

Block submits marketing order report to White House panel

WASHINGTON, D.C. — How the 47 fruit and vegetable marketing orders affect the nation's economy are covered in a report Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block has turned over to the President's Task Force on Regulatory Relief.

Block said he will soon announce guidelines for existing and future federal fruit, vegetable and specialty crop orders, then evaluate each order on a case-by-case basis.

"Four provisions of marketing orders give me particular concern," Block said. "Producer allotments, which restrict entry of new producers into commodity industries; prorates, which restrict the quantity of a commodity that each handler may ship to market over a stated time

period; reserve pools, whereby portions of a commodity are held back from primary markets for later sale, diverted to secondary markets or disposed of in non-food uses; and quality provisions, which may possibly be misused as non-tariff trade barriers."

Crop marketing orders were among several areas of federal regulation the presidential task force targeted for review last spring. Block appointed a team of five U.S. Department of Agriculture and university agricultural economists to review the programs.

Block said the review team's report indicates marketing orders have potential for increasing economic efficiency by stabilizing returns to crop growers and by providing quality assurance to buyers.

He said the report also indicates, however, that if marketing orders limit quantities of commodities in one or more outlets, they may impose inefficiencies on the production and marketing system. The team's report describes research provisions of marketing orders as the most likely to contribute to economic efficiency.

This is followed, in descending order, by:

—Pack and container standardization;

—Grade, size and maturity standards, particularly those that remain essentially the same from year to year;

—Prorate regulations controlling rate of flow during only part of the season, and reserve pools that are used for storing commodities for later return to the market;

—Market allocation and full-season prorate provisions; and

—Provisions that allot market shares among producers.

The five-member review team, headed by USDA staff economist Richard Heifner, examined market orders in light of changes that have occurred recently in economic conditions and philosophy.

The team's report addresses the likely effects of four major options:

—continuing the programs as they are; eliminating them, but not substituting new federal programs; replacing them with other programs designed to overcome some of the same marketing problems; and changing individual marketing orders to focus on those provisions which contribute most to efficiency and productivity.

The report said marketing order provisions that allocate products to markets or regulate the flow of crops to market throughout the season have little positive effect on overall economic efficiency and may actually have a negative impact. However, the report said, these provisions "when used infrequently...may be justified as a 'safety-valve' to protect growers from disastrously low prices."

Provisions that allot market shares among producers are generally the most likely to detract from economic efficiency, according to the report, "although even these provisions may carry some stabilization benefits."

Marketing orders are designed jointly by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service and affected producers to help overcome specific marketing problems. Marketing orders may regulate the quality and sizes of the commodity marketed, the quantity, or

both. Unlike many government regulations imposed on industries, the orders are put into effect or eliminated only following a referendum of affected producers.

Assessments that handlers pay are used to finance research to improve production and

marketing, as well as market development activities and advertising.

Copies of the report will be available in about three weeks from the AMS Information Division, room 2638-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Md. offers 'Choose and Cut' Christmas tree directories

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — The 1981 "Choose and Cut" Christmas Tree directory is now off the press and or those interest in selecting and cutting a Christmas Tree right on the farm where it has been grown, it is free for the asking.

Copies are being sent to the public library systems throughout Maryland including the Enoch Pratt system in Baltimore and the Washington, D.C. library network and can be picked up at any library. In addition, copies are also sent to all county offices of the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service.

The 1981 edition of the ever popular director lists 25 Christmas tree farms and three retail sales lots operated by the growers. The farms are located in Anne Arundel, Allegany, Baltimore, Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Prince George's, Talbot and Washington counties.

Also listed are complete road

directions to the farms, the hours and days of their operation, the type and sizes of the trees and related decorative material they produce and telephone numbers for each grower.

The director is a joint effort of the Maryland Christmas Tree Association and the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Division of Agricultural Development and Marketing.

Five growers are listed for the first time further broadening the geographical choice of farms: Garrett, Caroline, nearby West Virginia and two in the Baltimore-Washington metro areas: Brandywine and Annapolis.

If it would be easier for you to secure a copy of the directory by mail, send a postcard request to: "Christmas Trees", Maryland Department of Agriculture, Parole Plaza Office Building, Annapolis, Maryland 21401 by December 5th and one will be mailed to you.

Now is the Time

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genetic potential. If sires are chosen wisely, heifers should possess genetic potential superior to that of the present cows. They are the hope for upgrading the herd in the future.

Whether heifers will ever develop and produce to their potential depends largely on the care given to them when they are young. The proper care and management of dairy heifers is discussed in a new Penn State circular. For a copy of the circular, contact your Penn State Extension office. In Lancaster, our office is located in the Farm and Home center, 717/394-6851.

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