



*Fresh produce from our families to yours.*

August 9, 2004

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Fruit & Vegetable Programs  
Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA  
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Dear Mr. Priester:

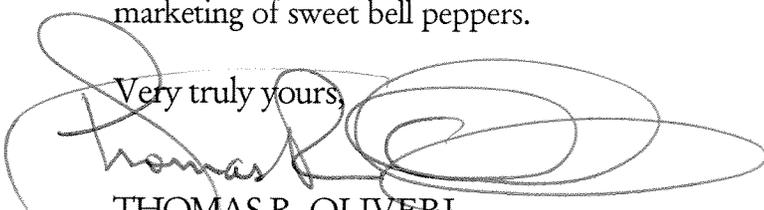
**Subject: U.S. Standards for Grades on Sweet Peppers  
Docket FV-04-308**

Western Growers is an agricultural trade association whose nearly 3,000 members grow, pack and ship 90% of the fresh vegetables and nearly 70% of the fresh fruits and nuts grown in Arizona and California; about 1/2 of the nation's fresh produce. On behalf of Western Growers sweet bell pepper members, I am writing this letter in support of amending the United States Standards for Grades of Sweet Peppers.

The current standards for all grades for sweet bell peppers allow a 2% tolerance for decay affecting stems, walls and calyxes. It is our member's perspective that decay seriously detracts from the appearance of the edible portion of the pepper. However, decay affecting the stems does not affect the edible portion of the sweet pepper and as such, should not be scored. Therefore, Western Growers supports the change to scoring and reporting of decay. Western Growers supports the continuation of reporting decay affecting the walls and calyxes against the restricted tolerance of 2% for decay. However, decay affecting the stems should not be scored against in the decay category but rather in the serious damage tolerance of 5% for U.S. Fancy and U.S. No. 1 grades.

Western Growers surveyed its membership which unanimous supports the grade standard sweet bell peppers concerning decay. WG members view this change as worthwhile and imperative and request that AMS proceed with revising the standards as soon as possible because this common sense approach will have a positive impact on the marketing of sweet bell peppers.

Very truly yours,



THOMAS R. OLIVERI  
Director, Trade Practices & Commodity Services

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