

701—18.57 (422,423) Exemptions applicable to the production of flowering, ornamental, and vegetable plants. On and after July 1, 1995, the production of flowering, ornamental, or vegetable plants by a grower in a commercial greenhouse or at another location is considered to be a part of agricultural production. The word “plants” does not include trees, shrubs, other woody perennials, or fungus. The exemption also applies to implements, machinery, equipment, and replacement parts directly and primarily used in the production of flowering, ornamental, or vegetable plants and fuel used for providing heating or cooling for greenhouses or buildings or parts of buildings dedicated to the production of flowering, ornamental, or vegetable plants intended for sale in the ordinary course of business. The following exemptions are applicable to the production of flowering, ornamental, or vegetable plants.

18.57(1) Sales of fertilizer, limestone, herbicides, pesticides, insecticides, plant food, and medication for use in disease, weed, insect control, or other health promotion of flowering, ornamental, or vegetable plants to a commercial greenhouse are exempt from tax. For the purposes of this subrule a virus, bacteria, fungus, or insect which is purchased for use in killing insects or other pests is an “insecticide” or “pesticide.” See rules 701—17.4(422,423) and 17.9(422,423) for more information regarding these exemptions.

18.57(2) Sales of fuel to provide heating or cooling for a greenhouse or building or a part of a building dedicated to the production of flowering, ornamental, or vegetable plants held for sale in the ordinary course of business are exempt from tax. Electricity is a “fuel” for the purposes of this subrule. Fuel used in a plant production building for purposes other than heating or cooling (e.g., lighting) or for purposes other than direct use in plant production (e.g., heating or cooling office space) is not eligible for this exemption. For example, assume that there is a separate meter for electricity used only for heating or cooling. If a greenhouse is used, partially for growing plants and partially for a nonexempt purpose, a proportional exemption from sales tax may be claimed based upon a percentage calculated from a fraction, the numerator of which is the number of square feet of the greenhouse heated or cooled and used for raising plants, and the denominator of which is the number of square feet heated or cooled in the entire greenhouse. It may be necessary to alter this formula (by the use of separate metering, for example) if a greenhouse has a walk-in cooler and the cooler is used directly in plant production. Plant production has ended when a plant has grown to the point that it is of the size or weight at which it will be prepared for shipment to the destination where it will be marketed. Examples of nonexempt purposes for which a portion of a greenhouse might be used include, but are not limited to, portions used for office space, loading docks, storage of property other than plants, housing of heating and cooling equipment and portions used for packaging plants for shipment. See rule 701—15.3(422,423) regarding fuel exemption certificates and subrule 18.48(8) regarding seller’s and purchaser’s liability for sales tax.

18.57(3) Sales of gas, electricity, steam or other tangible personal property for use as a fuel in implements of husbandry used in the production of plants in a commercial greenhouse or elsewhere are exempt from tax. See 701—subrule 17.9(6), paragraph “a,” for a definition of “implements of husbandry.”

18.57(4) Sales of self-propelled implements. Sales of self-propelled implements or implements customarily drawn by or attached to self-propelled implements and replacement parts for the same are exempt from tax if the implements are used directly and primarily in the production of plants in commercial greenhouses or elsewhere. See rule 701—18.44(422,423) for an extensive explanation of this exemption. Implements exempt under this subrule include, but are not limited to, forklifts used to transport pallets of plants; wagons containing sterilized soil and tractors used to pull the same.

18.57(5) Sale of water used in the production of plants is exempt from tax. If water is not separately metered, the grower of plants must determine by use of a percentage that portion which is used for a taxable purpose and that portion which is used for an exempt purpose.

Nonexclusive examples of taxable usage would be rest rooms, sanitation, lawns, and vehicle wash.

18.57(6) For sales occurring on or after July 1, 1996, the gross receipts for the sale of property which is a container, label, carton, pallet, packing case, wrapping, baling wire, twine, bag, bottle, shipping case, or other similar article or receptacle sold for use in agricultural, livestock, or dairy production

are not subject to sales tax. This exemption also applies to producers of ornamental, flowering, or vegetable plants in commercial greenhouses or other places which sell such items in the ordinary course of business since that activity is considered to be agricultural. A noninclusive list of containers and packaging materials would include boxes, trays, labels, sleeves, tape, and staples.

18.57(7) Sales of machinery and equipment used in plant production which are not self-propelled or attached to self-propelled machinery and equipment are also exempt from tax. See rule 701—18.48(422,423) for a thorough explanation of this exemption. Listed below are a number of examples of machinery and equipment which are directly and primarily used in plant production. Sales of this machinery and equipment to commercial growers are usually exempt from tax.

- Air-conditioning pads*
- Airflow control tubes
- Atmospheric CO₂ control and monitoring equipment
- Backup generators
- Bins holding sterilized soil
- Control panels = heating and cooling
- Coolers used to chill plants*
- Cooling walls* or membranes
- Equipment used to control water levels for subirrigation
- Fans = cooling and ventilating*
- Floor mesh for controlling weeds
- Germination chambers
- Greenhouse boilers*
- Greenhouse netting or mesh = used for light and heat control
- Greenhouse monorail systems*
- Greenhouse thermometers
- Handcarts used to move plants
- Lighting which provides artificial sunlight
- Overhead heating, lighting and watering systems
- Overhead tracks for holding potted plants*
- Plant tables*
- Plant watering systems*
- Portable buildings used to grow plants*
- Seeding and transplanting machines
- Soil pot and soil flat filling machines
- Steam generators for soil sterilization*
- Warning devices = excess heat or cold
- Watering booms

*If not real property. See 18.48(1) “c”(1).

18.57(8) Miscellaneous exempt and taxable sales. Sales of pots, soil, seeds, bulbs, and “starter plants” for use in plant production are not the sale of machinery or equipment, but can be sales for resale and exempt from tax if the pots and soil are sold with the final product or become the finished product. Sales of portable buildings which will be used to display plants for retail sales are taxable. Finally, sales of whitewash which will be painted on greenhouses to control the amount of sunlight entering those houses are taxable sales of a “supply” rather than exempt sales of equipment. See 18.48(1) “c”(2) relating to “supplies.” See rule 701—18.7(422,423) relating to containers, including packaging cases, shipping cases, wrapping materials, and similar items sold to retailers, and see subrule 18.57(6).

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code sections 422.42(1), 422.42(4), 422.42(11), 422.45(39) and 422.47(4) and Iowa Code section 422.45 as amended by 1996 Iowa Acts, chapter 1145.