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Crops
Program

Specialty
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Inspection
Division

United States Standards for Grades of Growers' Stock Strawberries for Manufacture

Effective September 6, 2016

This issue of the United States Standards for Grades of Growers' Stock Strawberries for Manufacture (81 FR 51297) supersedes the previous issue which has been in effect since June 1, 1935.

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
Specialty Crops 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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General
§51.4415 General.

- (a) These standards are intended for use only as a basis for determining the quality of strawberries as they are delivered by the growers to the manufacturing plant. The requirements of the standards are not applicable nor is it intended that they shall apply to strawberries which have been washed and graded for barreling or packaging for market.
- (b) Buying and selling on the basis of uniform standards encourages better production and better handling methods. The practice of paying a flat price for all strawberries which are accepted discriminates against the best growers. The grower should be paid a suitable premium for strawberries which will make a high quality manufactured product. Likewise the grower should be penalized for the delivery of low quality berries.
- (c) It should be understood at the outset that in the application of these standards the only sorting required of the grower is the removal of cull berries. The standards provide a basis for sampling lots as they are delivered by the growers.
- (d) There are two methods suggested for applying the standards as a measure of quality of growers deliveries. The manufacturer may contract with growers to pay a certain price per pound according to the actual percentage of U.S. No. 1 berries delivered, or at a certain price per pound for strawberries of each grade with the respective tolerances. In the first method the contract would disregard all tolerances and also U.S. No. 2, U.S. No. 3, and U.S. No. 4 grades.
- (e) To illustrate the first method of applying the standards, suppose the contract specifies that the manufacturer agrees to pay at the rate of 6 cents per pound according to the actual percentage of U.S. No. 1 berries delivered. The inspector takes a representative sample from a 300-pound lot of strawberries and finds that 93 percent of the berries, by weight, meet U.S. No. 1 requirements. Therefore, the lot would be settled for at the rate of 6 cents per pound for 93 percent of 300 pounds (279 pounds) or \$16.74 for the 300-pound lot. Similarly a 300-pound lot having 85 percent of U.S. No. 1 berries would be settled for at the rate of 6 cents per pound for 85 percent of 300 pounds (255 pounds) or \$15.30 for the 300-pound lot.
- (f) To illustrate the second method, suppose the contract specified that the manufacturer agrees to pay 6 cents per pound for U.S. No. 1 berries, 5 cents per pound for U.S. No. 2 berries, 4-1/2 cents per pound for U.S. No. 3 berries, and 4 cents per pound for U.S. No. 4 berries. The inspector takes a representative sample from a 300-pound lot of strawberries and finds that 96 percent of the berries, by weight, meet U.S. No. 1 requirements. Since a tolerance of 5 percent is allowed for this grade such a lot would grade U.S. No. 1 and would be paid for

at the rate of 6 cents per pound. Therefore, the 300-pound lot would bring \$18.

- (g) If the inspector found the lot to contain 11 percent defective berries it would grade U.S. No. 3 and would be paid for at the rate of 4-1/2 cents per pound. In this case the 300-pound lot would bring \$13.50.
- (h) The foregoing prices are used for illustrative purposes only.
- (i) The application of these standards requires the services of private or official inspectors to determine and report the grade of each lot of strawberries delivered to the factory. Such inspectors must be capable, efficient, and above all they must be absolutely neutral.

Grades

§51.4416 U.S. No. 1.

“**U.S. No. 1**” consists of strawberries of one variety which are well colored, free from mold and decay and from soft, badly crushed or split, dried or undeveloped berries and from damage caused by dirt or other foreign matter, hail, sunscald, birds, disease, insects, mechanical or other means. Unless otherwise specified, the minimum size shall be not less than 5/8 inch in diameter and the caps shall be entirely removed.

- (a) In order to allow for variations incident to proper handling, not more than 5 percent, by weight, of the strawberries in any lot may be below the requirements of this grade.

§51.4417 U.S. No. 2.

“**U.S. No. 2**” consists of strawberries which meet all the requirements of U.S. No. 1 grade except that a tolerance of 10 percent, by weight, of the strawberries in any lot shall be permitted for grade defects.

§51.4418 U.S. No. 3.

“**U.S. No. 3**” consists of strawberries which meet all the requirements of U.S. No. 1 grade except that a tolerance of 15 percent, by weight, of the strawberries in any lot shall be permitted for grade defects.

§51.4419 U.S. No. 4.

“**U.S. No. 4**” consists of strawberries which meet all the requirements of U.S. No. 1 grade except that a tolerance of 20 percent, by weight, of the strawberries in any lot shall be permitted for grade defects.

Reserved

§51.4420 Reserved.

Definitions

§51.4421 Well colored.

“**Well colored**” means that at least four-fifths of the surface of the berry is covered with red or pink color.

§51.4422 Soft.

“**Soft**” means that more than one-third of the volume of the whole berry is mushy or will be removed in the ordinary process of washing.

§51.4423 Dried.

“**Dried**” means appreciably lacking in juice. Dried berries are excessively seedy and often shriveled.

§51.4424 Undeveloped.

“**Undeveloped**” means lack of development due to frost or insect injury, lack of pollination, or other means which causes the berry to be badly misshapen.

§51.4425 Damage.

“**Damage**” means any defect, or any combination of defects, which materially detracts from the appearance, or the edible quality of the berry for manufacturing purposes. A berry showing dirt which will not wash off in the ordinary process of washing shall be considered as damaged.

§51.4426 Diameter.

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