



Research and Promotion

Research and Promotion Branch
Fruit and Vegetable Programs
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Program Information

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) oversees several national research and promotion programs for individual agricultural commodities. These self-help programs are designed to maintain and expand domestic and foreign markets for agricultural commodities.

The programs are administered by boards, usually composed of producers, handlers, processors, and/or importers, who are appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture from industry nominations.

The programs are requested by industry and usually do not take effect until they are approved in a national referendum by those who would be covered by the program. Designated segments of the industry pay assessments to the board which uses the funds to administer the program as well as to reimburse USDA for the cost of its oversight.

Currently, there are nine promotion programs for fruits, vegetables, and specialty crops:

- cultivated blueberries
- Hass avocados
- honey
- mangos
- mushrooms
- peanuts
- popcorn
- potatoes
- watermelons

Highbush Blueberries: Under the program, assessments are collected by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council on cultivated blueberries grown in and imported into the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Producers and importers pay an annual assessment of \$12 per ton, which generates approximately \$1 million annually to conduct generic consumer and industrial market development activities in the United States and abroad. The Council consists of 13 members and their alternates.

Hass Avocados: Approved in September 2002, the Hass avocado program works to increase U.S. consumption of Hass avocados. A 12-member board, elected during the inaugural meeting on March 18, 2003, administers the program under USDA supervision. The program covers fresh domestic and imported Hass and Lamb Hass avocados. Exports of domestic product are exempt from assessments. The initial assessment rate is 2.5 cents per pound, gathering nearly \$9.8 million annually. Assessment collections began on January 2, 2003.

Honey: Under the honey program, domestic producers and importers pay to the National Honey Board an assessment of 1 cent per pound of honey produced or imported. The board uses these funds, which total about \$3 million annually, to conduct research and promotion projects in the United States and selected foreign countries. Approximately 3,300 producers and 350 importers pay assessments under the program. The board consists of seven producers, two handlers, two importers, one officer of a marketing cooperative, and their alternates.

Mangos: In November 2003, first handlers and importers of fresh mangos approved a national promotion program. It will be administered locally by a board of 20 members. USDA will begin the nomination process after the Mango Research, Promotion, and Information Order becomes effective in November 2004. First handlers and importers of mangos will pay an initial assessment of 0.5 cents per pound on all handled and imported fresh mangos beginning January 2005.

Mushrooms: Producers and importers who produce or import, on average, over 500,000 pounds of mushrooms for the fresh market annually pay an assessment of 0.25 cent per pound to the Mushroom Council. With an annual income of approximately \$2 million, the council conducts consumer, food service, and retail promotions in the United States. Nearly 150 producers and 5 importers pay assessments under the program. The council consists of nine producer members.



Popcorn: Processors of more than 4 million pounds of popcorn per year pay an assessment rate of 6 cents per hundredweight to the Popcorn Board. Assessment income totals about \$500,000 annually. In 2000, the board also received about \$370,000 from USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service to promote popcorn in foreign countries. Thirty-five processors pay assessments under the program. The board, which began operating in 1998, is composed of nine processors.

Peanuts: Peanut producers pay to the National Peanut Board an assessment of 1 percent of the price paid for all farmers' stock peanuts sold. The program generates approximately \$10 million annually. The board, which consists of 10 producer members and their alternates, conducts promotion and research projects in the United States and abroad.



Potatoes: The National Potato Promotion Board collects 2 cents per hundredweight on all Irish potatoes handled in the United States. The board's annual assessment income is about \$8 million, which is paid by producers of 5 or more acres of potatoes and importers of potatoes and potato products. The board, which has been in operation since 1972, promotes potatoes and potato products in the United States and in the Far East, Central America, and South America. The board is composed of 102 producers, 4 importers, and 1 public member.

Watermelons: Watermelon producers with 10 acres or more, importers of 150,000 pounds or more, and handlers pay assessments to the National Watermelon Promotion Board. Producers and handlers each pay 2 cents per cwt., and importers pay 4 cents per cwt. The board uses the \$1.3 million it collects to conduct production research, and to promote watermelons to consumers and retail food service operations.



Contacts

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