

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6731

As Passed House:

March 2, 2004

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

Brief Description: Concerning standards and grades for fruits and vegetables.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Agriculture (originally sponsored by Senators Honeyford, Mulliken and Rasmussen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/25/04 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/2/04, 95-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Waives until 2006 a requirement for standards for asparagus shipped out-of-state for fresh packing.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Linville, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Holmquist, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kristiansen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Eickmeyer, Hunt, McDermott, Orcutt, Quall and Sump.

Staff: Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).

Background:

Under the state's laws for agricultural grades and packs, the Director of Agriculture is required to adopt rules establishing standards for apples, apricots, Italian prunes, peaches, sweet cherries, pears, potatoes, and asparagus. The Director must also require these commodities, except potatoes, to be inspected. The Director may adopt rules establishing standards for and/or requiring the inspection of any other fruit or vegetable.

Summary of Bill:

Until 2006, the requirement that the Director establish standards for asparagus does not apply to asparagus shipped out-of-state for fresh packing.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: 1) When an asparagus packer quit operations last year, the Department of Agriculture allowed the surplus asparagus to be shipped out of state without meeting this state's standards and grades. However, after re-examining the statutes, the Department does not believe it can continue to do so. The statute requires the asparagus to be inspected for meeting the standards. 2) Two more packing operations have now closed and it is clear there will be surplus asparagus. The bill allows it to be shipped out-of-state for packing without first being inspected for standards here. It gives growers a place to send the product. 3) The bill gives the industry two years to come up with a more permanent solution.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Honeyford, prime sponsor; and Charlie Brown, Washington Asparagus Council.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.