

**Finding of No Significant Impact
on the
Proposed Rule for Mexican Hass Avocado
Import Program Expansion
Environmental Assessment, October 2001**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that assesses potential environmental impacts of a proposal to amend the regulations governing the importations of fruits and vegetables. This is a proposal for expansion of the distribution area and shipping season of fresh Hass avocado fruit grown in Michoacan, Mexico, to be imported into certain areas of the United States subject to certain conditions. The EA, incorporated by reference in this document, is available from:

Phytosanitary Issues Management
Plant Protection and Quarantine
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
4700 River Road, Unit 140
Riverdale, Maryland 20737-1236

The initial EA analyzed three alternatives: (1) the proposed regulation change to add an additional 12 States to the geographical distribution area and extend the shipping season by 2 months to include March and April, (2) no action, and (3) proposed regulation change that would allow for year-round importation to all 50 States and the District of Columbia.. As a result of the public comment process on the initial EA, APHIS considered a recommended and reasonable fourth alternative: a proposed regulation change to add an additional 12 States and extend the revised shipping season from October 15 to April 15. In response to the comments received and considering the alternatives, APHIS has determined that the fourth alternative is its preferred alternative in that it further enhances its abilities to regulate and exclude injurious plant pests from the United States.

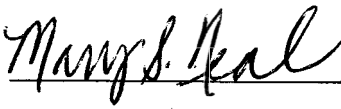
The analysis of this EA finds that there would be no significant impact of this action based upon the results of the 2001 Information Memo for the Record, the "Risk Management Analysis: A Systems Approach for Mexican Avocado, May 1995," and the "Importation of Avocado Fruit (*Persea americana*) from Mexico: Supplemental Pest Risk Assessment, May 1995," and the likely small size of any treatment area in the unlikely event that an infestation occurs. Any analysis of possible actions against exotic pests would be extremely speculative at this time and would not serve any useful purpose. In the unlikely event that a plant pest becomes established somewhere in the United States as a result of Hass avocados imported from Michoacan, Mexico, and actions are required of APHIS, an environmental analysis will be conducted to look at the site-specific details necessary to perform a meaningful analysis.

The analysis in the EA has considered the impact of the proposal on federally listed endangered and threatened species, according to the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and has determined that the proposal will have no adverse effect on endangered and threatened species.

The analysis in this EA has considered Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. The implementation of this proposal will not result in disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on any minority populations and low-income populations.

The analysis has also considered Executive Order 13045, Protection of Children From Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks. The implementation of the proposal will not present any risks to the health or safety of children.

Therefore, I find that the potential risk to the quality of the environment from the proposed amendment, if adopted, is insignificant.

for 

Richard L. Dunkle
Deputy Administrator
Plant Protection and Quarantine
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Date 10/17/01