

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

[Doc. No. AMS–SC–26–1849]

Christmas Tree Promotion, Research, and Information Order; Continuance Referendum

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notification of referendum.

SUMMARY: This notice directs that a referendum be conducted among eligible producers and importers of Christmas trees to determine whether they favor continuance of the Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) regulations regarding the national Christmas tree research and promotion program.

DATES: This referendum will be conducted by express mail and electronic ballot from October 1, 2026, through October 16, 2026. Ballots delivered to AMS via express mail or electronic ballot must show proof of delivery by no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on October 16, 2026. Eligible persons will receive a ballot via express mail and may cast it either through express mail or electronic ballot. To be eligible to vote, domestic producers and importers must have produced or imported 500 or more Christmas trees from September 1, 2025, through March 15, 2026, and must be subject to assessment under the Christmas Tree Promotion, Research, and Information Order (Order).

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Order may be obtained from: Referendum Agent, Market Development Division, Specialty Crops Program, AMS, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 1406–S, Stop 0244, Washington, DC 20250–0244; via telephone: (202) 720–8085; or by contacting George Webster via electronic mail: George.Webster@usda.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

George Webster, Marketing Specialist, or Alexandra Caryl, Branch Chief, Mid-Atlantic Region Branch, Market Development Division, Specialty Crops Program; telephone: (202) 720–8085; email: George.Webster@usda.gov or Alexandra.Caryl@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to the Commodity Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 1996 (7 U.S.C. 7411–7425) (the Act), it is hereby directed that a referendum be conducted to ascertain whether continuance of the Christmas Tree Promotion, Research, and Information Order (the Order) (7 CFR part 1214) is favored by a majority of eligible domestic producers and importers covered under the program.

The representative period for establishing voter eligibility is September 1, 2025, through March 15, 2026. Producers who domestically produced 500 or more Christmas trees and importers who imported 500 or more Christmas trees into the United States during the representative period are eligible to vote. Persons who received an exemption from assessments pursuant to § 1214.53 for the entire representative period are ineligible to vote. The referendum will be conducted by express mail and electronic ballot from October 1, 2026, through October 16, 2026. Further details will be provided in the ballot instructions.

Section 518 of the Act (7 U.S.C. 7417) authorizes continuance referenda. Under § 1214.81(b) of the Order, USDA must conduct a referendum every seven years, at the request of the Board established in the Order, when 10 percent or more of the number of persons eligible to vote in a referendum, or at any time as determined by the Secretary. The program's last continuance referendum was conducted from May 22 through June 2, 2026, to comply with the Order. In that vote, 49.83% of voters supported its continuation. However, the voting period included fewer business days than the standard timeframe, and AMS received numerous late ballots which, under a standard voting window, may have been counted and potentially changed the outcome. Given these circumstances, pursuant to section 518(d) of the Act, AMS will conduct an additional referendum to determine the

industry's support for continuation or termination.

USDA would continue the Order if it is favored by a majority of eligible domestic producers and importers voting in the referendum. If not favored, USDA would comply with the suspension and termination procedures at § 1214.82 and conduct appropriate rulemaking in accordance with the Order.

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the referendum ballot has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and assigned OMB No. 0581–0268. Approximately 1,200 persons will be eligible to vote in the referendum. It will take an average of 15 minutes for each voter to read the voting instructions and complete the referendum ballot.

Referendum Order

George Webster, Marketing Specialist, and Alexandra Caryl, Branch Chief, Mid-Atlantic Region Branch, Market Development Division, SCP, AMS, USDA, Stop 0244, Room 1406–S, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250–0244, are designated as the referendum agents to conduct this referendum. The referendum procedures at §§ 1214.100 through 1214.108 of the Order, which were issued pursuant to the Act, shall be used to conduct the referendum.

The referendum agents will mail ballots and voting instructions, including how to vote electronically, to all known, eligible domestic producers and importers prior to the first day of the voting period. Any eligible domestic producer or importer who does not receive a ballot should contact a referendum agent no later than three days before the end of the voting period. Ballots delivered to AMS via express mail or electronic ballot must show proof of delivery by no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on October 16, 2026, to be included in the vote tabulation.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 7411–7425; 7 U.S.C. 7401.

Erin Morris,

Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service.

[FR Doc. 2026–18059 Filed 9–2–26; 8:45 am]

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