price data reflect the stabilizing effect of the volume control regulations. Industry statistics show that total hazelnut production has varied widely over the 10-year period between 1992 and 2001, from a low of 16,500 tons in 1998 to a high of 49,500 tons in 2001. Production in the shortest crop year and the biggest crop year was 48 percent and 153 percent, respectively, of the 10-year average tonnage of 32,240. The coefficient of variation (a standard statistical measure of variability; "CV") for hazelnut production over the 10-year period is 0.36. In contrast, the coefficient of variation for hazelnut grower prices is 0.16, less than half the CV for production. The considerable lower variability of prices versus production provides an illustration of the order's price-stabilizing impacts.

Comparing grower cost of production to grower revenue in recent years highlights the financial impacts on growers at varying production levels. A recent hazelnut cost of production study from Oregon State University estimated cost of production per acre to be approximately \$1,340 for a typical 100-acre hazelnut enterprise. Average grower revenue per bearing acre (based on NASS acreage and value of production data) equaled or exceeded that typical cost level twice between 1995 and 2000. Average grower revenue was below typical costs in the other years. Since 1995, the highest level of revenue per bearing acre was \$1552 (1997) and the lowest was \$561 in 1996. Without the stabilizing impact of the order, growers may have lost more money. While crop size has fluctuated, the volume regulations contribute to orderly marketing and market stability, and help to moderate the variation in returns for all producers and handlers, both large and small.

While the level of benefits of this rulemaking is difficult to quantify, the stabilizing effects of the volume regulations impact both small and large handlers positively by helping them maintain and expand markets even though hazelnut supplies fluctuate widely from season to season. This regulation provides equitable allotment of the most profitable market, the domestic inshell market. That market is available to all handlers, regardless of size.

As an alternative to this regulation, the Board discussed not regulating the 2002–2003 hazelnut crop. However, without any regulations in effect, the Board believes that the industry would oversupply the inshell domestic market. Although the 2002–2003 hazelnut crop is much smaller than last year, the

release of 18,000 tons on the domestic inshell market would cause producer returns to decrease drastically, and completely disrupt the market.

Section 982.40 of the order establishes a procedure and computations for the Board to follow in recommending to USDA release of preliminary, interim final, and final quantities of hazelnuts to be released to the free and restricted markets each marketing year. The program results in plentiful supplies for consumers and for market expansion while retaining the mechanism for dealing with oversupply situations.

Hazelnuts produced under the order comprise virtually all of the hazelnuts produced in the U.S. This production represents, on average, less than 4 percent of total U.S. production for other tree nuts, and less than 4 percent of the world's hazelnut production.

During the 2001–2002 season, 78 percent of the kernels were marketed in the domestic market and 22 percent were exported. Domestically produced kernels generally command a higher price in the domestic market than imported kernels. The industry is continuing its efforts to develop and expand other markets with emphasis on the domestic kernel market. Small business entities, both producers and handlers, benefit from the expansion efforts resulting from this program.

Inshell hazelnuts produced under the order compete well in export markets because of quality. Based on Board statistics, Europe has historically been the primary export market for U.S. produced inshell hazelnuts, with a 10-year average of 5,436 tons out of total average exports of 12,132 tons. Recent years have seen a significant shift in export destinations. Inshell shipments to Europe totaled 4,526 tons in the 2001–2002 season, representing 17 percent of exports, with the largest share going to Germany. Inshell shipments to Southwest Pacific countries, and Hong Kong in particular, have increased dramatically in the past few years, rising to 73 percent of total exports of 25,868 tons in 2001–2002 season. The industry continues to pursue export opportunities.

There are some reporting, recordkeeping, and other compliance requirements under the order. The reporting and recordkeeping burdens are necessary for compliance purposes and for developing statistical data for maintenance of the program. The information collection requirements have been previously approved by the Office of Management and Budget under OMB No. 0581–0178. The forms require information which is readily available from handler records and which can be

provided without data processing equipment or trained statistical staff. 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. This rule does not change those requirements. In addition, USDA has not identified any relevant Federal rules that duplicate, overlap or conflict with this rule.

Further, the Board's meetings were widely publicized throughout the hazelnut industry and all interested persons were invited to attend the meetings and participate in Board deliberations. Like all Board meetings, those held on August 29, and November 15, 2002, were public meetings and all entities, both large and small, were able to express their views on this issue. Finally, interested persons are invited to submit information on the regulatory and informational impacts of this action on small businesses.

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.

This rule invites comments on the establishment of final free and restricted percentages for the 2002–2003 marketing year under the hazelnut marketing order. Any comments received will be considered prior to finalization of this rule.

After consideration of all relevant material presented, including the Board's recommendation, and other information, it is found that this interim final 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 action until 30 days after publication in the **Federal Register** because: (1) The 2002–2003 marketing year began July 1, 2002, and the percentages established herein apply to all merchantable hazelnuts handled from the beginning of the crop year; (2) handlers are aware of this rule, which was recommended at an open Board meeting, and need no additional time to comply with this rule; and (3) interested persons are provided a 60-day comment period in which to respond, and all

comments timely received will be considered prior to finalization of this action.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 982

Filberts, Hazelnuts, Marketing agreements, Nuts, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR Part 982 is amended as follows:

PART 982—HAZELNUTS GROWN IN OREGON AND WASHINGTON

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR Part 982 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 601–674.

2. A new section 982.250 is added to read as follows:

Note: This section will not be published in the annual Code of Federal Regulations.

§ 982.250 Free and restricted percentages—2002–2003 marketing year.

The final free and restricted percentages for merchantable hazelnuts for the 2002–2003 marketing year shall be 18.4392 and 81.5608 percent, respectively.

Dated: March 6, 2003.

A.J. Yates,

Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service.

[FR Doc. 03–5843 Filed 3–11–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–02–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 71

[Docket No. FAA–2003–14549; Airspace Docket No. 03–ACE–17]

Modification of Class D and Class E Airspace; St. Louis, Spirit of St. Louis Airport, MO

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Direct final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This action modifies Class D and Class E airspace at St. Louis, Spirit of St. Louis Airport, MO. The National Aeronautical Charting Office (NACO) revised the Spirit of St. Louis Airport airport reference point effective February 6, 2003. The Class D and Class E airspace areas at St. Louis, Spirit of St. Louis Airport, MO are defined by the Spirit of St. Louis Airport airport reference point. This same data is also used in the legal descriptions for these