

Contacts

To apply for services or obtain additional information, contact the Processed Products Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 0709-S, Stop 0247, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0247. Telephone: (202) 720-4693. Fax: (202) 690-1087. E-mail: Terry.Bane@usda.gov. Internet: www.ams.usda.gov/fv/ppb.html.

Also, contact one of the Processed Products Branch offices listed below.

Eastern Regional Office:

Glen Ellyn, IL	(630) 790-6937
College Park, GA	(770) 909-6780
Guaynabo, PR	(787) 783-2230
Hunt Valley, MD	(410) 584-9008
North Brunswick, NJ	(732) 545-0939
Portland, ME	(207) 772-1588
Richmond, VA	(804) 786-0930
Ripon, WI	(920) 748-2287
South Bend, IN	(574) 287-5407
Weslaco, TX	(956) 514-5562
Winter Haven, FL	(863) 294-7416

Western Regional Office:

Fresno, CA	(559) 487-5891
Covina, CA	(626) 732-9178
Fresno, CA	(559) 487-5210
Honolulu, HI	(808) 832-0713
Stockton, CA	(209) 946-6301
Yakima, WA	(509) 575-5869



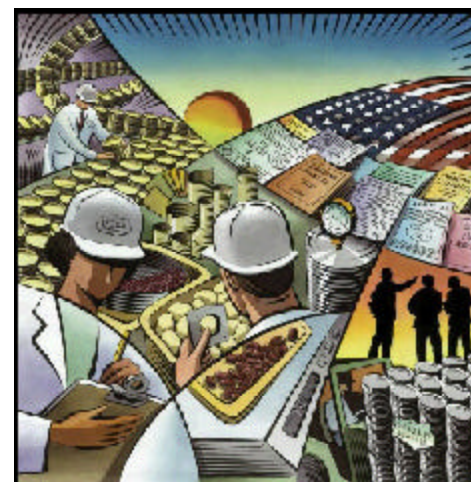
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To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Processed Products Grading and Certification



Visit our Internet site at:
www.ams.usda.gov/fv/ppb.html

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
Fruit and Vegetable Programs
Processed Products Branch**

Program Information

AMS Fruit and Vegetable Programs's Processed Products Branch (PPB) offers a broad range of product certification and acceptance services for canned, frozen, and dehydrated fruits, vegetables, and related products. These services can be tailored to meet specific requirements and can include quality assurance design and monitoring as well as expert product grading and certification. Evaluations can be based on official U.S. grade standards or on processor or buyer quality and condition requirements. These user fee services are available upon request to anyone who has a financial interest in these commodities.

For processors, the service can check overall production quality augmenting a processor's quality control programs. We can also provide an impartial evaluation of final product quality. Several approved grade and inspection marks can be included on the processor's label. Processors must meet certain contract requirements before this service is implemented and the use of approved grade marks can be authorized.

For buyers, the service can be used to determine if final products or production operations meet the buyer's requirements. This can be done by officially sampling and grading the final product and issuing an inspection certificate recognized as prima facie evidence in U.S. courts, or by monitoring and evaluating the supplier's quality assurance and production operations. If a buyer wishes, these services can be tied to a contract requirement calling for the product label to bear official U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grade and inspection marks.

Processed fruit and vegetable products may be inspected or graded under various grading programs tailored to fit most needs. USDA also provides services that include:

Program Information (Cont'd)

- inspection of processing plants for compliance with government or private buyer sanitation requirements;
- checking warehouse lots for condition of food containers and wholesomeness of product;
- case stamping to provide lot identity;
- checkloading to verify identity and quantity; and
- inspection of military rations.

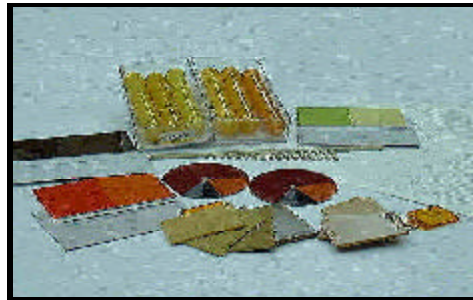
PPB's audit-based programs include:

- Plant Surveys which consist of an on-site evaluation of a food processing facility to assess the facility's compliance with current Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP's);
- Plant Systems Audit - unbiased, independent third-party audits of processing facilities; and
- Qualified Through Verification (QTV) - HACCP-based audits currently designed for the fresh-cut produce industry.

Visual Aids/Other Services

Visual aids and inspection materials are available to the industry to promote uniformity of grading. In addition, PPB personnel can assist buyers and sellers in the development of product specifications to better serve the needs of the industry.

PPB inspectors also are available to make presentations on grading and related activities and to provide grading demonstrations.



Grade Marks

Several grade and inspection marks have been established by USDA to help consumers make informed food selections. Processors and buyers may assist the consumer by using one or more of these official marks. The type of inspection conducted and the grade of a product determine the type of shield, mark, or other approved identification that can be used.

USDA Standards

To provide uniformity in grading, USDA has developed more than 150 official standards for processed fruits, vegetables, and related products. These standards establish grades for a variety of products based on quality and analytical factors that are valued in the marketplace, such as flavor, color, maturity, sugar and acid content, size, defects, appearance, etc.



Because of differences between commodities, each standard includes a combination of different factors in determining a particular grade. The higher the grade, the higher the quality will be for the particular product. A list and description of quality standards for processed fruits and vegetables can be found on the Internet at www.ams.usda.gov/standards/standpfv.htm.