

NCTA COMMENTS ON CHECKOFF ORDER IMPLEMENTATION

The National Christmas Tree Association is pleased that there will be implementation of a Christmas Tree Promotion, Research and Information Order. This program was requested by the industry in 2009 and has gone through two industry-wide comment periods, during which 565 comments were submitted from interested parties. More than 70% of the growers posting comments and nearly 90% of the state and multi-state associations that posted comments indicated that they were in favor of the program. The final rule was published in November 2011, but a stay was implemented at that time.

NCTA's Board of Directors, which is responsible for the affairs of the organization, considered feedback from the meetings discussed above and polled the boards and/or members of their respective state/regional organizations. The feedback (positive and negative) was reported at an NCTA board meeting in March 2009. After hearing all reports, the board voted to support a checkoff program. Additionally, NCTA members were surveyed in January 2010, with 62% indicating they were in favor of a checkoff program and only 17% opposed.

The program is designed to benefit the industry, especially small family-farms, and will be funded by the growers at a rate of 15 cents per tree sold. The program will be administered by an independent 12-member board of industry representatives who will be responsible for developing and approving promotional and research efforts to benefit the entire industry. That board is appointed by the USDA, not NCTA. The program is not expected to have any impact on consumer prices.

This program was developed under the Commodity Promotion, Research and Information Act of 1996. There are at least 18 other similar programs already in effect for various commodities. Although smaller in scope, the Christmas tree program could be similar to the widely-known programs for milk, cotton and beef that have brought consumers commodity-oriented messages such as "Got Milk?" and "Beef, It's what's for dinner."

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