

Sent: Friday, August 11, 2006 10:10 AM

To: DocketClerk, FPB

Subject: Standards for grades of Summer Squash

To whom it may concern,

I have been in the produce business for 22 years and am in favor of the standards on all products to be reviewed, but I believe to try to put size restrictions on Summer Squash will be a detriment to the growing community. The foundation for that previous statement is based on the fact that, with the different growth rates from one day to the next on squashes, as well as from one region to the other, prohibits a fixed sizing requirement at the packaging point. Also, the different varietal characteristics in each type could stop what would work as a "fancy" being packed for one area and put undue strain on the "medium" market because a particular variety of squash does not have the genetics to meet size criteria. Another factor that influences the ability to grow squash to meet proposed sizing requirements are that some regions can only successfully grow certain seed varieties and with the characteristics of some varieties, size restrictions could make it prohibitive for some areas to produce Summer Squash all together. Summer Squash is not on a similar harvest schedule such as Bell Pepper or Cucumbers. Squash must be harvested every day and if the grower misses 6-8 hours in a field due to other tasks taking precedence, they can usually pack what is called a heavy "fancy". Under a strict sizing guideline, that could translate to a complete "medium" pack out for that particular days harvest. It would also create a similar disruption in the "medium" grade as well. In the interest of all parties involved the standard set by the customer should be the guideline for product shipped on orders. I understand when the Department of Agriculture collects data and information to implement changes, they apply facts from every available source. I urge you to contact the prominent producers of Summer Squash in the growing community from several different regions to get the opinions right from the people having to meet new standards. I represent farms in Georgia and Florida that you can contact at any time. I believe contacting the growers and packers of Summer Squash could be the only way to see if, realistically, we can apply fixed size requirements to the Summer Squash varieties. As I said earlier in this e-mail, I am in favor of the standards being reviewed. I also feel that if we apply requirements that, in effect, become restrictions, it is not what our end result would be meant to accomplish. Thank you and a reply will be graciously anticipated.

Sincerely,

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