

California Table
Grape News
Commission
Release

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Grape Shatter Levels Don't Change Consumer Perceptions of Quality

FRESNO, California – A proposed change to the federal regulations on the permissible levels of loose grapes has California's fresh grape industry and U.S. retailers talking, but an earlier survey by the California Table Grape Commission indicates the change will have no impact for consumers.

The percentage of loose grapes, known in the industry as "shatter," will vary depending on factors such as weather, harvest time and storage conditions. Under the new proposal, an allowance of 5 percent will be created before shatter is counted as a gradable defect. A 2005 survey of 1,500 U.S. and Canadian consumers found that over 80 percent of shoppers considered grapes with shatter levels of up to 10 percent to be of "excellent, very good or good" quality. Importantly, there was no significant difference in quality perception of grapes with three, seven or 10 percent shatter.

Follow-up focus groups in three cities in the United States also showed that consumers believed there was no difference in the quality of grapes with shatter levels of three, seven or 10 percent.

"One of the things the survey found was that 98 percent of shoppers said they had purchased grapes with some of the berries detached from the stem," said commission president Kathleen Nave. "It is a normal experience and not something that bothers consumers." The survey found that 40 percent of shoppers eat the detached grapes first, while the rest simply store them in the same container as the rest of the bunch.

"It is clear from the research that as long as the grapes are in good condition, consumers are fine with a reasonable level of shatter and don't consider it to be a sign of poor quality," said Nave.

The California Table Grape Commission was created by the California legislature in 1967 to increase worldwide demand for fresh California grapes through a variety of research and promotional programs.

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