Introduction to fruit grading and its uses

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Grades and Standards

• In United States agricultural policy, grades and standards refers to the segregation, or classification, of agricultural commodities into groupings that share common characteristics.

• Grades provide a common trading language, or common reference, so that buyers and sellers can more easily determine the quality (and therefore value) of those commodities.

Commodity Standards and Grades

- Two USDA agencies, the Agricultural Marketing Service and Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration, serve as objective sources for this information.

- These agencies develop common grades and standards and conduct inspection and grading services for most food and farm products, and industry pays for most of the cost through user fees.
USDA Quality Standards

• USDA provides quality standards for agricultural products such as cotton, dairy, fruits and vegetables, livestock, poultry, nuts, and processed foods.

• Quality grading is based on the standards developed for each product. Quality grades provide a common language among buyers and sellers, which in turn assures consistent quality for consumers.
USDA Grade Marks

• For many fresh and processed fruits, the grade mark isn't always visible on the retail product.

• In these commodities, the grading service is used by wholesalers, and the final retail packaging may not include the grade mark.
USDA Quality Standards

• However, quality grades are widely used--even if they are not prominently displayed--as a "language" among traders.

• They make business transactions easier whether they are local or made over long distances.
Fresh Products Grading & Quality Certification

- Grading is paid for by user fees and is voluntary except for commodities that are regulated for quality by a marketing order or marketing agreement, subject to import or export requirements, or purchased by USDA or certain other Government agencies.
USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

- AMS Fruit and Vegetable Program’s Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Division offers a broad range of product certification and acceptance services for canned, frozen, and dehydrated fruits, vegetables, and related products.

- These services can be tailored to meet specific requirements and can include quality assurance monitoring as well as expert product grading and certification.
Processed Fruit Inspection and Certification Services

• Evaluations can be based on official U.S. grade standards, Commercial Item Descriptions (CID), or on processor or buyer quality and condition requirements.

• These user fee services are available upon request to anyone who has a financial interest in these commodities.
Saskatoons are similar to blueberries

- Small
- Round
- Similar calyx end
- Similar stem scar

- Dark colored
- Many similar uses
- Packed in similar containers
Saskatoons are similar to blueberries

- They could be judged and graded similarly
Saskatoons are similar to blueberries

• They could be judged and graded similarly

• But, should they be?
Blueberry grades – fresh berries

United States Standards for Grades of Blueberries

Effective March 20, 1995
(Reprinted - January 1997)
Blueberry grades – fresh berries

- U.S. No. 1
- Size classifications
fresh berries – U.S. No. 1 requirements

• Basic requirements
  • Similar varietal characteristics (color and shape)
  • Clean (practically free from dirt, foreign material)
  • Well colored (>1/2 of berry surface with ripe color)
  • Not overripe
  • Not crushed, split or leaking
  • Not wet
fresh berries – U.S. No. 1 requirements

• Free from:
  • Attached stems
  • Mold
  • Decay
  • Insects or when there is visible evidence of the presence of insects
  • Mummified berries
  • Clusters
fresh berries – U.S. No. 1 requirements

- Free from damage caused by:
  - Shrivelng
  - Broken skins
  - Scars
  - Green berries
  - Other means
fresh berries – U.S. No. 1 sizes

- Extra large    less than 90 berries per cup
- Large          90 to 129 berries per cup
- Medium         130 to 189 berries per cup
- Small          190 to 250 berries per cup
fresh berries – U.S. No. 1 tolerances

• Defects at shipping point

Ten percent for blueberries which have attached stems. Additionally, not more than 8 percent of the blueberries may be below the remaining requirements for the grade: Provided, that included in this amount not more than 4 percent shall be allowed for defects causing serious damage, including in this latter amount not more than 1 percent for blueberries which are affected by mold or decay.
fresh berries – U.S. No. 1 tolerances

• Defects en route or at destination

Ten percent for blueberries which have attached stems. Additionally, not more than 12 percent of the blueberries may be below the remaining requirements for the grade: Provided, that included in this amount not more than the following percentages shall be allowed for the defects listed:

(1) 8 percent for blueberries which fail to meet the requirements for this grade because of permanent defects; or,
fresh berries – U.S. No. 1 tolerances

• Defects en route or at destination, cont.

(2) 6 percent for blueberries which are seriously damaged, including therein not more than 4 percent for blueberries which are seriously damaged by permanent defects and not more than 2 percent for blueberries which are affected by mold and decay.
fresh berries – U.S. No. 1 tolerances

• Off-size

When size is designated according to one or more of the size classifications, not more than 10 percent of the samples in any lot or one sample, whichever is the greater number, mail fail to meet the range in count specified.
Blueberry grades – processed berries

- U.S. No. 1
- U.S. No. 2
- U.S. No. 3
- Unclassified
Processed berries – U.S. No. 1

U.S. No. 1 shall consist of blueberries which internally are free from worms, and are free from other kinds of berries, clusters, large stems, leaves and other foreign material, distinctly immature berries, and free from damage caused by visible mold and decay, shriveling, dirt, overmaturity, or other means.
Inspections for processed berries

United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
Fruit and Vegetable Division
Fresh Products Branch
Washington, D.C.

July 6, 1951
GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

The inspector is to be guided by these instructions and by such additional instructions as may be given him either orally or in writing by his supervisor. When in doubt in any matter, he should consult his supervisor. If it is necessary to take immediate action, he must use his best judgment and advise his supervisor of the action that was taken so the corrective steps can be taken, if the proper procedure was not followed.

This circular contains instructions regarding methods of inspection which must be learned in detail before any attempt is made to inspect blueberries under practical operations. The inspector must know the complete details of the specifications of the U. S. Standards for Blueberries for Processing.
Blueberry grades – canned berries

United States Standards for Grades of Canned Blueberries

Effective date May 12, 1976
Blueberry grades – canned berries

• U.S. Grade A or U.S. Fancy
• U.S. Grade B or U.S. Choice
• U.S. Grade C or U.S. Standard
• U.S. Grade D or Substandard
Blueberry grades – frozen berries

United States Standards for Grades of Frozen Blueberries

Effective date May 22, 1957
Blueberry grades – frozen berries

- U.S. Grade A or U.S. Fancy
- U.S. Grade B or U.S. Choice
- U.S. Grade C or U.S. Standard
- U.S. Grade D or Substandard
Does Canada have grades for saskatoons?
Does Canada have grades for saskatoons?

• Not that I have been able to find
Does Canada have grades for saskatoons?

• Not that I have been able to find

• Canada does have grades for blueberries:
  • Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Regulations
    • Canada No. 1 for blueberries
  • Processed Product Regulations
    • Canada Fancy for blueberries
Should grades be established for saskatoons?

• Sounds like it’s committee time!

• State or U.S. in scope?

• I will continue to work on this if there is interest
I have communicated with the U.S.D.A. on this topic and I have received a reply from:

Brian E. Griffin
Agricultural Marketing Specialist
Specialty Crops Inspection Division
Agricultural Marketing Service
United States Department of Agriculture

Copies are available in the back of the room
For now...

Saskatoons-

they’re all good!
Thanks!

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