



8 August 2016

Docket No. APHIS – 20130 0081
Regulatory Analysis and Development
PPD, APHIS
Station 3A- 03.8
4700 River Road
Unit 118
Riverdale, MD 20737-1238

RE: Docket No. 2013-0081

To whom it may concern,

Today I write to you in support of your Department's proposed rule change to 7 CFR Part 305.6 which will incorporate phytosanitary criteria for cold treatment facilities in regions of our nation that are currently banned from allowing this type of treatment to occur. It is my hope that the Department will favorably approve this proposed rule change.

Foremost, I would like to thank the Department for demonstrating their willingness to set forth a path that would establish more ports of entry and cold treatment facilities for the importation of fruits and vegetables into the United State. While I deeply understand the need to ensure that any new facility undertakes the necessary steps to ensure public safety, it is my belief that this proposed rule will accomplish this, as well as increase competition within the United States as it relates to supply sources. This regulated competition will ultimately benefit our nation's consumers. This is an important issue as the demand for imported products increases in line with our nation's need for more healthy food products.

Furthermore, it is my understanding that in 2002 three southern U.S. ports were approved for cold treatment. Considering that fact, and the fact that demand has increased, the proposed criteria will establish a clear path for others to follow. This rule change will eliminate any guessing as it relates to why some regions have been exempted while others have not been exempted from the underlying rule. Therefore, I am pleased that this proposal treats all areas equitably and doesn't pick "winners" and "losers". Instead the proposal clearly establishes a safety protocol for all those to follow prior to the products going to market.

Again, thank you for establishing this proposed rule and it is my hope that it is adopted in its entirety as soon as the law allows.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about my comments.

Sincerely,

Tom Verbitski
Pacific Trellis
Director – Quality Control & Operations
tverbitski@pacifictrellisfruit.com