

Rules and Regulations

Federal Register

Vol. 68, No. 139

Monday, July 21, 2003

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 989

[Docket No. FV03-989-6 IFR]

Raisins Produced From Grapes Grown in California; Revision of Varietal Types

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Interim final rule with request for comments.

SUMMARY: This rule revises the list of varietal types of raisins specified under the Federal marketing order for California raisins (order). The order regulates the handling of raisins produced from grapes grown in California and is locally administered by the Raisin Administrative Committee (RAC). The order provides authority for volume and quality regulations that are applied according to varietal type of raisin. This action combines the Oleate and Related Seedless varietal type (Oleates) with the Natural (sun-dried) Seedless varietal type (Naturals), and makes conforming changes to the order's volume and quality regulations. This action addresses changing cultural practices in the California raisin industry.

DATES: Effective July 22, 2003. Comments must be received by September 19, 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. All comments should reference the docket

number and the date and page number of this issue of the **Federal Register** and will be made 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:

Maureen T. Pello, Senior Marketing Specialist, California Marketing Field Office, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, 2202 Monterey Street, suite 102B, Fresno, California 93721; telephone: (559) 487-5901, Fax: (559) 487-5906; 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 and Order No. 989 (7 CFR part 989), both as amended, regulating the handling of raisins produced from grapes grown in California, 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. This rule is not intended to have retroactive effect. 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 revises the list of varietal types of raisins specified under the order. The order regulates the handling of raisins produced from grapes grown in California and is administered locally by the RAC. The order provides authority for volume and quality regulations that are applied according to varietal type of raisin. This action combines the Oleate varietal type with the Natural varietal type, and makes conforming changes to the order's volume and quality regulations. This action was unanimously recommended by the RAC at a meeting on May 15, 2003, and addresses changing cultural practices in the California raisin industry.

Varietal Types

The order provides authority for quality and volume regulations that are applied according to varietal type of raisin. Section 989.10 of the order defines the term varietal type to mean raisins generally recognized as possessing characteristics differing from other raisins in a degree sufficient to make necessary or desirable separate identification and classification. That section includes a list of eight varietal types, and provides authority for the RAC, with the approval of USDA, to change this list. A description of these varietal types, along with additional varietal types, may be found in § 989.110 of the order's administrative rules and regulations. There are currently 10 different varietal types of raisins listed in this section.

Paragraph (a) in § 989.110 currently defines the Natural varietal type to include all sun-dried seedless raisins that possess characteristics similar to Natural Thompson Seedless (NTS) raisins which, for the purpose of