

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

[TM-98-00-3]

Notice of Meeting of the National Organic Standards Board

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announces a forthcoming meeting of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB).

DATES: March 16, 1998, at 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.; March 17, 1998, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; March 18, 1998, from 8:00 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and March 19, 1998, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for the NOSB.

PLACE: Doubletree Hotel Ontario Airport, 222 N. Vineyard, Ontario, California 91764. Phone: (909) 983-0909.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michael I. Hankin, Senior Marketing Specialist, Room 2510 South Building, U.S. Department of Agriculture, AMS, Transportation and Marketing, National Organic Program Staff, PO Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090-6456. Phone (202) 720-3252.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 2119 (7 U.S.C. 6518) of the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA), as amended (7 U.S.C. 6501 *et seq.*) requires the establishment of the NOSB. The purpose of the NOSB is to assist in the development of standards for substances to be used in organic production and to advise the Secretary on any other aspects of the implementation of OFPA. The NOSB met for the first time in Washington, D.C., in March 1992 and currently has six committees working on various aspects of the program. The committees are: Crops Standards; Processing,

Labeling and Packaging; Livestock Standards; Accreditation; Materials; and International Issues. In August 1994, the NOSB provided its initial recommendations for the National Organic Program (NOP) to the Secretary of Agriculture and since that time has submitted 30 addenda to the recommendations and reviewed more than 170 substances for inclusion on the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances. The last meeting of the NOSB was held in September 1996, in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Department of Agriculture (USDA) published its proposed rule for the NOP in the **Federal Register** (62 FR 65849) on December 16, 1997. An extension of the comment period on the proposed rule was published in the **Federal Register** (63 FR 6498-6499) on February 9, 1998. The comment period has been extended until April 30, 1998.

Purpose and Agenda

The main purposes of this meeting are to provide an opportunity for the NOSB to listen to comments from interested persons regarding the proposed rule for the NOP, for the NOSB to review its Committee reports on the proposed rule, and for the NOSB to prepare comments on the proposed rule to be submitted to USDA. Minutes of the NOSB meeting, including minutes of oral presentations to the NOSB, will be included in the public record of comments for the proposed rule.

A final agenda for this meeting will be available on March 2, 1998. Persons requesting copies of the final agenda should contact Ms. Karen Thomas at the above address or phone (202) 720-3252.

Type of Meeting

All meetings will be open to the public. Individuals and organizations wishing to provide oral presentations to the NOSB on issues related to the proposed rule should forward the request to Ms. Karen Thomas at the above address or by FAX to (202) 690-3924 by March 10, 1998, in order to be scheduled. The NOSB has scheduled time for public input on March 16, 1998, beginning at 1 p.m. and continuing until 5 p.m. While persons wishing to make a presentation may sign up at the door, advance registration will ensure an opportunity to speak during the allotted time period and will help the NOSB better manage the meeting and accomplish the agenda. It

is our intention to give each individual or organization approximately 5 minutes to present orally their views on the key issues of concern. All persons making an oral presentation are asked also to provide their views in writing. Such written submissions may of course supplement the oral presentation with additional material. Attendees who do not wish to make an oral presentation are invited to submit written comments to the NOSB at this meeting. Those persons submitting written comments should provide 20 copies to the NOSB. All such comments will be included in the minutes of the meeting and placed in the rulemaking record.

Dated: February 9, 1998.

Eileen S. Stommes,

Deputy Administrator, Transportation and Marketing.

[FR Doc. 98-3868 Filed 2-13-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Commodity Credit Corporation

Announcement of the Market Access Program for FY 1998

AGENCY: Commodity Credit Corporation, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the availability of funds for the Fiscal Year 1998 Market Access Program (MAP).

DATES: All applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Savings Time, April 20, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Marketing Operations Staff, Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 1042, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250, (202) 720-4327.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Introduction

The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) announces that applications are being accepted for participation in the Fiscal Year 1998 MAP. The MAP is designed to encourage the development, maintenance, and expansion of commercial export markets for U.S. agricultural commodities and products. Cost-share assistance is provided to eligible trade organizations to implement approved market

development programs. Financial assistance under the MAP will be made available on a competitive basis and applications will be reviewed against the evaluation criteria contained herein. The MAP is administered by personnel of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

Under the MAP, CCC enters into agreements with eligible participants to share the costs of certain overseas marketing and promotion activities. MAP participants may receive assistance for either generic or brand promotion activities. The MAP generally operates on a reimbursement basis.

Authority

The MAP is authorized under section 203 of the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978, as amended, and MAP regulations are set forth in 7 CFR part 1485.

Eligible Applicants

To participate in the MAP, an applicant must be: A nonprofit U.S. agricultural trade organization, a nonprofit state regional trade group (i.e., an association of State Departments of Agriculture), a U.S. agricultural cooperative, a State agency, or a small-sized U.S. commercial entity (other than a cooperative or producer association).

Available Funds

\$90 million of cost-share assistance may be obligated under the MAP announcement to eligible applicants.

Application Process

The FAS administers various agricultural export assistance programs, including the MAP, the Foreign Market Development Cooperator (Cooperator) Program, Cochran Fellowships, the Emerging Markets Program, Section 108, and several Export Credit Guarantee programs. Until now, organizations interested in receiving assistance under any of these FAS-administered programs were asked to submit their requests at varying times throughout the year. In an effort to facilitate the strategic planning process of MAP applicant organizations, as well as that of the Federal government, FAS has unified and simplified the application process for its agricultural export assistance programs.

Beginning with this announcement, organizations which are interested in applying for MAP funds will have the opportunity to incorporate multiple requests for assistance into a single Unified Export Strategy (UES) proposal. The suggested UES format permits the submissions of a consolidated and strategically coordinated proposal

including not only MAP applications, but also requests for assistance under virtually all other FAS marketing programs, financial assistance programs, and market access programs. The suggested UES framework encourages applicants to examine the constraints or barriers to trade they face, identify activities which would help overcome such impediments, consider the entire pool of complementary marketing tools and program resources, and establish realistic export goals.

The UES handbook, including the suggested format, instructions, and a sample proposal, may be obtained in a paper copy or on a diskette by contacting the Marketing Operations Staff at (202) 720-4327, or it can be downloaded from the FAS Home Page at the following URL address: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/agexport/ues/unified.html>.

In order to be considered for the MAP, an application must contain the information required by the MAP regulations set forth in 7 CFR 1485. Incomplete applications and applications that do not otherwise conform to this announcement will not be accepted for review. Paper applications must be signed and submitted, via hand delivery or U.S. mail, in triplicate form (an original and two copies); electronic applications can be submitted via electronic mail, facsimile, or on a diskette. Anyone choosing to submit an application electronically must also submit, via hand delivery or U.S. mail, an original signed certification statement as included in the UES handbook. Any organization which is not interested in applying for the MAP but would like to request assistance through one of the other programs mentioned should contact the Marketing Operations Staff at (202) 720-4327.

Review Process and Allocation Criteria

FAS allocates funds in a manner that effectively supports the strategic decision-making initiatives of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) 1993. In deciding whether a proposed project will contribute to the effective creation, expansion, or maintenance of foreign markets, FAS seeks to identify a clear, long-term agricultural trade strategy by market or product and a program effectiveness time line against which results can be measured at specific intervals using quantifiable product or country goals. These performance indicators are part of FAS' resource allocation strategy to fund applicants which can demonstrate performance based on a long-term strategic plan, consistent with the

strategic objectives of the United States Department of Agriculture, and address the performance measurement objectives of the GPRA.

Following is a description of the CCC process for reviewing applications and the criteria for allocating available funds.

(1) Phase I—Sufficiency Committee Review

Applications received by the closing date will be reviewed by FAS to determine the eligibility of the applicants and the completeness of the applications. These requirements appear at § 1485.12 and § 1485.13 of the MAP regulations.

(2) Phase II—FAS Divisional Review

Applications which meet the application procedures will then be further evaluated by the applicable FAS Commodity Division. The Divisions will recommend funding levels for each applicant based on a review of the applications against the criteria listed in § 1485.14 of the MAP regulations. The purpose of this review is to identify meritorious proposals and to suggest an appropriate funding level for each application based upon these criteria.

(3) Phase III—Competitive Review

Meritorious applications will then be passed on to the office of the Deputy Administrator, Commodity and Marketing Programs, for the purpose of allocating available funds among the applicants. Applications which pass the Divisional Review will compete for funds on the basis of the following evaluation criteria (the number in parentheses represents a percentage weight factor):

(a) Applicant's Contribution Level (40)

- The applicant's 4-year average share (1995–98) of all contributions (cash and goods and services provided by U.S. entities in support of overseas marketing and promotion activities may be considered in the allocation process and therefore should be reported separately from the applicant's contributions) compared to

- The applicant's 4-year average share (1995–98) of the funding level for all MAP participants.

(b) Past Performance (30)

- The 3-year average share (1995–97) of the value of exports promoted by the applicant compared to

- The applicant's 2-year average share (1996–97) of the funding level for all MAP applicants plus, for those groups participating in the Cooperator program, the 2-year average share (1997–98) of

Cooperator marketing plan budgets and the 2-year share (1996-97) of foreign overhead provided for co-location within a U.S. agricultural office;

(c) Projected Export Goals (15)

- The total dollar value of projected exports promoted by the applicant for 1998 compared to
- The applicant's requested funding level;

(d) Accuracy of Past Projections (15)

- Actual exports for 1996 as reported in the 1998 MAP application compared to
- Past projections of exports for 1996 as specified in the 1996 MAP application.

The Commodity Divisions' recommended program levels for each applicant are converted to a percent of the total MAP funds available and multiplied by the total weight factor as described above to determine the amount of funds allocated to each applicant.

Closing Date for Applications

All applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Savings Time, April 20, 1998, at the following addresses:

Hand Delivery (including FedEx, DHL, etc.): U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Marketing Operations Staff, Room 4932-S, 14th and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-1042.

U.S. Postal Delivery: Marketing Operations Staff, STOP 1042, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-1042.

Electronic mail:
mosadmin@fas.usda.gov.

Facsimile: (202) 720-9361.

Lon Hatamiya,

Administrator, Foreign Agricultural Service, and Vice President, Commodity Credit Corporation.

[FR Doc. 98-3874 Filed 2-13-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-10-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Economic Research Service

Notice of Intent to Seek Approval to Collect Information

AGENCY: Economic Research Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub.L. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

regulations at 5 CFR part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), this notice announces the Economic Research Service's (ERS) intention to request approval for a new information collection on multifamily rental housing funded through USDA's Rural Rental Housing Program. This information will contribute to a better understanding of how USDA housing programs help to provide adequate and affordable rental housing for low-income residents in rural areas.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by April 23, 1998 to be assured of consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS: Contact Leslie Whitener, Food Assistance, Poverty, and Well-Being Branch, Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room S2079, 1800 M. St., NW, Washington, DC. 20036-5831, 202-694-5444.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Application for ERS collection of information on multifamily rental housing funded through USDA's Rural Rental Housing Program.

Type of Request: Approval to collect information on multifamily rental housing funded through USDA's Rural Rental Housing Program.

Abstract: The Economic Research Service has the responsibility to provide social and economic intelligence on changing rural housing needs in the United States to help assess the relationship between Federal housing assistance policies and rural development. Research activities focus on three major objectives: (1) Identification of trends in rural housing availability, affordability, and adequacy which underlie an understanding of rural housing needs; (2) assessment of the use and effectiveness of Federal housing assistance programs in rural areas, particularly as they relate to low-income residents; and (3) investigation of the potential effects of Federal policy changes on rural housing programs and housing needs in rural communities. Housing has a major influence on the quality of life of rural residents, and is an important focus of the Department's rural development efforts. Research findings are provided to public and private decision-makers for use in developing and evaluating policies and programs to insure that adequate and affordable housing is available to low-income and other rural residents.

USDA's Rural Rental Housing Section 515 Program provides affordable rental housing to very low-, low-, and moderate-income rural families; elderly residents; and persons with disabilities.

The Program employs a public-private partnership by providing loans to developers to construct or renovate modest-cost rental complexes and cooperative buildings in rural areas. These loans are direct, competitive mortgage loans made to individuals, partnerships, for-profit corporations, nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and others to provide affordable multifamily rental housing in rural areas. The long-term, low percentage loans provided by this Program allow the debt service on the property to be sufficiently low to support below market rents affordable to low-income tenants. Tenants pay basic rent or 30 percent of adjusted income, whichever is greater. Those living in substandard housing are given first priority for tenancy. Since 1963, the Program had funded construction of 515,000 units in 26,000 rental housing projects across the country. Appropriations for this Program total \$150 million in fiscal year 1998.

While the Department maintains a national account tracking system and a local project information system, information on the impact of the Rural Rental Housing Program on the community and on the tenants served by the Program is difficult to obtain on a national basis. The data collection effort proposed here will provide a unique information base by soliciting information from a sample of property managers who oversee multifamily rental housing financed by USDA's Rural Rental Housing Program. The survey will interview property managers to ascertain general housing conditions within their projects, neighborhood quality, access to services, and demographic, employment, and income information on tenants. This information will help to fill a serious gap in our understanding of the effects of rental housing programs on low-income rural residents and their communities, and will provide USDA and other policy makers with sound information to help evaluate current programs and develop more effective rural housing policies.

The Economic Research Service, working with Washington State University's Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, will conduct a telephone survey of property managers overseeing multifamily rental housing funded through USDA's Section 515 Program. Property managers to be interviewed will be selected from a simple random national sample of current property managers, taken from USDA's Rural Development administrative records. Survey data will be collected using Computer-Assisted