

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BEFORE THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

In re:)	PACA Docket No. D-10-0332
)	
Miami Best Tropical Enterprise, Inc.)	
)	Decision and Order
Respondent)	by Reason of Default

1. The Complaint, filed on June 16, 2010, initiated a disciplinary proceeding under the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act, 1930, as amended (7 U.S.C. §499a *et seq.*) (herein frequently the “PACA”). The Complaint alleged that Miami Best Tropical Enterprise, Inc., the Respondent, willfully, flagrantly, and repeatedly violated Section 2(4) of the PACA (7 U.S.C. § 499b(4)).

Parties and Counsel

2. The Complainant is the Deputy Administrator, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture (herein frequently “Complainant” or “AMS”). AMS is represented by Leah C. Battaglioli, Esq. with the Office of the General Counsel (Trade Practices Division), United States Department of Agriculture, South Building Room 2309 Stop 1413, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-1413.

3. The Respondent is Miami Best Tropical Enterprise, Inc., (herein frequently “Miami

Best” or “Respondent”), a corporation registered in the State of Florida. The Respondent’s business address, before it ceased operations in July 2009, was 3555 NW 79th Avenue, Miami, Florida 33122.

Procedural History

4. AMS’s Motion for Decision Without Hearing by Reason of Default, filed August 9, 2010, is before me. Respondent Miami Best was served on September 8, 2010, with a copy of that Motion and a copy of the proposed Decision and has failed to respond.

5. More than one method of serving the Complaint on Respondent Miami Best (*see* 7 C.F.R. §1.130 *et seq.*) has been effective. Service of the Complaint by certified mail was signed for on July 12, 2010. The Respondent’s answer was due to be filed within 20 days after service, according to section 1.136(a) of the Rules of Practice. 7 C.F.R. § 1.136(a). The time for filing an answer to the Complaint expired on August 2, 2010.

6. In response to an earlier delivery of the Complaint, accompanied by a copy of the Hearing Clerk’s notice letter and a copy of the Rules of Practice, Respondent Miami Best filed its “Response to Complaint” on June 22, 2010, identifying certain companies which did not file (for reparation) within 12 months or which had taken steps to go directly to the courts. The June 22, 2010 filing does not deny the allegations of the Complaint and is in the nature of admissions. Accordingly, Respondent Miami Best’s Response is not an Answer, and Respondent Miami Best is in default, pursuant to section 1.136(c) of the Rules of Practice. 7 C.F.R. § 1.136(c).

7. Failure to file an answer within the time provided under 7 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) shall be

deemed an admission of the allegations in the complaint. 7 C.F.R. §1.136(c). Failure to file an answer constitutes a waiver of hearing. 7 C.F.R. § 1.139. Accordingly, the material facts alleged in the Complaint, which are admitted by the Respondent's default, are adopted and set forth herein as Findings of Fact. This Decision and Order, therefore, is issued pursuant to section 1.139 of the Rules of Practice. 7 C.F.R. § 1.139.

Findings of Fact

8. Miami Best Tropical Enterprise, Inc., the Respondent, is a corporation registered in the State of Florida. The Respondent's business address, before it ceased operations in July 2009, was 3555 NW 79th Avenue, Miami, Florida 33122.

9. At all times material herein, Respondent was licensed under the provisions of the PACA. License number 20070621 was issued to Respondent on March 23, 2007. This license was suspended on August 21, 2009, for failure to pay reparation awards, pursuant to section 7(d) of the PACA (7 U.S.C. § 499g(d)). The license terminated on March 23, 2010, pursuant to section 4(a) of the PACA (7 U.S.C. § 499d(a)), for failure to pay the annual renewal fee.

10. Respondent Miami Best Tropical Enterprise, Inc., during October 2008 through July 2009, failed to make full payment promptly of the agreed purchase prices, or balances thereof, in the total amount of \$299,065.01 to 9 sellers for 30 lots of perishable agricultural commodities, which Respondent purchased, received, and accepted in the course of interstate or foreign commerce. These amounts remained unpaid as of the date of the Complaint.

	Seller's Name	Trans actions	Commodity	Date Accepted	Date Payment Due	Amount Past Due & Unpaid
1	Western Pacific Produce Santa Barbara, CA	2	Mixed Fruit & Vegetables	9/25/08 to 10/25/08	10/5/08 to 11/4/08	\$6,078.16
2	Richard Cortell Marketing, Inc. Bakersfield, CA	1	Grapes	11/13/08	11/23/08	\$9,798.50
3	Champion Produce Sales, Inc., Parma, ID	2	Onions	11/18/08	12/9/08	\$20,504.50
4	Associated Potato Grower, Inc., Grand Forks, ND	1	Potatoes	11/29/08	12/9/08	\$11,075.00
5	DeBruyn Produce Co., Zeeland, MI	4	Onions	2/16/09 to 4/30/09	2/26/09 to 5/10/09	\$20,167.00
6	John Georgallas Banana Dist. Of New York Bronx, NY	1	Plantain	4/30/09	5/11/09	\$18,480.00
7	ATV Farms Holland Landing, OH	3	Onions	4/20/09 to 5/17/09	5/11/09 to 6/7/09	\$18,205.00
8	Bananas Y Plantanos de Guatemala Miami, FL	8	Plantain	5/20/09 to 6/23/09	5/30/09 to 7/3/09	\$73,426.85
9	American Hurricane Produce Grecia Alajuela, Costa Rica	8	Pineapple	6/26/09 to 7/10/09	7/6/09 to 7/20/09	\$121,330.00
	Totals	30 Lots				\$299,065.01

Conclusions

11. The Secretary of Agriculture has jurisdiction over Respondent Miami Best Tropical Enterprise, Inc. and the subject matter involved herein.

12. Miami Best Tropical Enterprise, Inc. willfully, flagrantly, and repeatedly violated section 2(4) of the PACA (7 U.S.C. § 499b(4)), during October 2008 through July 2009, by failing to make full payment promptly of the agreed purchase prices, or balances thereof, in the total amount of \$299,065.01 to 9 sellers for 30 lots of fruits and vegetables, all being perishable agricultural commodities, which Respondent Miami Best purchased, received, and accepted in the course of interstate or foreign commerce.

Order

13. Miami Best Tropical Enterprise, Inc. committed willful, flagrant and repeated violations of Section 2(4) of the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (the PACA) (7 U.S.C. § 499b(4)), and the facts and circumstances of the PACA violations shall be published.

14. This Order shall take effect on the 11th day after this Decision becomes final.

Finality

15. This Decision and Order shall be final without further proceedings 35 days after service unless an appeal to the Judicial Officer is filed with the Hearing Clerk within 30 days after service, pursuant to section 1.145 of the Rules of Practice (7 C.F.R. § 1.145, see attached Appendix A).

Copies of this Decision and Order shall be served by the Hearing Clerk upon each of the parties.

Done at Washington, D.C.
this 4th day of October 2010

Jill S. Clifton
Administrative Law Judge

Hearing Clerk's Office
U.S. Department of Agriculture
South Bldg Room 1031
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington DC 20250-9203
202-720-4443
Fax: 202-720-9776

APPENDIX A

7 C.F.R.:

TITLE 7—AGRICULTURE

SUBTITLE A—OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

PART 1—ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS

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SUBPART H—RULES OF PRACTICE GOVERNING FORMAL

ADJUDICATORY PROCEEDINGS INSTITUTED BY THE SECRETARY UNDER

VARIOUS STATUTES

...

§ 1.145 Appeal to Judicial Officer.

(a) *Filing of petition.* Within 30 days after receiving service of the Judge's decision, if the decision is a written decision, or within 30 days after issuance of the Judge's decision, if the decision is an oral decision, a party who disagrees with the decision, any part of the decision, or any ruling by the Judge or who alleges any deprivation of rights, may appeal the decision to the Judicial Officer by filing an appeal petition with the Hearing Clerk. As provided in

§ 1.141(h)(2), objections regarding evidence or a limitation regarding examination or cross-examination or other ruling made before the Judge may be relied upon in an appeal. Each issue set forth in the appeal petition and the arguments regarding each issue shall be separately numbered; shall be plainly and concisely stated; and shall contain detailed citations to the record, statutes, regulations, or authorities being relied upon in support of each argument. A brief may be filed in support of the appeal simultaneously with the appeal petition.

(b) *Response to appeal petition.* Within 20 days after the service of a copy of an appeal petition and any brief in support thereof, filed by a party to the proceeding, any other party may file with the Hearing Clerk a response in support of or in opposition to the appeal and in such response any relevant issue, not presented in the appeal petition, may be raised.

(c) *Transmittal of record.* Whenever an appeal of a Judge's decision is filed and a response thereto has been filed or time for filing a response has expired, the Hearing Clerk shall transmit to the Judicial Officer the record of the proceeding. Such record shall include: the pleadings; motions and requests filed and rulings thereon; the transcript or recording of the testimony taken at the hearing, together with the exhibits filed in connection therewith; any documents or papers filed in connection with a pre-hearing conference; such proposed findings of fact, conclusions, and orders, and briefs in support thereof, as may have been filed in connection with the proceeding; the Judge's decision; such exceptions, statements of objections and briefs in support thereof as may have been filed in the proceeding; and the appeal petition,

and such briefs in support thereof and responses thereto as may have been filed in the proceeding.

(d) *Oral argument.* A party bringing an appeal may request, within the prescribed time for filing such appeal, an opportunity for oral argument before the Judicial Officer. Within the time allowed for filing a response, appellee may file a request in writing for opportunity for such an oral argument. Failure to make such request in writing, within the prescribed time period, shall be deemed a waiver of oral argument. The Judicial Officer may grant, refuse, or limit any request for oral argument. Oral argument shall not be transcribed unless so ordered in advance by the Judicial Officer for good cause shown upon request of a party or upon the Judicial Officer's own motion.

(e) *Scope of argument.* Argument to be heard on appeal, whether oral or on brief, shall be limited to the issues raised in the appeal or in the response to the appeal, except that if the Judicial Officer determines that additional issues should be argued, the parties shall be given reasonable notice of such determination, so as to permit preparation of adequate arguments on all issues to be argued.

(f) *Notice of argument; postponement.* The Hearing Clerk shall advise all parties of the time and place at which oral argument will be heard. A request for postponement of the argument must be made by motion filed a reasonable amount of time in advance of the date fixed for argument.

(g) *Order of argument.* The appellant is entitled to open and conclude the argument.

(h) *Submission on briefs.* By agreement of the parties, an appeal may be submitted for decision on the briefs, but the Judicial Officer may direct that the appeal be argued orally.

(i) *Decision of the [J]udicial [O]fficer on appeal.* As soon as practicable after the receipt of the record from the Hearing Clerk, or, in case oral argument was had, as soon as practicable thereafter, the Judicial Officer, upon the basis of and after due consideration of the record and any matter of which official notice is taken, shall rule on the appeal. If the Judicial Officer decides that no change or modification of the Judge's decision is warranted, the Judicial Officer may adopt the Judge's decision as the final order in the proceeding, preserving any right of the party bringing the appeal to seek judicial review of such decision in the proper forum. A final order issued by the Judicial Officer shall be filed with the Hearing Clerk. Such order may be regarded by the respondent as final for purposes of judicial review without filing a petition for rehearing, reargument, or reconsideration of the decision of the Judicial Officer.

[42 FR 743, Jan. 4, 1977, as amended at 60 FR 8456, Feb. 14, 1995; 68 FR 6341, Feb. 7, 2003]

7 C.F.R. § 1.145