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(c) To furnish to the Secretary such available information as the Secretary may request;

(d) To appoint such employees, agents, and representatives as it may deem necessary and to determine the salaries and define the duties of each such person;

(e) To investigate from time to time and to assemble data on the growing, harvesting, shipping, and marketing conditions with respect to Walla Walla Sweet Onions and to engage in such research and service activities which relate to the production, handling, or marketing of Walla Walla Sweet Onions as may be approved by the Secretary;

(f) To keep minutes, books, and records which clearly reflect all of the acts and transactions of the committee. Such minutes, books, and records shall be subject to examination at any time by the Secretary or the Secretary's authorized agent or representative;

(g) To make available to producers and handlers the committee voting record on recommended regulations and on other matters of policy;

(h) Prior to each fiscal period, to submit to the Secretary a budget of its proposed expenses for such fiscal period, together with a report thereon, and a recommendation as to the rate of assessment for such period;

(i) To cause its books to be audited by a competent accountant at least once each fiscal period, and at such other time as the committee may deem necessary or as the Secretary may require; the report of such audit shall show the receipt and expenditure of funds collected pursuant to this part; a copy of each such report shall be furnished to the Secretary, and a copy of each such report shall be made available at the principal office of the committee for inspection by producers and handlers: *Provided*, that confidential information shall be removed from all copies made available to the public; and

(j) To consult, cooperate, and exchange information with other onion marketing committees and other individuals or agencies in connection with all proper committee activities and objectives under this subpart.

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EXPENSES AND ASSESSMENTS

§ 956.40 Expenses.

The committee is authorized to incur such expenses as the Secretary may find are reasonable and likely to be incurred by the committee for its maintenance and functioning, and to enable it to exercise its powers and perform its duties in accordance with the provisions of this part. The funds to cover such expenses shall be acquired in the manner prescribed in §§ 956.42 and 956.45.

§ 956.41 Budget.

Prior to each fiscal period and as may be necessary thereafter, the committee shall prepare an estimated budget of income and expenditures necessary for the administration of this part. The committee shall recommend a rate of assessment calculated to provide adequate funds to defray its proposed expenditures. The committee shall present such budget to the Secretary with an accompanying report showing the basis for its calculations.

§ 956.42 Assessments.

(a) The funds to cover the committee's expenses shall be acquired by the levying of assessments upon handlers as provided in this subpart. Each person who first handles Walla Walla Sweet Onions shall pay assessments to the committee upon demand, which assessments shall be in payment of such handler's pro rata share of the committee's expenses.

(b) Assessments shall be levied upon handlers, at rates established by the Secretary. Such rates may be established upon the basis of the committee's recommendations or other available information.

(c) At any time during, or subsequent to, a given fiscal period, the committee may recommend the approval of an amended budget and an increase in the rate of assessment. Upon the basis of such recommendations, or other available information, the Secretary may approve an amended budget and increase the assessment rate. Such increase in the assessment rate shall be applicable to all Walla Walla Sweet Onions which were handled by each handler thereof during such fiscal period.

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(d) The payment of assessments for the maintenance and functioning of the committee may be required under this part throughout the period it is in effect, irrespective of whether particular provisions of this part are suspended or become inoperative.

(e) To provide funds for the administration of the provisions of this part during the initial fiscal period or the first part of a fiscal period when neither sufficient operating reserve funds nor sufficient revenue from assessments on the current season's shipments are available, the committee may accept payment of assessments in advance or may borrow money for such purposes.

(f) The committee may impose a late payment charge or an interest charge, or both, on any handler who fails to pay any assessment in a timely manner. Such time and the rates shall be recommended by the committee and approved by the Secretary.

§ 956.43 Accounting.

(a) All funds received by the committee pursuant to the provisions of this part shall be used solely for the purposes specified in this part.

(b) The Secretary may at any time require the committee, its members and alternate members, employees, agents, and all other such persons associated with the committee to account for all receipts, disbursements, funds, property, or records for which they are responsible. Whenever any person ceases to be a member, alternate member, employee, or agent of the committee, such person shall account for all receipts, disbursements, funds, property, and records pertaining to the committee's activities for which such person was responsible, deliver all property and funds in such person's possession to the committee, and execute such assignments and other instruments as may be necessary or appropriate to vest in the committee full title to all of the property, funds, and claims vested in such person pursuant to this part.

(c) The committee may make recommendations to the Secretary for one or more of the members thereof, or any other person, to act as a trustee for holding records, funds, or any other

committee property during periods of suspension of this part, or during any period or periods when regulations are not in effect and, upon determining such action is appropriate, the Secretary may direct that such person or persons shall act as trustee or trustees for the committee.

§ 956.44 Excess funds.

If, at the end of a fiscal period, the assessments collected are in excess of expenses incurred, such excess shall be accounted for as follows:

(a) The committee, with approval of the Secretary, may establish an operating reserve and may carry over to subsequent fiscal periods excess funds in a reserve so established, except funds in the reserve shall not exceed the equivalent of approximately two fiscal period's budgeted expenses. Such reserve funds may be used:

(1) To defray any expenses authorized under this part;

(2) To defray expenses during any fiscal period prior to the time assessment income is sufficient to cover such expenses;

(3) To cover deficits incurred during any fiscal period when assessment income is less than expenses;

(4) To defray expenses incurred during any period when any or all provisions of this part are suspended or are inoperative; and

(5) To cover necessary expenses of liquidation in the event of termination of this part.

(b) Upon termination of this part, any funds not required to defray the necessary expenses of liquidation shall be disposed of in such manner as the Secretary may determine to be appropriate except that to the extent practicable, such funds shall be returned pro rata to the persons from whom such funds were collected.

(c) If such excess is not retained in a reserve as provided in paragraph (a) of this section, each handler entitled to a proportionate refund of the excess assessments collected shall be credited at the end of a fiscal period with such refund against the operations of the following fiscal period unless such handler demands payment thereof, in which event such proportionate refund shall be paid as soon as practicable.