

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1416

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to standards and grades for fruits and vegetables.

Brief Description: Extending an asparagus exception to the standards for fruits and vegetables.

Sponsors: By Representatives Grant, Chandler, Linville, Newhouse, Warnick and VanDeWege.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/1/07, 2/5/07 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/23/07, 93-0.

Passed Senate: 4/11/07, 46-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends the current exception to mandatory grading standards for asparagus shipped out-of-state for fresh packing to December 31, 2009.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Blake, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Grant, Hailey, Kagi, Lantz, McCoy, Newhouse, Orcutt, Strow and VanDeWege.

Staff: Meg Van Schoorl (786-7105).

Background:

The Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program of the Department of Agriculture (Department) inspects fresh and processed produce such as apples, pears, cherries, peaches, asparagus, and potatoes. The produce is inspected according to uniform grading standards adopted by the Department including maturity, size, soundness, shape, color, condition, and other factors important to marketing. The produce may also be certified as free from pests and diseases in

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order to meet domestic and international market requirements. The Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program is self-supporting through fees-for-service.

The Director of the Department must adopt rules providing uniform grading standards for some fruits and vegetables, and may adopt rules providing uniform grading standards for others. Asparagus is one of the vegetables for which uniform grading standards are required. In 2004, the Legislature approved a temporary exception to these mandatory standards for asparagus shipped out-of-state for fresh packing, and in 2005, approved a two year extension of the exception. With no grading standards, there are no inspections in Washington. Instead the inspections take place in the state in which the packing occurs. The current exception expires on December 31, 2007.

Summary of Bill:

The current exception to mandatory grading standards for asparagus shipped out-of-state for fresh packing is extended for two years and will expire on December 31, 2009.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill extends by two years the time frame in which there will be no mandatory grading standards and therefore no Washington inspections of asparagus shipped out-of-state to fresh packing and processing plants. Asparagus is instead inspected when it arrives at the out-of-state plants.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Grant, prime sponsor; and Charlie Brown, Washington Asparagus Council.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.