

§ 4908. Assessment procedures**(a) Persons responsible for remittance of assessments; recordkeeping; equal and unitary assessments**

(1) Each handler required to pay assessments under a plan, as provided for under section 4906(f) of this title, shall be responsible for payment to the Board, as it may direct, of the assessments. A handler also shall collect from any producer, or shall deduct from the proceeds paid to any producer, on whose watermelons a producer assessment is made, the assessments required to be paid by the producer. The handler shall remit producer assessments to the Board as the Board directs. Such handler shall maintain a separate record with respect to each producer for whom watermelons were handled. Such records shall indicate the total quantity of watermelons handled by the handler, including those handled for producers and for the handler, the total quantity of watermelons handled by the handler that are included under the terms of the plan, as well as those that are exempt under the plan, and such other information as may be prescribed by the Board. To facilitate the collection and payment of assessments, the Board may designate different handlers or classes of handlers to recognize differences in marketing practices or procedures used in any State or area. The handler shall be assessed an equal amount as the producer. No more than one assessment on a producer nor more than one assessment on a handler shall be made on any watermelons.

(2)(A) If importers are subject to the plan, each importer required to pay assessments under the plan shall be responsible for payment of the assessment to the Board, as the Board may direct.

(B) The assessment on imported watermelons shall be equal to the combined rate for domestic producers and handlers and shall be paid by the importer to the Board at the time of the entry of the watermelons into the United States.

(C) Each importer required to pay assessments under the plan shall maintain a separate record that includes a record of—

- (i) the total quantity of watermelons imported into the United States that are included under the terms of the plan;
- (ii) the total quantity of watermelons that are exempt from the plan; and
- (iii) such other information as may be prescribed by the Board.

(D) No more than 1 assessment shall be made on any imported watermelon.

(b) Inspection of records

Handlers and importers responsible for payment of assessments under subsection (a) shall maintain and make available for inspection by the Secretary such books and records as required by the plan and file reports at the times, in the manner, and having the content prescribed by the plan, to the end that information and data shall be made available to the Board and to the Secretary that is appropriate or necessary to the effectuation, administration, or enforcement of this chapter or of any plan or regulation issued under this chapter.

(c) Confidentiality of information; disclosure authority; general or violation statements; penalties; removal from office

All information obtained under subsections (a) and (b) shall be kept confidential by all officers and employees of the Department of Agriculture and of the Board, and only such information so furnished or acquired as the Secretary deems relevant shall be disclosed by them, and then only in a suit or administrative hearing brought at the direction, or on the request, of the Secretary, or to which the Secretary or any officer of the United States is a party, and involving the plan with reference to which the information to be disclosed was furnished or acquired. Nothing in this subsection shall be deemed to prohibit—

(1) the issuance of general statements based on the reports of a number of handlers or importers subject to a plan if such statements do not identify the information furnished by any person; or

(2) the publication by direction of the Secretary of the name of any person violating any plan together with a statement of the particular provisions of the plan violated by such person.

Any such officer or employee violating the provisions of this subsection shall be subject to a fine of not more than \$1,000 or imprisonment for not more than one year, or both, and shall be removed from office.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XVI, §1649, Dec. 23, 1985, 99 Stat. 1626; Pub. L. 103-189, §8(g), Dec. 14, 1993, 107 Stat. 2262.)

AMENDMENTS

1993—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 103-189, §8(g)(1), designated existing provisions as par. (1) and added par. (2).

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 103-189, §8(g)(2), inserted “and importers” after “Handlers”.

Subsec. (c)(1). Pub. L. 103-189, §8(g)(3), inserted “or importers” after “handlers”.

§ 4909. Petition and review

(a) Any person subject to a plan may file a written petition with the Secretary, stating that the plan or any provision of the plan, or any obligation imposed in connection therewith, is not in accordance with law and praying for a modification thereof or to be exempted therefrom. The person shall be given an opportunity for a hearing on the petition, in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary. After the hearing, the Secretary shall make a ruling on the petition, which shall be final if in accordance with the law.

(b) The district courts of the United States in any district in which the person is an inhabitant, or in which the person's principal place of business is located, are hereby vested with jurisdiction to review such ruling, provided that a complaint for that purpose is filed within twenty days from the date of the entry of the ruling. Service of process in such proceedings may be had on the Secretary by delivering to the Secretary a copy of the complaint. If the court determines that the ruling is not in accordance with law, it shall remand the proceedings to the Secretary with directions either to (1) make