

IMPORT REQUIREMENTS FOR DATES

March 2001

USDA INSPECTION REQUIRED - "Dates in retail packages" meaning whole or pitted dates, other than dates prepared or preserved, wrapped or packaged for sale at retail. "Dates for packaging" meaning whole or pitted dates in bulk containers which are to be repacked, in whole or part, in the United States as dates in retail packages.

GRADE REQUIREMENTS - Dates for packaging and dates in retail packages must meet modified **U.S. Grade B**.

DISPOSITION OF DATES FAILING TO MEET INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS - Dates failing to meet the above import requirements may be: (1) reconditioned and re-inspected with the failed portion disposed under Federal supervision; for example, failed portions that are dumped should be witnessed by a USDA inspector; (2) diverted to an exempt outlet using the FV-6 form (see various approved outlets and procedures listed below); (3) exported; or (4) disposed of under Federal supervision.

CONDITIONS FOR THE IMPORTATION OF DATES EXEMPT FROM THE IMPORT REQUIREMENTS - "Dates for processing" meaning dates for use in a bakery, confectionary, or other product and includes dates coated with a substance materially altering their color and, "Dates prepared or preserved" meaning dates processed into a confection or other product, dates coated with a substance materially altering their color, or dates prepared for incorporation into a product by chopping, slicing, or other processing which materially alters their form are not subject to grade, inspection and certification requirements. Form filing requirements, however, must be met by the importer.

To import dates for processing or dates prepared or preserved, an importer must file an Importer's Exempt Commodity Form (FV-6). The FV-6 form is also used for dates donated to needy persons, prisoners, and Native Americans on reservations. The white copy of the FV-6 must be presented to U.S. Custom Service at the Port of Entry. The yellow copy of the form must be mailed to the Marketing Order Administration Branch (MOAB) within 2-days after the commodity enters the United States. The importer must send the pink copy of the FV-6 form with the exempt shipment to the receiver. The receiver must complete Section II of the FV-6, certifying the amount of commodity received and that the commodity will be used for an exempt purpose, and mail it to MOAB within 2 days after taking possession of the exempt commodity. The blue copy should be retained by the importer.

Any lot of dates not exceeding 70 pounds, net weight, and any lot of dates so denatured as to render them unfit for human consumption may be imported exempt from grade and form filing requirements.

RECLASSIFICATION OF DATES - Dates initially offered as "dates for processing" meeting U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) wholesomeness and cleanliness requirements, may subsequently be re-offered as "dates for packaging", upon USDA re-inspection to meet grade requirements.

Dates initially offered as "dates for packaging" or "dates in retail packages", but failing both grade and FDA requirements cannot be imported. Dates failing grade and meeting FDA requirements may be imported as "dates for processing" without reconditioning and re-inspection, but subject to form filing requirements.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR OBTAINING USDA INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION - The Processed Products Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is hereby designated as the governmental inspection agency for the purpose of certifying the quality and maturity of the dates prior to importation into the United States.

USDA inspection and certification services will be available upon application, in accordance with the rules and regulations governing the inspection and certification of processed fruits and vegetables, processed products thereof, and certain other processed food products [7 CFR Part 52]. The cost of inspection and certification shall be borne by the applicant.

Importers should make arrangements for inspection and certification through the following offices prior to entry at Port inspection offices. An onboard bill of lading designating the lots to be inspected must accompany applications for inspection or be submitted promptly thereafter.