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Monday 17th May 2010, 11:02 GMT

Puerto Rico could open to Mexican Hass



USDA has proposed an amendment to regulations allowing importation of Hass avocados from Mexico into Puerto Rico

Fruit and vegetable regulations currently restricting the importation of Hass avocados from Mexico into Puerto Rico could be lifted under new proposals made by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The USDA's Animal and Plant Inspection Service (APHIS) is proposing to amend its fruit and vegetable regulations to allow Hass avocado imports under the same systems approach that is required for the importation of the fruit into all states of the US from Michoacán in Mexico.

Under those regulations, a systems approach requires trapping, orchard certification, limited production area, trace-back labelling, pre-harvest orchard surveys for all pests, orchard sanitation, post-harvest safeguards, fruit cutting and inspection at the packhouse, port-of-arrival inspection and clearance activities.

"This action would allow for the importation of Hass avocados from Michoacán, Mexico, into Puerto Rico while continuing to provide protection against the introduction of quarantine pests," APHIS said in a press release.

APHIS is also proposing to amend regulations to provide for the Mexican national plant protection organisation to use an approved designee to inspect avocados for export, and to suspend importation of avocados into the US from Michoacán, Mexico, only from specific orchards or packhouses when quarantine pests are detected, rather than suspending imports from the entire municipality where the affected orchards or packhouses are located.

The proposed actions have been published in the Federal Register as of 14 May, and APHIS said that it would consider all comments received on or before 13 July 2010.