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Fresh Deciduous Fruit

EU Import License System for Apples

2006

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Report Highlights:

The European Commission has adopted a proposal to introduce a system of import licenses for apples. The measure, which is expected to begin on February 1st, is intended to help establish a more timely transmission of statistical data on EU apple imports, particularly for imports originating from the Southern Hemisphere.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Brussels USEU [BE2]
[E3]

EU Set to Begin Import License System for Apples

On January 17, 2006, the Fruit & Vegetable Management Committee adopted a European Commission proposal to introduce a system of import licenses for apples. The measure, approved by a majority of EU Member States, is intended to help establish a more timely transmission of statistical data on EU apple imports, particularly for imports originating from the Southern Hemisphere.

The import license system is expected to begin on February 1st, 2006. The technical procedure for implementation will follow the system already in place for bananas. EU importers, wishing to import apples from non-EU countries will need to submit a license application, and a security of 15€/ton (or about 0.29 €/carton). Since the application can be filed electronically, the license should be readily available. The security will be refunded once the final import shipment transaction is complete.

The European Commission believes that the license system will not interfere with existing trade. It is seen as a temporary measure that will remain in place until the new IT-based centralized data transmission system becomes operational in 2007.

In order to minimize the administrative burden, the Commission has created a special form for electronic reporting. The Commission will also encourage representatives of the main exporting countries to present their perspective and their market data at the next meeting of the Forecast group of experts, to be held in Brussels on March 7th, 2006.

Background

In 2005, the French Agricultural Minister, Dominique Bussereau, asked the Commission to intervene with a safeguard measure for apples. Minister Bussereau alleged that despite the good quality of the French product, there was a large market presence of apples from third countries, particularly from the Southern Hemisphere. Minister Bussereau maintained that the European apple imports rose by more than 300,000 tons in three years, with a dampening effect on EU market prices. At the time, Minister Bussereau demanded a renegotiation of the trigger conditions for the special safeguard clause, both in terms of volume and of price. The trigger levels for additional duties are determined every year. For 2006, the trigger level for January 1 to August 31 is 805,913 tons, and for September 1 to December 31 is 80,454 tons (Commission Regulation (EC) No 2123/2005).

It is generally believed that the lack of adequate (and timely) import data may have contributed to an EU inability to properly respond to price situation which inflicted substantial losses on European producers. France in particular has claimed that import levels through August 31st had been underestimated. With evidence that some EU Member States submitted erroneous data, the European Commission promised that it would initiate more intense monitoring of imports during the 2006 campaign.

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