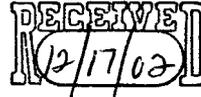


**THOMAS W. GASSELING**  
**714 N. 44<sup>TH</sup> AVE.**  
**YAKIMA, WASHINGTON 98908**

Docket Clerk  
AMS Fruit and Vegetable Programs  
Market Order Administration Branch  
USDA Mail Stop 0237  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250-0201



December 8, 2002

Dear Sir or Madam:

As an American hop grower I wish to go on record as supporting the proposed Federal Marketing Order. Because the American hop grower is the most efficient producer in the world, he has the ability to overproduce rapidly and the Federal Marketing Order will address that problem.

With the exception of some domestic Breweries who are committed to contracting at a fair price, the rest of the industry has become so accustomed to buying cheap on the spot market, due to persistent overproduction, that forward contracting, which is the backbone of our industry, has all but disappeared.

We are not asking the Federal Government to bail us out monetarily, but only to give us the tools to regulate ourselves, thus assuring our survival and more importantly the survival of a part of U.S. agriculture.

As an involved participant on the proponents' committee, I can assure you that a major effort was made to get input from all segments of our industry. This process took place over a period of approximately two years and included both those in favor and opposed to the proposed plan. At this time there is overwhelming grower support for the adoption of a Federal Marketing Order and all that I ask is for you to allow the process to move forward.

Given the current state of the industry, it is imperative that the Department act on the request as soon as possible. The survival of many growers depends on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas W. Gasseling". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Thomas W. Gasseling