



PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT



AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

United States Department of Agriculture • 1400 Independence Ave., SW • Room 3510-S
Washington, DC 20250 • (202) 720-8998 • World Wide Web: <http://www.ams.usda.gov>

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George Chartier (202) 720-8998
george.chartier@usda.gov
Billy Cox (202) 720-8998
billy.cox@usda.gov

CALIFORNIA PISTACHIO GROWERS VOTE TO ESTABLISH MARKETING ORDER

WASHINGTON, March 1, 2004 — The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today the results of a producer referendum to establish a marketing order program for pistachios produced in the State of California.

Establishing the marketing order was favored by those voting in the referendum. USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service reported that valid ballots representing 338 California pistachio producers – about 34 percent of the producers eligible to vote – were cast. Of those voting in the referendum, establishing the order was favored by 90.80 percent of producers, and by voters representing 90 percent of the total volume of production voted in the referendum. To become effective, the proposed program had to be approved by at least two-thirds of those producers voting or by voters representing at least two-thirds of the volume of California pistachios represented by voters voting in the referendum.

The new marketing order will regulate the handling of pistachios produced in California. Handling regulations will include mandatory inspection and certification for minimum quality and size, and maximum aflatoxin tolerances. The order's production area will include the entire State of California. It will be locally administered by an eleven-member committee, consisting of eight producers, two handlers, and one public member.

Based on the record of a public hearing held in the production area in 2002, USDA's recommendation to establish the order appeared in the Federal Register and was announced in an Aug. 1, 2003 news release. The hearing was requested by the Proponents Committee, a group representing the majority of producers and handlers of pistachios in California.

Notice of the referendum appeared in the Dec. 30, 2003 Federal Register. A final rule concerning these amendments will also appear in the Federal Register.

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