

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 22, 2002

Ms. Lydia E. Berry
Processed Products Branch
AMS Fruit and Vegetable Programs
USDA Stop 0247
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250-0247

RE: New Proposed Standards for Grades of Apple Juice from Concentrate, Federal Register, November 21, 2001, page 58431.

Dear Ms. Berry:

We are writing to express our strong concerns relative to the above referenced proposed standards for grades of apple juice from concentrate. We have received correspondence from many growers and processors in our districts who have voiced their concern with the potential devastating impact the proposed standards could have on their industry. We are asking that your office accept this letter as a part of the public comment period. In addition we request that the Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) extend the public comment period thirty additional days and provide each office a copy of the petition sent to AMS by the Processed Apple Institute, Inc.

Please know that we share the concerns of growers and processors in the state of Michigan. For the last several years the Michigan apple industry has been in a state of crisis. Michigan apple growers and processors continue to face cheap imports of foreign apple juice concentrate, devastating outbreaks of fireblight disease, regulatory burdens and subsidized foreign competition. The proposal by the AMS to create new United States standards for grades of apple juice from concentrate could be the final blow to the Michigan apple industry.

Currently, the USDA purchases single-strength, fresh-squeezed canned apple juice for their feeding programs. Most of this business has been awarded to apple juice processors in the Eastern United States and Michigan processors. The new proposed standards would, undoubtedly, shift apple juice production to the Pacific Northwest where they exclusively produce apple juice from concentrate as opposed to single-strength, "not-from-concentrate" juice. Reconstituted apple juice places little value on the raw product, unlike single strength juice, and would create a cheaper and yet inferior product Michigan producers would not be able to compete against. We fear the USDA may then use reconstituted juice as a cheap alternative to the single-strength apple juice currently being purchased by the USDA for feeding programs.

As you know the majority of the apple juice manufactured in the U.S. is made from foreign apple juice concentrate. Despite antidumping duties on certain imports of Chinese apple juice concentrate, cheap juice concentrate continues to flow into the country and damage the domestic apple industry. The

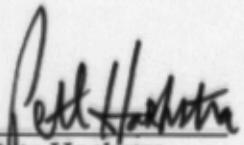
proposed standards seem to invite the use, if not the increased use, of foreign apple juice concentrate for production at the expense of Michigan grown apples.

Finally, we are concerned that the proposal will reduce the quality of apple juice available for U.S. consumers. Under the Brix-Acid ratio in the proposal, the high quality, flavorful juice apples grown in Michigan and other Eastern states would fail to meet the standard because of high acid levels. This ratio does not seem to be an indicator of apple juice quality, but an indicator of geographic convenience.

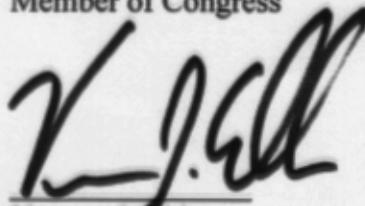
In summary, the proposed standard for apple juice from concentrate would not be beneficial for the entire U.S. apple industry, subject domestic producers to further competition from cheap, foreign apple juice concentrate, jeopardize the use of single strength apple juice in USDA feeding programs, and reduce the overall quality of apple juice for U.S. consumers.

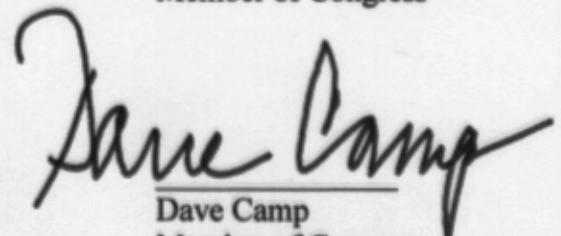
Thank you in advance for your cooperation and assistance in reviewing these concerns and those submitted by our constituents. We look forward to your response.

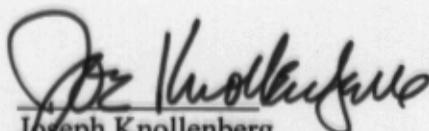
Sincerely,

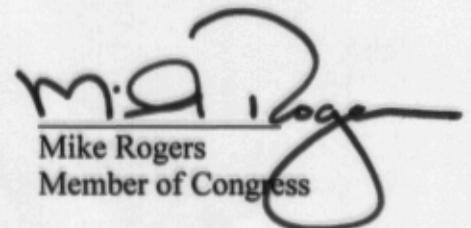

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