

**United States Department of Agriculture  
Agricultural Marketing Service, Dairy Programs**

**Market Administrator**

**Federal Order No. 6 – Florida Marketing Area  
Federal Order No. 7 – Southeast Marketing Area**

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**Guidelines for Producer-Handlers and Producers Delivering to Exempt Plants  
In the Southeast Marketing Area**

*This document is intended to clarify Atlanta Market Administrator policy in determining the regulatory status of operations in which dairy farmers own Class I distributing plants. For reference, the Order language for the Southeast Marketing Area cited in these guidelines is attached.*

For dairy farmers who own Class I distributing plants, the Market Administrator is required to make several determinations as to the regulatory status of both the distributing plant and the milk produced by the dairy farmer. The amount of packaged Class I sales originating from the distributing plant and the manner in which farm production is reported to the Market Administrator jointly establish plant and producer milk status. Two general categories of dairy farmer/distributing plant owner are outlined below.

**Producer-Handler Operation**

All persons operating both a dairy farm and distributing plant from which there is route disposition in the marketing area, and from which total route disposition and packaged sales of fluid milk products to other plants during the month does not exceed 3 million pounds and who can establish to the Market Administrator's satisfaction that all criteria found in §1007.10 are met may be designated as producer-handlers. While such designation precludes the market-wide pool from extracting Class I value from the distributing plant, it also prohibits the dairy farm from sharing in the benefits of the market-wide pool. Allowing producer-handlers to be excluded from pooling and pricing provisions on milk used internally AND receive the uniform price on surplus milk disposed of external to the operation creates advantages for producer-handlers not intended by §1007.10<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, those seeking producer-handler status forego producer status according to §1007.12(b)(1). **If an operation qualifies as a producer-handler, the plant is exempt from pricing and pooling provisions and the farm's production will not qualify as producer milk under any Federal milk order.**

**Dairy Farmer Diverting Milk into Exempt Plant**

All distributing plants that sell less than 150,000 pounds of Class I product per month will be exempt from Federal Order pooling and pricing provisions. Pursuant to §1007.12(b)(2), a dairy farmer delivering a portion of his/her production to an exempt plant will not meet the definition of a producer for purposes of pooling producer milk unless the amount delivered to the exempt plant is pooled and priced as a diversion pursuant to 1007.13(d). A qualified cooperative or a fully regulated proprietary plant operator must account for the total farm milk production and pool the amount delivered to the exempt plant as a diversion pursuant to §1007.13(d) on the handler's report of receipt and utilization each month. **If a dairy farmer owns a distributing plant with Class I sales less than 150,000 pounds per month, the plant is an exempt plant and the farm's production used internally and all surplus milk delivered to other plants must qualify as producer milk for any portion of the farm's production to be pooled.**

Persons operating both a dairy farm and distributing plant and who fail to meet both the producer-handler and exempt plant criteria will be subject to all Federal order pooling and pricing provisions where applicable. Individual circumstances may alter the regulatory status of the farm's production and of the distributing plant.

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<sup>1</sup> The advantage created by transferring balancing costs to other market participants was addressed in the discussion of the proposed rules during Order Reform. *Federal Register*: Vol. 64, No. 63. April 2, 1999, p. 16135.

## Federal Order Language Addressing Producer-Handlers and Producers Delivering to Exempt Plants Southeast Marketing Area

### § 1007.7 Pool plant .

### § 1000.8 Nonpool plant.

### § 1007.10 Producer-handler.

### § 1007.12 Producer.

### § 1007.13 Producer milk.

### § 1007.7 Pool plant.

Pool plant means a plant specified in paragraphs (a) through (d) of this section, a unit of plants as specified in paragraph (e) of this section, or a plant specified in paragraph (h) of this section, but excluding a plant specified in paragraph (g) of this section. The pooling standards described in paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section are subject to modification pursuant to paragraph (f) of this section:

(a) A distributing plant, other than a plant qualified as a pool plant pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section or §\_\_\_\_.7(b) of any other Federal milk order, from which during the month 50 percent or more of the fluid milk products physically received at such plant (excluding concentrated milk received from another plant by agreement for other than Class I use) are disposed of as route disposition or are transferred in the form of packaged fluid milk products to other distributing plants. At least 25 percent of such route disposition and transfers must be to outlets in the marketing area.

(b) Any distributing plant located in the marketing area which during the month processed at least 50 percent of the total quantity of fluid milk products physically received at the plant (excluding concentrated milk received from another plant by agreement for other than Class I use) into ultra-pasteurized or aseptically-processed fluid milk products.

(c) A supply plant from which 50 percent or more of the total quantity of milk that is physically received during the month from dairy farmers and handlers described in § 1000.9(c), including milk that is diverted from the plant, is transferred to pool distributing plants. Concentrated milk transferred from the supply plant to a distributing plant for an agreed-upon use other than Class I shall be excluded from the supply plant's shipments in computing the plant's shipping percentage.

(d) A plant located within the marketing area that is operated by a cooperative association if pool plant status under this paragraph is requested for such plant by the cooperative association and during the month at least 60 percent of the producer milk of members of such cooperative association is delivered directly from farms to pool distributing plants or is

transferred to such plants as a fluid milk product (excluding concentrated milk transferred to a distributing plant for an agreed-upon use other than Class I) from the cooperative's plant.

(e) Two or more plants operated by the same handler and located within the marketing area may qualify for pool status as a unit by meeting the total and in-area route disposition requirements specified in paragraph (a) of this section and the following additional requirements:

(1) At least one of the plants in the unit must qualify as a pool plant pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section;

(2) Other plants in the unit must process only Class I or Class II products and must be located in a pricing zone providing the same or a lower Class I price than the price applicable at the distributing plant included in the unit pursuant to paragraph (e)(1) of this section; and

(3) A written request to form a unit, or to add or remove plants from a unit, must be filed with the market administrator prior to the first day of the month for which it is to be effective.

(f) The applicable shipping percentages of paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section may be increased or decreased by the market administrator if the market administrator finds that such adjustment is necessary to encourage needed shipments or to prevent uneconomic shipments. Before making such a finding, the market administrator shall investigate the need for adjustment either on the market administrator's own initiative or at the request of interested parties if the request is made in writing at least 15 days prior to the date for which the requested revision is desired effective. If the investigation shows that an adjustment of the shipping percentages might be appropriate, the market administrator shall issue a notice stating that an adjustment is being considered and invite data, views, and arguments. Any decision to revise an applicable shipping percentage must be issued in writing at least one day before the effective date.

(g) The term pool plant shall not apply to the following plants:

- (1) A producer-handler plant;
- (2) An exempt plant as defined in § 1000.8(e);
- (3) A plant qualified pursuant to paragraph (a)

of this section which is not located within any Federal order marketing area, meets the pooling requirements of another Federal order, and has had greater route disposition in such other Federal order marketing area for 3 consecutive months;

(4) A plant qualified pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section which is located in another Federal order marketing area, meets the pooling standards of the other Federal order, and has not had a majority of its route disposition in this marketing area for 3

consecutive months or is locked into pool status under such other Federal order without regard to its route disposition in any other Federal order marketing area; and

(5) A plant qualified pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section which also meets the pooling requirements of another Federal order and from which greater qualifying shipments are made to plants regulated under such other order than are made to plants regulated under the order in this part, or such plant has automatic pooling status under such other order.

(h) Any distributing plant, located within the marketing area as described on May 1, 2006, in §1007.2;

(1) From which there is route disposition and/or transfers of packaged fluid milk products in any non-Federally regulated marketing area(s) located within one or more States that require handlers to pay minimum prices for raw milk provided that 25 percent or more of the total quantity of fluid milk products physically received at such plant (excluding concentrated milk received from another plant by agreement for other than Class I use) is disposed of as route disposition and/or is transferred in the form of packaged fluid milk products to other plants. At least 25 percent of such route disposition and/or transfers, in aggregate, are in any non-Federally regulated marketing area(s) located within one or more States that require handlers to pay minimum prices for raw milk. Subject to the following exclusions:

(i) The plant is described in §1007.7(a), (b), or (e);

(ii) The plant is subject to the pricing provisions of a State-operated milk pricing plan which provides for the payment of minimum class prices for raw milk;

(iii) The plant is described in §1000.8(a) or (e); or

(iv) A producer handler described in §1007.10 with less than three million pounds during the month of route disposition and/or transfers of packaged fluid milk products to other plants.

#### **§ 1000.8 Nonpool plant.**

Nonpool plant means any milk receiving, manufacturing, or processing plant other than a pool plant. The following categories of nonpool plants are further defined as follows:

(a) A plant fully regulated under another Federal order means a plant that is fully subject to the pricing and pooling provisions of another Federal order.

(b) Producer-handler plant means a plant operated by a producer-handler as defined under any Federal order.

(c) Partially regulated distributing plant means a nonpool plant that is not a plant fully regulated under another Federal order, a producer-handler plant, or an exempt plant, from which there is route disposition in the marketing area during the month.

(d) Unregulated supply plant means a supply plant that does not qualify as a pool supply plant and is not a plant fully regulated under another Federal order, a producer-handler plant, or an exempt plant.

(e) An exempt plant means a plant described in this paragraph that is exempt from the pricing and pooling provisions of any order provided that the operator of the plant files reports as prescribed by the market administrator of any marketing area in which the plant distributes packaged fluid milk products to enable determination of the handler's exempt status:

(1) A plant that is operated by a governmental agency that has no route disposition in commercial channels;

(2) A plant that is operated by a duly accredited college or university disposing of fluid milk products only through the operation of its own facilities with no route disposition in commercial channels;

(3) A plant from which the total route disposition is for individuals or institutions for charitable purposes without remuneration; or

(4) A plant that has route disposition and packaged sales of fluid milk products to other plants of 150,000 pounds or less during the month.

#### **§ 1007.8 Nonpool plant.**

See § 1000.8.

#### **§ 1000.9 Handler.**

Handler means:

(a) Any person who operates a pool plant or a nonpool plant.

(b) Any person who receives packaged fluid milk products from a plant for resale and distribution to retail or wholesale outlets, any person who as a broker negotiates a purchase or sale of fluid milk products or fluid cream products from or to any pool or nonpool plant, and any person who by purchase or direction causes milk of producers to be picked up at the farm and/or moved to a plant. Persons who qualify as handlers only under this paragraph under any Federal milk order are not subject to the payment provisions of §§ ----.70, ----.71, ----.72, ----.73, ----.76, and ----.85 of that order.

(c) Any cooperative association with respect to milk that it receives for its account from the farm of a producer and delivers to pool plants or diverts to nonpool plants pursuant to § ----.13 of the order. The operator of a pool plant receiving milk from a cooperative association may be the handler for such milk if both parties notify the market administrator of this agreement prior to the time that the milk is delivered to the pool plant and the plant operator purchases the milk on the basis of farm bulk tank weights and samples.

#### **§ 1007.9 Handler.**

See § 1000.9.

#### **§ 1007.10 Producer-handler.**

Producer-handler means a person who:

(a) Operates a dairy farm and a distributing plant from which there is route disposition in the marketing area, and from which total route disposition and packaged sales of fluid milk products to other plants during the month does not exceed 3 million pounds;

(b) Receives no fluid milk products, and acquires no fluid milk products for route disposition, from sources other than own farm production;

(c) Disposes of no other source milk as Class I milk except by increasing the nonfat milk solids content of the fluid milk products received from own farm production; and

(d) Provides proof satisfactory to the market administrator that the care and management of the dairy animals and other resources necessary to produce all Class I milk handled, and the processing and packaging operations, are the producer-handler's own enterprise and are operated at the producer-handler's own risk.

(e) Any producer-handler with Class I route dispositions and/or transfers of packaged fluid milk products in the marketing area described in §1131.2 shall be subject to payments into the Order 1131 producer settlement fund on such dispositions pursuant to §1000.76(a) and payments into the Order 1131 administrative fund provided such dispositions are less than three million pounds in the current month and such producer-handler had total Class I route dispositions and/or transfers of packaged fluid milk products from own farm production of three million pounds or more the previous month. If the producer-handler has Class I route dispositions and/or transfers of packaged fluid milk products into the marketing area described in §1131.2 of three million pounds or more during the current month, such producer-handler shall be subject to the provisions described in §1131.7 or §1000.76(a).

#### **§ 1007.11 [Reserved]**

#### **§ 1007.12 Producer.**

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, producer means any person who produces milk approved by a duly constituted regulatory agency for fluid consumption as Grade A milk and whose milk (or components of milk) is:

(1) Received at a pool plant directly from the producer or diverted by the plant operator in accordance with § 1007.13; or

(2) Received by a handler described in § 1000.9(c).

(b) Producer shall not include:

(1) A producer-handler as defined in any Federal order;

(2) A dairy farmer whose milk is received at an exempt plant, excluding producer milk diverted to the exempt plant pursuant to § 1007.13(d);

(3) A dairy farmer whose milk is received by diversion at a pool plant from a handler regulated under another Federal order if the other Federal order designates the dairy farmer as a producer under that order and that milk is allocated by request to a utilization other than Class I; and

(4) A dairy farmer whose milk is reported as diverted to a plant fully regulated under another Federal order with respect to that portion of the milk so diverted that is assigned to Class I under the provisions of such other order.

#### **§ 1007.13 Producer milk.**

Except as provided for in paragraph (e) of this section, producer milk means the skim milk (or the skim equivalent of components of skim milk) and butterfat contained in milk of a producer that is:

(a) Received by the operator of a pool plant directly from a producer or a handler described in § 1000.9(c). All milk received pursuant to this paragraph shall be priced at the location of the plant where it is first physically received;

(b) Received by a handler described in § 1000.9(c) in excess of the quantity delivered to pool plants;

(c) Diverted by a pool plant operator to another pool plant. Milk so diverted shall be priced at the location of the plant to which diverted; or

(d) Diverted by the operator of a pool plant or a handler described in § 1000.9(c) to a nonpool plant, subject to the following conditions:

(1) In any month of January through June, not less than 1 days' production of the producer whose milk is diverted is physically received at a pool plant during the month;

(2) In any month of July through December, not less than 1 days' production of the producer whose milk is diverted is physically received at a pool plant during the month;

(3) The total quantity of milk so diverted during the month by a cooperative association shall not exceed 25 percent during the months of July through November, January, and February, and 35 percent during the months of December and March through June, of the producer milk that the cooperative association caused to be delivered to, and physically received at, pool plants during the month, excluding the total pounds of bulk milk received directly from producers meeting for conditions as described in § 1007.82 (c)(2)(ii) and (iii), and for which a transportation credit is requested;

(4) The operator of a pool plant that is not a cooperative association may divert any milk that is not under the control of a cooperative association that diverts milk during the month pursuant to paragraph (d) of this section. The total quantity of milk so diverted during the month shall not exceed 25 percent during the months of July through November, January, and February, and 35 percent during the months of

December and March through June of the producer milk physically received at such plant (or such unit of plants in the case of plants that pool as a unit pursuant to § 1007.7 (e)) during the month, excluding the quantity of producer milk received from a handler described in § 1000.9 (c), excluding the total pounds of bulk milk received directly from producers meeting for conditions as described in § 1007.82 (c)(2)(ii) and (iii), and for which a transportation credit is requested; *(eff 3/18/2008)*

(5) Any milk diverted in excess of the limits prescribed in paragraphs (d)(3) and (4) of this section shall not be producer milk. If the diverting handler or cooperative association fails to designate the dairy farmers' deliveries that will not be producer milk, no milk diverted by the handler or cooperative association shall be producer milk;

(6) Diverted milk shall be priced at the location of the plant to which diverted; and

(7) The delivery day requirements and the diversion percentages in paragraphs (d)(1) through (4) of this section may be increased or decreased by the market administrator if the market administrator finds that such revision is necessary to assure orderly marketing and efficient handling of milk in the marketing area. Before making such a finding, the market administrator shall investigate the need for the revision either on the market administrator's own initiative or at the request of interested persons. If the investigation shows that a revision might be appropriate, the market administrator shall issue a notice stating that the revision is being considered and inviting written data, views, and arguments. Any decision to revise an applicable percentage must be issued in writing at least one day before the effective date.

(e) Producer milk shall not include milk of a producer that is subject to inclusion and participation in a marketwide equalization pool under a milk classification and pricing program imposed under the authority of a State government maintaining marketwide pooling of returns.