

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BEFORE THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

In re:)	P & S Docket No. D-10-0065
)	
Kao Vang and Chue Thao,)	
d/b/a California Fresh Meats,)	
)	Decision and Order
Respondents)	by Reason of Default

1. The Complaint, filed on December 28, 2009, alleged that the Respondent Kao Vang (an individual) and the Respondent Chue Thao (an individual), doing business as the partnership California Fresh Meats, were, in 2009, operating as a dealer without registering with the Secretary of Agriculture and without maintaining an adequate bond or bond equivalent, thereby willfully violating the Packers and Stockyards Act, 1921, as amended and supplemented (7 U.S.C. § 181, *et seq.*) (frequently herein the “Packers and Stockyards Act” or the “Act”), and the Regulations promulgated thereunder (9 C.F.R. § 201.1, *et seq.*).

Parties and Counsel

2. The Complainant is the Deputy Administrator, Packers and Stockyards Program, Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), United States Department of Agriculture (frequently herein “Packers and Stockyards” or “Complainant”). Packers and Stockyards is represented by Leah C. Battaglioli, Esq. with the Office of the

General Counsel (Trade Practices Division), United States Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-1413.

3. The Respondents are Kao Vang and Chue Thao, doing business as California Fresh Meats (frequently herein “Respondent Kao Vang and Respondent Chue Thao” or “Respondents”). The Respondents have failed to appear.

Procedural History

4. Packers and Stockyards’ Motion for Decision Without Hearing by Reason of Default, filed May 18, 2010, is before me. Respondent Kao Vang and Respondent Chue Thao were served on May 22, 2010 with copies of that Motion and copies of the proposed Decision and have failed to respond.

5. The Hearing Clerk had mailed copies of the Complaint to Respondent Kao Vang and Respondent Chue Thao, d/b/a California Fresh Meats, by certified mailings on December 29, 2009, together with copies of the Hearing Clerk’s notice letter and copies of the Rules of Practice. Respondent Kao Vang and Respondent Chue Thao were served on January 8, 2010 with the copies of the Complaint and the other documents and failed to answer. The Respondents’ answer or answers were 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 January 28, 2010. The Respondents failed to file an answer, so the Respondents are in default, pursuant to section 1.136(c) of the Rules of Practice (7 C.F.R. § 1.136(c)).

6. 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 Respondents' 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). *See* 7 C.F.R. §1.130 *et seq.*

Findings of Fact

7. Respondent Kao Vang and Respondent Chue Thao are individuals, doing business as California Fresh Meats, a partnership, with a business mailing address of 13600 E. Belmont, Fresno, California 93657.

8. At all times material to the Complaint, and particularly during February and March, 2009, the Respondents were:

- (a) Engaged in the business of buying and selling livestock in commerce as a dealer for their own account within the meaning of and subject to the provisions of the Packers and Stockyards Act;
- (b) Operating as a dealer while not registered with the Secretary of Agriculture, as required under the Packers and Stockyards Act; and
- (c) Not maintaining an adequate bond or bond equivalent, as required under the Packers and Stockyards Act.

9. In a certified Notice of Default Letter dated January 22, 2009, and received by Respondents on January 28, 2009, Respondents were informed that the Packers and Stockyards Program had information that they were buying and selling livestock in commerce and were therefore subject to the Act and the Regulations. Respondents were further informed that in order to come into compliance with the Act and the Regulations, they must complete and file an application for registration and obtain a condition 2 bond or bond equivalent. Respondents were informed that the amount of bond coverage must be based on the average amount of livestock purchased during a period equivalent to two business days, but in no case could the bond be less than \$10,000.00. Respondents were also informed that continuing to operate subject to the Act and the Regulations without registering and/or filing the applicable bond or bond equivalent could result in a complaint being filed in a United States District Court or an administrative complaint being filed.

10. On March 12, 2009, and again on March 16, 2009, a Packers and Stockyards Program representative personally met with Respondent Kao Vang and discussed the bonding requirements with him and gave him ideas of where to obtain a bond. Notwithstanding such notice, Respondents continued to engage in the business of buying and selling livestock as a dealer without being registered as a dealer with the Secretary and without maintaining an adequate bond or bond equivalent as required by the Act and the Regulations.

11. During February and March 2009, in the transactions more particularly described in Paragraph III and Appendix A of the Complaint and incorporated herein by reference,

Respondents engaged in the business of a dealer buying and selling livestock in commerce without maintaining an adequate bond or bond equivalent. The transactions occurred at Tulare County Stockyard, Inc., a posted stockyard in Dinuba, California; Fresno Livestock Commission LLC, a posted stockyard in Fresno, California; and Western Stockman's Market, a posted stockyard in Famoso, California.

12. Respondents registered and obtained the necessary bond coverage on February 9, 2010.

Conclusions

13. The Secretary of Agriculture has jurisdiction over the parties and the subject matter.

14. By reason of the foregoing Findings of Fact, Respondent Kao Vang and Respondent Chue Thao, doing business as California Fresh Meats, willfully violated section 312(a) of the Act (7 U.S.C. § 213(a)), and sections 201.29 and 201.30 of the Regulations (9 C.F.R. §§ 201.29, 201.30).

Order

15. Respondent Kao Vang and Respondent Chue Thao, d/b/a California Fresh Meats, as individuals, and their agents and employees, directly or through any corporate or other device, shall cease and desist from engaging in operations subject to the Packers and Stockyards Act without being properly registered with the Secretary of Agriculture and without obtaining and maintaining the requisite bond or bond equivalent, as required by the Act and the Regulations.

16. Respondent Kao Vang and Respondent Chue Thao are assessed, jointly and severally, civil penalties totaling **\$14,000.00** (Fourteen Thousand dollars), in accordance with section 312(b) of the Act. 7 U.S.C. § 213(b). The civil penalty payment instruments shall be made payable to the order of **USDA-GIPSA** and sent to:

USDA-GIPSA
P.O. Box 790335
St. Louis, Missouri 63179-0335

Payment shall be made within 90 days from the date this Order is final and effective (*see* next paragraph).

Finality

17. This Decision and Order shall be final and effective 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 6th day of July 2010

s/ Jill S. Clifton

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. . . .

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