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# USDA Actions

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*USDA regularly implements operational and regulatory changes that affect the status of food and nutrition in the United States. Here are some actions.*

## Corn Donated to Cape Verde

The United States has donated 18,000 metric tons of corn to Cape Verde, the island nation off northwest Africa, to address serious seasonal rural unemployment and soil erosion. Proceeds from the sale will be used to employ rural people in labor-intensive soil and water conservation work.

## Open Border Proposal for Canadian Meat and Poultry Is Dropped

USDA withdrew a proposal to exempt Canadian meat and poultry products from U.S. inspection when imported into the United States. This "open border" proposal was designed to reduce regulatory burdens between the United States and Canada, since the two inspection systems for meat and poultry are substantially similar.

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The proposal was published in the June 29, 1990, *Federal Register*, and notice of withdrawal was published on October 18, 1991.

## Sulfite Violation Closes Meat Firm

USDA suspended inspection services for 2 weeks at a meat firm in North Carolina, as a penalty for the firm's conviction on charges of illegally adding sulfites to meat products. Because a meat or poultry plant cannot sell products without Federal inspection, the suspension effectively closed the plant.

## Special Grade for Glutinous Rice Established

USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service has established a special grade for glutinous rice. Also known as waxy or sweet rice, glutinous rice is characterized by chalky kernels. In nonglutinous rice, chalky kernels are considered undesirable. Previously, U.S. standards imposed grade limits on all rice with chalky kernels.

## Surplus Dairy Products Sold to Mexico

USDA sold \$34 million worth of nonfat dry milk (\$1,780 per metric ton) to Mexico. USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation sold the 19,000 metric tons to Compania Nacional de Subsistencias Populares (CONASUPO). The dry milk was delivered in railcars to the U.S.-Mexican border from November 1991 through January 1992.

## USDA Donates Nonfat Milk to Jamaica

USDA donated 2,000 metric tons of nonfat dry milk to Jamaica which, in turn, sold it to the private sector. The proceeds will be used to provide food assistance to the needy and to support the Jamaican food stamp program, which aids about 250,000 residents each year. The supply period was fiscal year 1991.

## Former Soviet Union, China, and Morocco Eligible for More U.S. Wheat

USDA announced an opportunity for sales of an additional 3 million metric tons of U.S. wheat to the former Soviet Union, 2 million to China, and 1 million to Morocco under the Export Enhancement Program (EEP). Sales will be made to buyers in those countries through normal commercial channels at competitive world prices. The sales will provide commodities from USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation. EEP sales will enable U.S. exporters to compete in these markets.

## Algeria Eligible for More Butterfat

USDA announced that Algeria is eligible for an additional 5,000 metric tons of butterfat under the Dairy Export Incentive Program. Export sales will be facilitated through payment of bonus commodities from USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation. Sales of butterfat will be made through normal commercial channels at competitive world prices.

## Restrictions on Canadian Potatoes Continue

Restrictions on imports of Canadian potatoes are being extended to include additional production areas because of the discovery of new outbreaks of a foreign potato disease. The disease is caused by a virus that infects potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, and tobacco. Although not yet confirmed in the

United States, this strain of virus—called PVY-N—can be transmitted long distances through the movement of seed potatoes. PVY-N also can be spread by aphids feeding on infected plants and transmitting the virus to healthy plants.

## Imports of Papayas From Costa Rica Are Being Considered

USDA is proposing to allow imports of Solo papayas from three western provinces of Costa Rica.

Studies have shown that these papayas can be shipped from these regions without any significant pest risk if proper precautions are taken. For example, fruit flies of western Costa Rica that potentially threaten U.S. agriculture do not attack Solo papayas if they are not quite ripe.

Under the proposed new import rules, growers would have to harvest all papayas before they are half ripe, keeping orchards free of more developed papayas.

The risk of pests from other types of papayas, or from Solo papayas from other areas, has not been studied. Notice of the proposed rule was published in the January 3, 1992, *Federal Register*.

## Lithuania and Estonia To Receive U.S. Corn

The United States has donated 100,000 metric tons of corn (valued at \$1 million) to Lithuania and Estonia for fiscal 1992.

The Lithuanian and Estonian governments will sell the corn to private feed millers and livestock and poultry producers for feed. The proceeds will go to private voluntary organizations operating there and to developing private sector farms.

## Imports of Additional Fruits From Mexico Are Being Considered

USDA is proposing to permit imports of apricots, persimmons, and pomegranates to the United States from specific municipalities in Sonora, Mexico, because the areas have been designated free of fruit flies. Previously, such fruit from Mexico has been barred because of fruit fly infestations.

The fruit may be shipped from municipalities along the Arizona border. Apples, grapefruit, oranges, peaches, and tangerines are already entering from this area.

Sonora growers estimate they will annually export nearly 300 tons of fresh apricots to the United States (less than 2 percent of U.S. production).

## New Grade for Pistachios in the Shell

With the addition of a new grade—U.S. No. 3—to the U.S. standards for pistachio nuts in the shell, as of February 14, 1992, more pistachios will enter the market.

Similar to the requirements for U.S. No. 2 pistachios, the new grade establishes higher tolerances for certain external visual defects, such as shell stain.

Details of the new standards appeared as a final rule in the January 15, 1992, *Federal Register*.

## Fresh Sweet Corn Standards Revised

USDA has revised standards for grades of sweet corn to reflect harvesting and marketing methods. The standards were last updated in 1954.

U.S. grades have applied only to sweet corn in husks, yet the corn is usually sold after being husked, trimmed, and wrapped in plastic packages.

The revisions specify two grades for husked sweet corn—U.S. Fancy Husked and U.S. No. 1 Husked—determined by the amount of husk left on the ear, clipping of the ends of the ear, and absence of other superfluous material such as threads of corn silk.

### Grants Awarded for Outreach and Assistance to the Homeless

Over \$250,000 in grants has been awarded to six nonprofit organizations to provide food assistance to homeless Americans.

The grant recipients are to establish effective methods of reaching homeless people and help them make better use of the available USDA food assistance programs.

The 1990 farm bill includes a provision for restaurants to offer low-cost meals to homeless people in exchange for food stamps. This parallels a long-standing provision allowing elderly and disabled persons to use food stamps in some restaurants.

USDA also expects to donate more than \$260,000 million worth of food in 1992 to programs that assist homeless people, including food for soup kitchens, charitable institutions, and The Emergency Food Assistance Program.

These programs will coordinate with USDA participation in the Federal Government's Interagency Council on the Homeless.

### Maine Is First State To Be Free of Pseudorabies

USDA has recognized Maine as the first state to be free of pseudorabies, a contagious livestock disease that is most prevalent in swine. Other animals, including cattle, sheep, dogs and cats, can catch pseudorabies from swine. In those species, it almost always causes a quick death. (The disease does not affect humans.) Although pseudorabies often causes death in newborn pigs, older hogs can survive the infection and remain carriers of the virus for life. Stress or other conditions, however, can reactivate the virus.

The declaration by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) was based on a recent recommendation of the National Pseudorabies Control Board—a six-member body created in 1985 through joint action by the Livestock Conservation Institute, the National Pork Producers Council, and the U.S. Animal Health Association.

### More Export Opportunities

To help U.S. exporters compete at commercial prices in world markets, USDA announced opportunities for sales of U.S. agricultural commodities under the Export Enhancement Program (EEP) from December 1991 through January 1992 to the following countries:

- Brazil: 25,000 metric tons of barley malt,
- Bahrain: 25,000 tons of wheat,
- Egypt: 1 million tons of wheat,
- Algeria, Turkey, and Tunisia: 60,000 tons of vegetable oil,
- Jordan: 75,000 tons of rice,
- Eastern Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia): 150,000 tons of Durum wheat, and
- former Soviet Union: 25,000 tons of barley, and 500,000 tons of wheat flour.

Sales will be made to buyers in these countries through normal commercial channels at competitive world prices. Export sales will be facilitated through payment in the form of bonus commodities from USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation. ■