



USDA Sets November 2–20 Grower Referendum on Letting the Almond Board of California Borrow Through a Seasonal Line of Credit

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USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service published a proposed rule and referendum order on October 8, 2026 to amend California's almond marketing order so the Almond Board can borrow through a seasonal line of credit. Growers vote November 2 through November 20, 2026. A 2023 vote on similar borrowing authority fell short of the two-thirds needed.

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) published a proposed rule and referendum order in the Federal Register on October 8, 2026 (FR Doc. 2026-20622, Doc. No. AMS-SC-25-0016, 91 FR 64306) to amend Marketing Order No. 981, which regulates the handling of almonds grown in California.

The proposal would add a new section 981.81(f) authorizing the Almond Board of California to borrow funds from a commercial lending institution through a seasonal line of credit.

The referendum

- Voting period: November 2 through November 20, 2026.
- Representative period: August 1, 2025 through July 31, 2026.
- Passing threshold: at least two-thirds of growers voting, or growers representing at least two-thirds of the production volume voted, must favor the amendment. If they do, AMS says a final rule will be issued.

Why the Board wants it

The Board is funded by assessments on almond handlers. AMS says borrowing authority would provide short-term cash to cover the timing gap between program spending and assessment collections, such as in the first months of a marketing year, when the new crop is being received but no assessments have yet been collected. AMS says seasonal lines of credit are common for businesses and are already authorized under other marketing orders. It says loan limits and terms would be discussed at annual Board meetings that are open to the public.

It failed once before

A similar borrowing proposal went to growers in a USDA referendum held October 30 to November 20, 2023. It drew 63.59% of growers voting, representing 56.15% of production volume, short of the two-thirds required. AMS says the Board later concluded the failure came from grower confusion over the ballot's regulatory language and a lack of coordinated communication.

Contacts

Written questions and comments can go to the Docket Clerk, Market Development Division, Specialty Crops Program, AMS, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, STOP 0237, Washington, DC 20250-0237; (202) 720-2491. Contacts listed are Taylor Johnson and Matthew Pavone.

Source

- Federal Register, FR Doc. 2026-20622, "Almonds Grown in California; Amendment to the Marketing Order," USDA AMS, October 8, 2026.

Notes

- Author: Ryan Standley / Record of Sale, LLC / Notice Nearby.
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