



United States Department of Agriculture

Marketing and
Regulatory
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Service

Fruit and
Vegetable
Program

Specialty
Crops
Inspection
Division

United States Standards For Grades of Creole Onions

Effective November 24, 2014

This is the third issue, as amended, of the United States Standards for Grades of Creole Onions published in the FEDERAL REGISTER on October 23, 2014 (79 FR 63378) to become effective November 24, 2014. This issue supersedes the second issue, which has been in effect since April 10, 1943.

Voluntary U.S. grade standards are issued under the authority of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, which provides for the development of official U.S. grades to designate different levels of quality. These grade standards are available for use by producers, suppliers, buyers, and consumers. As in the case of other standards for grades of fresh and processed fruits, vegetables, and specialty crops these standards are designed to facilitate orderly marketing by providing a convenient basis for buying and selling, for establishing quality control programs, and for determining loan values.

The U.S. grade standards and inspection instructions for all fresh and processed fruits, vegetables, and specialty crops are available on the internet and upon request at the address below. These documents provide detailed interpretations of the grade standards and provide step-by-step procedures for grading the product.

Grade standards are issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) after careful consideration of all data and views submitted during rulemaking. The Department welcomes suggestions for improving the standards in future revisions. Comments may be submitted to, and copies of standards and inspection instructions obtained from:

Director, Specialty Crops Inspection Division
Fruit and Vegetable Program,
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, STOP 0240
Washington, D.C. 20250

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1621-1627.

Note: Compliance with the provisions of these standards shall not excuse failure to comply with the provisions of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, or with applicable State laws and regulations.

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United States Standards for Grades of Creole Onions

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Grades

§51.3955 U.S. No. 1.

“U.S. No. 1” consists of Creole onions of similar varietal characteristics, except color when designated as a specialty or mixed pack, which are mature, fairly well shaped, free from soft rot, doubles, bottlenecks, and from damage caused by splits, seedstems, tops, roots, moisture, sunburn, sunscald, cuts, staining, dirt or other foreign matter, diseases, insects, or mechanical or other means. Unless otherwise specified, the minimum size shall be 1-3/4 inches in diameter. (See §51.3959.)

§51.3956 U.S. No. 2.

“U.S. No. 2” consists of Creole onions of similar varietal characteristics, except color when designated as a specialty or mixed pack, which are not badly misshapen and are free from soft rot, doubles, bottlenecks, and from damage caused by splits, moisture, sunscald, and from serious damage caused by seedstems, tops, roots, cuts, staining, dirt or other foreign matter, diseases, insects, or mechanical or other means. Unless otherwise specified, the minimum size shall be 1-1/2 inches in diameter. (See §51.3959.)

§51.3957 U.S. Combination.

“U.S. Combination.” Any lot of Creole onions may be designated “U.S. Combination” when not less than 50 percent, by weight, of the onions in each container meet the requirements of U.S. No. 1 grade and the remainder U.S. No. 2 grade. (See §51.3959.)

§51.3958 [Reserved].

Tolerances

§51.3959 Tolerances.

In order to allow for variations incident to proper grading and handling in each of the foregoing grades, the following tolerances, by weight, are provided as specified:

- (a)** For defects.
 - (1)** U.S. No. 1 and U.S. No. 2 grades. Ten percent for onions in any lot which fail to meet the requirements of the specified grade, including therein not more than 2 percent for onions which are watersoaked or affected by soft rot.
 - (2)** U.S. Combination grade. Ten percent for onions in any lot which fail to meet the requirements of U.S. No. 2 grade, including therein not more than 2 percent for onions which are watersoaked or affected by soft rot. No part of any tolerance shall be allowed to reduce for the lot as a whole the percentage of U.S. No. 1 onions required in the combination, but

individual containers may have not more than a total of 15 percentage points less than the percentage of U.S. No. 1 onions required: Provided, That the entire lot averages within the percentage required.

- (b) For off-size. Five percent for onions in any lot which are below the specified minimum size and 15 percent for onions which are larger than any specified maximum size.

Application of Tolerances

§51.3960 Application of tolerances.

The contents of individual packages in the lot are subject to the following limitations:

- (a) For a tolerance of 10 percent or more, not more than one-tenth of the packages in any lot may contain more than one and one-half times the tolerance specified: Provided, That soft rot in any package shall not exceed three times the tolerance: And provided further, That the average for the entire lot is within the tolerance specified for the grade.
- (b) For a tolerance of less than 10 percent, not more than one-tenth of the packages in any lot may contain more than double the tolerance specified: Provided, That soft rot in any package shall not exceed three times the tolerance and that at least one defective and one off-size specimen may be permitted in any package: And provided further, That the average for the entire lot is within the tolerance specified for the grade.

Definitions

§51.3961 Similar varietal characteristics.

“Similar varietal characteristics” means that the onions have the general distinguishing features of the Creole type, i.e., flat to somewhat globular shape. Variations in color from yellow to brownish red shall be permitted but white Creole onions shall not be mixed in the same container with onions of other colors.

§51.3962 Mature.

“Mature” means having reached a stage of development at which the onions are firm, not becoming soft or spongy.

§51.3963 Fairly well shaped.

“Fairly well shaped” means having the characteristic shape, not thicknecked, lopsided or otherwise materially deformed, but not necessarily of either flat or globe type.

§51.3964 Soft rot.

“Soft rot” means any soft or mushy condition of the tissue such as bacterial soft rot, or wet breakdown following sunscald.

§51.3965 Doubles.

“Doubles” means onions which have developed more than one distinct bulb joined only at the base.

§51.3966 Bottlenecks.

“Bottlenecks” means onions which have thick necks, usually with poorly developed bulbs.

§51.3967 Badly misshapen.

“Badly misshapen” means that the onion is so decidedly deformed that its appearance is seriously affected.

§51.3968 Damage.

“Damage” means any specific defect described in this section; or an equally objectionable variation of any one of these defects, any other defect, or any combination of defects, which materially detracts from the appearance, or the edible or marketing quality of the onion. The following specific defects shall be considered as damage:

- (a) Splits. A split is an onion which has more than one distinct bulb at least partially covered by an outer scale. Such an onion, if not well cured, shall be considered damaged when not completely covered by more than one outer scale. If well cured, such an onion shall not be regarded as damaged if practically covered by an outer scale, unless the distinct bulbs are readily apparent upon casual examination of the onion.
- (b) Seedstems when any seedstem is tough or woody, or is more than one-fourth inch in diameter.
- (c) Sunburn. Sunburn means discoloration due to exposure to the sun where there is no injury to the tissue. Individual onions showing bad sunburn shall be considered as damaged but onions showing slight sunburn shall not be regarded as damaged unless present in a sufficient amount to cause the lot to have a distinctly greenish cast. Onions should not be peeled to detect sunburn.
- (d) Sunscald. An onion, when not dry and well cured, shall be considered as damaged if it is affected by any sunscald. If dry and well cured, an onion affected by sunscald shall be regarded as damaged except when the affected

area is dry and so inconspicuous that the appearance of the onion is not materially injured.

- (e) Staining. Any lot of onions which is materially stained shall be considered as damaged. In this connection the number of stained onions permitted, before the lot is considered damaged, will depend upon the degree of staining on individual onions. As a guide, a lot should be considered damaged if the appearance is affected to a greater extent than the presence of 15 percent appreciably stained plus 5 percent badly stained onions. If the lot has 15 percent which are appreciably stained, and 5 percent which are badly stained and most of the remainder of the lot shows staining of a lesser degree, but approaches that which is considered appreciably stained then the lot shall be considered as damaged by staining. If a lot contains slightly more than 20 percent of appreciably stained onions and most of the lot has none or very little staining, it should not be considered as damaged by staining.

§51.3969 Serious damage.

“Serious damage” means any specific defect described in this section; or an equally objectionable variation of any one of these defects, any other defect, or any combination of defects, which seriously detracts from the appearance or the edible or marketing quality of the onion.

The following specific defects shall be considered as serious damage:

- (a) Dirt or staining when more than 10 percent of the onions in any lot are badly caked with dirt or are badly stained.
- (b) Seedstems when any seedstem is tough or woody, or is more than one-half inch in diameter.

§51.3970 Diameter.

“Diameter” means the greatest dimension at right angles to a straight line running from stem to root.