



Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 1218

[Doc. No. AMS-SC-26-0001]

Blueberry Promotion, Research, and Information Order; Continuance Referendum

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service.

ACTION: Notification of referendum.

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

DATES: This referendum will be conducted by express mail and electronic ballot from July 13, 2026, through July 24, 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 July 24, 2026, to be included in the vote tabulation. Eligible persons will receive a ballot through the mail and may cast it either through express mail or electronic ballot. To be eligible to vote, blueberry producers and importers must have produced or imported 2,000 pounds or more of highbush blueberries during January 1 through December 31, 2025, and must currently be subject to assessment under the Blueberry Promotion, Research, and Information Order (Order).

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Blueberry Promotion, Research, and Information Order (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; by telephone: (202) 720-8085; or by contacting Jeanette Palmer at (202) 720-5976 or via electronic mail at Jeanette.Palmer@usda.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jeanette Palmer, Marketing Specialist, or Alexandra Caryl, Branch Chief, mid-Atlantic Region Branch, Market Development Division, Specialty Crops Program; telephone: (202) 720-5976; or electronic mail: Jeanette.Palmer@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) (Act), it is hereby directed that a referendum be conducted to ascertain whether continuance of the Blueberry Promotion, Research, and Information Order (7 CFR part 1218) (the Order) is favored by a majority of eligible producers and importers of highbush blueberries.

The representative period for establishing voter eligibility is January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025. Persons who produced or imported 2,000 pounds or more of highbush blueberries are eligible to vote. Persons who received an exemption from assessments for the entire representative period are ineligible to vote. USDA will conduct the referendum by express mail and electronic ballot from July 13, 2026, through July 24, 2026. Further details will be provided in the ballot instructions.

Section 518 of the Act authorizes continuance referenda. Under § 1218.71(b) of the Order, USDA must conduct a referendum every five years, at the request of 10 percent or more of the number of producers and importers eligible to vote in a referendum, or at any time as determined by the Secretary. The last referendum was held in 2021; therefore, a referendum must be held in 2026 to comply with the Order.

USDA would continue the Order if it is favored by a majority of the producers and importers voting in the referendum who also represent a majority of the volume of blueberries represented in the referendum who, during the representative period, have been engaged in the production or importation of blueberries. If not favored, USDA would comply with the suspension and termination procedures at § 1218.74.

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. 0581-0093. Approximately 1,400 persons will be eligible to vote in the referendum. It will take an average of 15 minutes for each voter to read the instructions and complete the ballot.

Referendum Order

Jeanette Palmer, Marketing Specialist; Victoria M. Carpenter, Marketing Specialist; and Alexandra Caryl, Branch Chief (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 7 CFR 1218.100 through 1218.107, which were issued pursuant to the Act, shall be used to conduct the referendum.

The referendum agents will express mail ballots and voting instructions to all known, eligible producers and importers prior to the first day of the voting period. Any eligible producer or importer who does not receive a ballot should contact the referendum agent no later than three days before the end of the voting period. Ballots delivered via express mail or electronic ballot must show proof of delivery by no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on July 24, 2026.

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

Erin Morris,
Administrator,
Agricultural Marketing Service.

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