

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is conducting a Request for Referendum among eligible producers and importers of hogs, pigs, pork and pork products to determine if they want a referendum on the Pork Promotion, Research and Consumer Information Order, commonly known as the Pork Checkoff Program.

Participation is voluntary, and only individuals who desire a referendum on the Pork Checkoff Program should participate.

USDA will only conduct a referendum on the order if at least 15 percent of the total number of eligible pork producers and importers request it.

The total number of producers and importers eligible to participate in the Request for Referendum is approximately 69, 446; therefore, at least 10,417 eligible producers and importers must request a referendum.

If necessary, the referendum will be conducted within one year after the results of the Request for Referendum are announced. If results indicate that a referendum is not supported, a referendum would not be conducted.

The Request for Referendum started Monday and continues through Jan. 2, 2009.

Producers and importers who were engaged in pork production or in the importation of hogs, pigs, pork or pork products between Jan. 1, and Dec. 31, 2007, and were at least 18 years of age on or before Dec. 31, 2007, are eligible to participate.

For producers, the Request for Referendum will be conducted at the USDA County Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices where their administrative farm records are maintained.

For producers not participating in FSA programs, the opportunity to participate will be provided at the county FSA office where the person owns or rents land.

Eligible producers may obtain form LS 54 1: Pork Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Request for Referendum from those offices either in person, by mail or by facsimile. Forms may also be obtained at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/LSMarketingPrograms>.