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Agricultural Marketing Service

[Doc. No. AMS-SC-26-0430]

Pecans Grown in the States of Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas; Continuance Referendum

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Referendum order.

SUMMARY: This document directs that a referendum be conducted among eligible pecan growers to determine whether they favor continuance of the marketing order regulating the handling of pecans grown in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas.

DATES: The referendum will be conducted from July 6 through August 3, 2026. Only current pecan growers within the production area who have produced a minimum average of 50,000 pounds of inshell pecans over the four years from October 1, 2021, to September 30, 2025, or who own a minimum of 30 pecan acres, are eligible to vote in this referendum. Ballots delivered to AMS via U.S. mail or electronic ballot must show proof of delivery by no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on August 3, 2026, to be included in the vote tabulation.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the marketing order may be obtained from the office of the referendum agents at U.S. Department of Agriculture Southeast Marketing Field Office, 1124 1st Street South, Winter Haven, FL 33880; telephone: (863) 324-3375; or from the Docket Clerk, Market Development Division, Specialty Crops Program, AMS, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, STOP 0237, Washington, DC 20250-0237; telephone

(202) 720-8085; or on the internet: *https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-IX/part-986*.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennie M. Varela, Marketing Specialist, or Christian D. Nissen, Branch Chief, Southeast Region Branch, Market Development Division, Specialty Crops Program, AMS, USDA, 1124 1st Street South, Winter Haven, FL 33880; telephone: (863) 324-3375; or email: Jennie.Varela@usda.gov or Christian.Nissen@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to Marketing Order No. 986, as amended (7 CFR part 986; the Order), and the applicable provisions of the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, as amended (7 U.S.C. 601-674) (the Act), it is hereby directed that a referendum be conducted to ascertain whether continuance of the Order is favored by pecan growers in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas. The referendum will be conducted from July 6 through August 3, 2026, among pecan growers in the production area. Only current pecan growers within the production area that produced a minimum average of 50,000 pounds of inshell pecans over the four years from October 1, 2021, to September 30, 2025, or that own a minimum of 30 pecan acres, are eligible to vote in this referendum.

USDA has determined that continuance referenda are an effective means for determining whether growers favor the continuation of marketing order programs. Under § 986.94(d), USDA must conduct a referendum every five years to ascertain whether continuance of the provisions of this part applicable to pecans are favored by two-thirds by number or volume of growers voting in the referendum. USDA will consider termination of the Order if less than two-thirds of the growers voting in the referendum, and less than two-thirds of the pecan volume represented in the referendum, vote in favor of continuance. In evaluating the merits of continuance versus termination, USDA will not exclusively consider the results of the continuance referendum. USDA will also consider all other relevant information concerning the operation of the Order and relative benefits and costs to growers, handlers, and consumers to determine whether continued operation of the Order would tend to effectuate the declared policy of the Act.

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the ballot materials used in the referendum have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and have been assigned OMB No. 0581-0291, Federal Marketing Order for Pecans. It has been estimated it will take an average of 20 minutes for each of the approximately 4,500 pecan growers to cast a ballot. Participation is voluntary. Ballots postmarked after August 3, 2026, will not be included in the vote tabulation.

Delaney Fuhrmeister, Rebecca Geller, Steven Kauffman, Christian Nissen, and Jennie Varela of the Southeast Region Branch, Specialty Crops Program, AMS, USDA, are hereby designated as the referendum agents of the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct this referendum. The procedure applicable to the referendum shall be the "Procedure for the Conduct of Referenda in Connection with Marketing Orders for Fruits, Vegetables, and Nuts Pursuant to the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, as Amended" (7 CFR part 900.400 *et seq*.).

Ballots and voting instructions will be sent by U.S. mail, or through electronic mail, to all pecan growers of record and may also be obtained from the referendum agents or their appointees.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 601-674.

Erin Morris
Administrator,
*Agricultural Marketing Service***.**
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