

Notices

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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

Foreign Agricultural Service

Notice of Request for Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, this notice announces the Foreign Agricultural Service's intention to request an extension for a currently approved information collection in support of the regulations governing the entry of raw cane sugar under the tariff-rate quota (TRQ) into the United States.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received January 5, 2004 to be assured on consideration.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Richard J. Blabey, Director, Import Policies and Programs Division, Foreign Agricultural Service, AgStop 1021, South Building, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250-1021 or telephone (202) 720-2916, fax to (202) 720-0876, or e-mail Richard.Blabey@fas.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Certificate for Quota Eligibility.

OMB Number: 0551-0014.

Expiration Date of Approval: February 29, 2004.

Abstract: The Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to establish the quantity of raw cane sugar, which may be entered at the TRQ duty rates. The terms under which Certificates for Quota Eligibility (CQEs) will be issued to foreign countries that have been allocated a share of the TRQ are set forth in 15 CFR part 2011, Subpart A, Allocation of Tariff-rate Quota on Imported Sugars, Syrups, and Molasses. The authority for issuing

CQEs is Additional U.S. Note 5(b)(iv) to chapter 17 of the HTS. The regulation, promulgated by the United States Trade Representative, provides for the issuance of CQEs by the Secretary of Agriculture, and in general prohibits sugar subject to the TRQ from being imported into the United States or withdrawn from a warehouse for consumption at the TRQ duty rates unless such sugar is accompanied by a CQE. CQEs are issued to foreign countries by the Director of the Import Policies and Programs Division, Foreign Agricultural Service, or his or her designee. The issuance of CQEs is in such amounts and at such times as the Director determines are appropriate to enable the foreign country to fill its quota allocation for such quota period in a reasonable manner, taking into account traditional shipping patterns, harvesting period, U.S. import requirements, and other relevant factors.

The information required to be collected on the CQE is used to monitor and control the imports of raw cane sugar. Proper completion of the CQE is mandatory for those foreign governments that are eligible and elect to export raw cane sugar to the United States under the TRQ.

Estimate of burden: The public reporting burden for the collection varies in direct relation to the number of CQEs issued.

Respondents: Foreign governments.

Estimated number of respondents: 40 (i.e., number of countries receiving a TRQ allocation).

Estimated number of responses per respondent: 30 per fiscal year.

Estimated total annual reporting burden: 200 hours.

Request for Comments: Send comments regarding: (a) Whether the information collection is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumption used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of

information technology. Copies of this information collection may be obtained from Kimberly Chisley, the Agency Information Collection Coordinator, at (202) 720-2568.

Comments may be sent to Richard Blabey, the Import Policies and Programs Division, Stop 1021, Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-1021, or Richard.Blabey@fas.usda.gov, or to the Desk Officer for Agriculture, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, DC 20503. Persons with disabilities who require an alternative means of communication of information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's Target Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will become a matter of public record.

FAS is committed to complying with the Government Paperwork Elimination Act which requires Government agencies, to the maximum extent feasible, to provide the public with the option of electronically submitting an information collection. CQEs permit exporters to ship raw cane sugar to the United States at the U.S. price, which is significantly higher than the world price for raw cane sugar. Therefore, in contrast to most information collection documents, CQEs have a monetary value equivalent to the substantial profits to exporters who can fill their raw cane sugar allocations under the TRQ. CQEs have always been carefully handled as secure documents, and issued only to foreign government-approved certifying authorities. The Department does not plan to make CQEs available electronically in order to prevent a potential proliferation of invalid CQEs, which could undermine the integrity of the TRQ system.

Signed at Washington, DC on October 27, 2003.

A. Ellen Terpstra,

Administrator, Foreign Agricultural Service.
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