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United States
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Food Safety and Quality Service
Marketing Bulletin Number 70

245

Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Grading Services

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Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grading Services

Thanks to the highly efficient marketing system in the United States, fruits and vegetables can be grown where climate, soil, and geography are most suitable and delivered fresh and wholesome to consumers thousands of miles away.

If you're part of this far-flung system—a grower, shipper, processor, or receiver—or if you're an institutional feeder, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's official grading services can play a vital role in the smooth functioning of your business.

For sellers, there is assurance that products meet specific grade or contract requirements; for buyers, assurance that they are getting the quality they expect, regardless of whether the shipper is across town or across the country.

Grade Standards

As the basis for the grading services, USDA has developed official grade standards for fresh fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, peanuts, and related commodities. The grade standards describe the quality requirements for each grade of a commodity, giving the industry a common language for selling and buying.

USDA has established a policy to gradually phase in four uniform grade names—U.S. Fancy, U.S. No. 1, U.S. No. 2, and U.S. No. 3—to represent available levels of quality. Although the number of grades included in a standard may vary, two or three are usually enough to meet normal trading demands for most fruits and vegetables.

If your request for official grading is based on U.S. grade standards, the official certificate covering your shipment will show which USDA grade the product meets. If there are no U.S. grade standards for your product, or if you request

a quality or condition inspection based on a State grade or your own specifications, USDA graders can certify the product's quality or condition on that basis. These certificates are accepted as legal evidence in all Federal courts and in nearly all State courts.

Grading Services

The grading services are divided into two main categories—shipping point grading and terminal market grading. The bulk of grading is conducted at shipping point as the produce is being packed for shipment to market. A shipment of produce also may be graded at its destination to determine its current grade, either for the receiver's use in handling the lot or to settle questions which may arise between shipper and receiver.



To provide grading service nationwide, USDA maintains cooperative grading agreements with State Departments of Agriculture and other State agencies. Agreements are now in force in 48 States and Puerto Rico.

The grading service performed under these agreements is operated jointly by USDA's Food Safety and Quality Service (FSQS) and cooperating State agencies, and is known as the Federal-State Grading Service. FSQS establishes basic grading policies and procedures and furnishes overall direction.

Under these Federal-State agreements, Federally-licensed graders perform their work throughout the country at points of origin. Often, these shipping point graders work in the fields while a crop is being harvested.

USDA grader inspects grapes at shipping point.





In addition, Federal grading service is provided in 75 of the largest terminal markets in the country, with assistance from the cooperating State agencies in certain of these markets.

All grading is voluntary except in those areas where producers have adopted Federal or State marketing orders which establish minimum quality standards.

For Shippers

Shippers of fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, and related products can have their produce graded for quality and condition at shipping point. This establishes the quality of the commodities at time of shipment, for sales purposes or for verifying compliance with contract terms. The Federal-State Grading Service maintains seasonal or year-round offices in all major shipping areas.

Far left: Terminal market grading of cherries.

Left: Pressure testing determines the stage of ripeness in apples.



The pulp temperature of lettuce is taken as part of the grading process.

For Receivers

Receivers in terminal markets throughout the country can have shipments of produce graded for both quality and condition or for condition only. Many receivers use the grading service to determine whether or not a shipment meets contract terms at time of arrival, to help them decide the best use for a particular shipment, or as an aid in selling. Grading service on any shipment is available to anyone with a financial interest in the commodity.

Receivers, as a group, or as individuals, may enter into a special contract with USDA to have their entire volume of rail car and trucklot receipts graded. This special contract service will be granted only when the anticipated volume is large enough to cover grading costs and when sufficient grading staff is available.

For Institutional Buyers and Government Agencies

Federal, State, and local governments, airlines, hospitals, schools, hotels, and other large feeding establishments make extensive use of the Federal and Federal-State Grading Services.

The grading service will help institutional buyers draw up specifications—using U.S. grade standards wherever appropriate—to describe the quality of produce they need, and then inspect deliveries to assure that they fit the specifications. In the contract with suppliers, buyers can specify that all purchases must be certified by USDA.





For Processors

Processors can contract with the Federal-State Grading Service for inspection of raw commodity deliveries. Trained graders will then be stationed at the processor's receiving stations to evaluate the produce as it is delivered—either on the basis of U.S. grade standards or on specifications designed to fit the processor's particular needs. The official grading certificate can be used as an equitable basis for grower payments. Many processors also find the grading reports useful in determining the storage life of the produce, adjusting their processing to varying qualities and conditions, and deciding the best use for particular lots of product.

Continuous Inspection

A special type of service, known as continuous inspection, is also available to packers at shipping points and in terminal markets.

Pear ripeness is checked by manual pressure.

Continuous inspection means that one or more graders are assigned to your packing plant during the full time packing is conducted. The grader observes plant conditions and preparation and packing of the product. Graders make frequent quality checks on the commodity from the packing lines and examine samples of the packed products to determine whether they meet the U.S. grade or specification for which the commodity is being packed.

Under this service the grader also gives the packinghouse management oral and written reports on the quality and condition of the commodities being packed. On the basis of these reports, management can take immediate steps to correct problems before they become serious and thus protect the quality of the pack.

This service is offered only to packers whose packing plants and facilities meet rigid sanitary requirements and are suitable for proper handling and packing operation. To receive this service, the



plant and facilities must first be inspected by specially qualified USDA or Federal-State graders to determine compliance.

Quality Control Aids

USDA has developed a number of visual aids, color standards, and guides to assure that the grade standards mean the same thing in all parts of the country.

Among the aids used to guide graders in rating quality factors are handpainted plaster models depicting shape, color, and types of defects; special plastic and glass color comparators; color photographs, sketches, and booklets and charts illustrating types of defects and other factors.

Recently USDA initiated a program in which some visual aid materials are being made available for sale to the public. You can get details on available aids and the firms who manufacture them from the grading office nearest you.

Grapes are sized as part of the grading process.

How To Obtain Official Grading

For further information on grading services, contact Fruit and Vegetable Quality Division, Food Safety and Quality Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, or the appropriate Federal or Federal-State Grading Service office nearest you. The principal offices are listed below.

Federal Grading Offices at Terminal Markets

Contact the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grading, at terminal market where you want inspection

Albany, NY 12235

State Campus Bldg.
No. 8

Asheville, NC 28806

570 Brevard Road

Atlanta, GA 30050

Administration Bldg.
Room 205
State Farmers Market
Forest Park, GA

Augusta, ME 04330

State Office Bldg.

Baltimore, MD

Maryland Wholesale
Produce Market
Bldg. B. Unit 13
Jessup, MD 20794

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

12055 Airline Highway
Post Office Box 44184
Capitol Station

Belle Glade, FL 33430

U.S. Highway 441 North

Birmingham, AL 35203

726 Second Ave., North

Boston, MA 02149

Boston Market Terminal
Room 1
34 Market Street
Everett, MA 02149

Buffalo, NY 14206

176 Niagara Frontier
Food Terminal, Room 8

Caribou, ME 04736

251 Main St.

Charlotte, NC 28203

2201 Park Road

Charleston, W. VA 25334

Charleston Farmers Market

Chicago, IL 60607

610 S. Canal Street
Room 1160

Cincinnati, OH 45202

Federal Office Bldg.
Room 3034
550 Main Street

Cleveland, OH 44115

3800 Woodland Ave.

Columbia, SC 29201

Administration Bldg.
State Farmers Market

Columbus, OH 42315

710 State Office Bldg.

Dallas, TX 75201

910 S. Pearl Expressway
Room 214

Denver, CO 80203

1525 Sherman St.
Room 406

Detroit, MI 48209

Detroit Union Produce
Terminal, Room 82
7201 West Fort Street

Dover, DE 19901

State of Delaware
Dept. of Agriculture
South Dupont Highway

El Paso, TX 79901

724 E. Overland

Grand Rapids, MI 49426

5551 Marlin Avenue
Hudsonville, MI

Harrisburg, PA 17120

2301 N. Cameron St.
Room 312

Hartford, CT 06115

State Office Bldg.
Room G-3

Honolulu, HI 96814

1428 S. King Street

Houston, TX 77023

3100 Produce Row,
Room 14

Indianapolis, IN 46218

Terminal Office Bldg.
Rooms 4 & 5
4101 Massachusetts Ave.

Jacksonville, FL 32205

3333 Edgewood Ave., N.
Unit 46

Kansas City, MO 64106

U.S. Court House, Rm. 123
811 Grand Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90021

784 S. Central Ave.,
Room 266

Louisville, KY 40218

No. 1 Produce Terminal

Memphis, TN 38103

Federal Office Bldg.,
Room 444
167 N. Main Street

Miami, FL 33136

1350 N.W., 12th Ave.
Room 530

Mobile, AL 36601

Grain Inspection Office
Alabama State Docks

Monett, MO 65708

8th and Broadway

Montgomery, AL 36109

Richard Beard Bldg.
Room 200
1445 Federal Drive

Nashville, TN 37204

Ellington Agri. Center
Hogan Road

Newark, NJ 07102

Room 839, Federal Bldg.
970 Broad Street

New Orleans, LA 70113

5027 U.S. Postal
Service Bldg.
701 Loyola Ave.

New York, NY 10474

28-A Hunts Point Market
Bronx, NY 10474

Norfolk, VA 23502

3661 Virginia Beach Blvd.
Room 115

Oklahoma City, OK 73105

122 State Capitol Bldg.

Philadelphia, PA 19148

293 Produce Bldg.
3301 S. Galloway St.

Phoenix, AZ 85061

2901 W. Fairmount Ave.

Pittsburgh, PA 15222

832-A Federal Bldg.
1000 Liberty Ave.

Portland, OR 97214

606 S.E. 9th Street

Providence, RI 02903

Veterans Memorial Bldg.
Room 204
83 Park Street

Raleigh, NC 27611

350 State Agriculture Bldg.

Richmond, VA 23219

203 N. Governor St.,
Room 328

Riverhead, NY 11901

127 East Main St.

Roanoke, VA 24012

5223 Williamston Road, N.E.

Rochester, NY 14623

Genesee Valley Regional Market
900 Jefferson Rd.

Sacramento, CA 95814

1220 "N" St.,
Room A-262

St. Louis, MO 63102

Unit 1 Produce Row,
Room 202

St. Paul, MN 55155

670 State Office Bldg.

Salt Lake City, UT 84114

Laboratory Bldg.
State Capitol

San Antonio, TX 78207

244 Administration Bldg.
1500 S. Zarzamora St.

San Francisco, CA 94111

739 Appraisers Bldg.
630 Sansome Street

San Juan, PR 00623

Army Terminal Pier
Cantano, PR

Savannah, GA 31408

State Farmers Markets

Seattle, WA 98108

5507 Sixth Ave., S.

Shreveport, LA 71101

State Office Bldg.
Room 313
1237 Murphy Street

Springfield, IL 62706

Emmerson Bldg.
State Fairgrounds

Syracuse, NY 13208

2100 Park Street
Room 206-207

Tampa, FL 33680

Tampa Wholesale Produce
Market
Room 58
28th St. & E
Hillsborough Ave.

Trenton, NJ 08625

New Jersey Dept. of Agriculture
Division of Regulatory Service
John Fitch Plaza

Washington, DC 20250

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Fruit and Vegetable Quality
Division—Food Safety and
Quality Service

Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701

Penn Place, Room 2203
20 N. Pennsylvania Ave.

Youngstown, OH 44503

9 West Front Street
Room 223

**Headquarters For
Federal-State
Inspection Service*****Alabama**

Richard Beard Bldg.
Room 200
1445 Federal Drive
Montgomery, AL 36109

Arizona

2901 W. Fairmount Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 85061

Arkansas

122 State Capitol Bldg.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

California

1220 "N" Street
Room A-262
Sacramento, CA 95814

Colorado

1525 Sherman Street
Room 406
Denver, CO 80203

*Local offices are maintained in major shipping areas. Check your local telephone directory under Federal-State or State department of agriculture.

Connecticut

State Office Bldg.
Room G-3
Hartford, CT 06115

Delaware

State of Delaware
Department of Agriculture
South Dupont Highway
Dover, DE 19901

Florida

Florida Citrus Bldg.
550 Third Street, NW
Winter Haven, FL 33880

Georgia

Florida Citrus Bldg.
550 Third Street, NW
Winter Haven, FL 33880

Hawaii

1428 South King Street
Honolulu, HA 96814

Idaho

4696 Overland Road
Suite 576
Boise, ID 83705

Illinois

610 South Canal Street
room 1160
Chicago, IL 60607

Indiana

Terminal Office Bldg.
rooms 4 & 5
4101 Massachusetts Ave.
Indianapolis, IN 46218

Iowa

670 State Office Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Kansas

122 State Capitol Bldg.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Kentucky

No. 1 Produce Terminal
Louisville, KY 40218

Louisiana

12055 Airline Highway
P.O. Box 44184
Capital Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Maine

251 Main Street
Caribou, ME 04736

Maryland

State of Delaware
Department of Agriculture
South Dupont Highway
Dover, DE 19901

Massachusetts

Boston Market Terminal
Room 1
34 Market Street
Everett, MA 02149

Michigan

Lewis Cass Bldg.
300 South Walnut
Lansing, MI 48901

Minnesota

670 State Office Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Mississippi

12055 Airline Highway
P.O. Box 44184
Capital Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Missouri

122 State Capitol Bldg.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Montana

4696 Overland Road
Suite 576
Boise, ID 83705

Nevada

Laboratory Bldg.
State Capitol
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

New Hampshire

Boston Market Terminal
Room 1
34 Market Street
Everett, MA 02149

New York

Div. of Farm Prod. Serv.
Depart. of Agri. & Mdts.
State Campus Bldg. No. 8
Albany, NY 12235

New Jersey

Room 293 Produce Bldg.
3301 S. Galloway Street
Philadelphia, PA 19148

New Mexico

1301 West Expressway Ave.
Alamo, TX 78516

North Carolina

901 East Boulevard
Williamston, NC 27892

North Dakota

670 State Office Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Ohio

710 State Office Bldg.
550 Main Street
Columbus, OH 42315

Oklahoma

122 State Capitol Bldg.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Oregon

Agriculture Bldg.
Room 109
Salem, OR 97310

Pennsylvania

2301 North Cameron Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Puerto Rico

Army Terminal Pier
Catano, PR 00623

Rhode Island

Veterans Memorial Bldg.
Room 204
83 Park Street
Providence, RI 02903

South Carolina

Administration Bldg.
State Farmers Market
Columbia, SC 29201

South Dakota

670 State Office Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Tennessee

Ellington Agri. Center
Hogan Road
Nashville, TN 37204

Texas

1301 West Expressway Ave.
Alamo, TX 78516

Utah

Laboratory Bldg.
State Capitol
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

Vermont

Boston Market Terminal
Room 1
34 Market Street
Everett, MA 02149

Virginia

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture
FSQS
Fruit & Veg. Quality Div.
Washington, DC 20250

Washington

General Admin. Bldg.
Room 418
Olympia, WA 98504

West Virginia

U.S. Dept. of Agri.
FSQS
Fruit & Veg. Quality Div.
Washington, DC 20250

Wisconsin

610 South Canal Street
Room 1160
Chicago, IL 60607

Wyoming

1525 Sherman Street
Room 406
Denver, CO 80203

The Food Safety and Quality Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, or handicap.

This publication supersedes AMS-520, "Official Grade Standards and Inspection for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables."

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