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December 4, 2003

Mr. Douglas Augsborg
USDA
Agricultural Marketing Service
Fruit and Vegetable Programs
Processed Products Branch
32 N. 3rd. Street
Yakima, WA 98902

Dear Doug:

Our industry is being threatened by the non-competitive position we have been placed in partially by a "loophole" that importers of pears to our country have found. We have to compete with processed pears that are substantially different in nature, but can be graded USDA grade B by definition. This is largely because of the lack of descriptive information and limits for firm fruit in sliced and diced styles in the B and C grade sections (sections §52.1623 (c) (B)(3) and (d) (C)(3)) of the Canned Pear Standards.

Correcting the definitions and limits for firm fruit in the sliced and diced styles to be similar to those listed for halves; quarters; pieces or irregular pieces, would at least force these imported products to compete with us at the quality level actually being supplied. All of the Chinese pear samples that we have observed have been what we would grade as sub-standard for character and we have had to compete with that using B grade product of our own.

I have no doubt that you will find a consensus among all USA suppliers of canned pears, as we all have to live with this competitive disadvantage until this situation is remedied.

We will look forward to a prompt response from the USDA regarding its position on this matter. It is vital to our industry.

Sincerely,

Theresa Gatti
Quality Assurance Manager

Cc: Peter Truitt
Rick Kimball

