

Organism	Title of environmental assessment	Date of finding of no significant impact
<i>Psylliodes chalcamera</i> (Illiger)	"Field Release of <i>Psylliodes chalcamera</i> (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae), a Nonindigenous Leaf Beetle for Biological Control of Musk Thistle, <i>Carduus nutans</i> (Asteraceae)" (March 1997).	3/7/97

The environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact have been prepared in accordance with: (1) NEPA, (2) Regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1b), and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372).

Done in Washington, DC, this 18th day of March 1997.

Terry L. Medley,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 97–7382 Filed 3–24–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–34–P

Food and Consumer Service

Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request—Study of the Implementation of the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children

AGENCY: Food and Consumer Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Food and Consumer Service's intention to request Office of Management and Budget approval of the Study of the Implementation of the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children.

DATES: Written comments on this notice must be received by May 27, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Comments are invited on: (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection

techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to: Michael E. Fishman, Acting Director, Office of Analysis and Evaluation, Food and Consumer Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Requests for additional information or copies of the proposed information collection forms should be directed to Michael E. Fishman, (703) 305–2117.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: The Study of the Implementation of the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children.

OMB Number: Not yet assigned.

Expiration Date: N/A.

Type of Request: New collection of information.

Abstract: The Study of the Implementation of the School Meals Initiative (SMI) for Healthy Children is a three-year study designed to collect information needed to address current policy issues including those associated with the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children and Team Nutrition. A major part of this study is intended to provide the Food and Consumer Service (FCS) with descriptive data on the status of School Food Authorities' (SFAs) implementation of the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children and the changes that have occurred in the food service operations as a result of implementing this new regulation. FCS will examine trends in SMI implementation and characteristics of SFAs implementing certain elements of SMI and Team Nutrition.

A nationally representative sample of approximately 1,750 public school districts will be selected to participate in a three-year longitudinal survey beginning in School Year 1997–98. Data will be collected from the SFA directors using a mixed mode approach of mail/telephone surveys. The study combines elements of longitudinal research and cross-sectional surveys. A brief telephone survey of all State Child Nutrition Directors will be included

each year. On-site data collection activities to supplement the primary data collection efforts have been included as contract options in the second and third years should an issue need to be examined that requires direct observation or in-depth interviewing at the SFA or school level. However, this request for OMB approval is for the first year data collection instrumentation only. Separate OMB packages will be submitted for data collection instruments in the second and third years.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden is estimated to range between 45 and 60 minutes for School Food Service Authority directors; and range between 20 and 30 minutes for State Child Nutrition directors;

Respondents: State Child Nutrition directors will be asked to confirm contact names, addresses and telephone numbers of selected SFAs and respond to a brief telephone survey. SFA directors will be asked to respond to a self-administered mail survey with telephone follow-up.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 50 State Child Nutrition directors, 1,750 SFA directors.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: One.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 1,775 hours.

Dated: March 19, 1997.

William E. Ludwig,

Administrator, Food and Consumer Service.

[FR Doc. 97–7516 Filed 3–24–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–30–P

Food Stamp Program, Regulatory Review: Food Stamp Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Systems—Interoperability

AGENCY: Food and Consumer Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice: Request for Information.

SUMMARY: The Department is reviewing policy and seeking information related to interoperable food stamp EBT systems. In particular, the Department is asking for information on the costs and transaction fees that are now or may in the future be associated with food stamp EBT interoperability, as well as any

additional information that should be considered within the scope of this review.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before May 27, 1997 to be assured of consideration.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be submitted to Jeffrey N. Cohen, Chief, Electronic Benefit Transfer Branch, Benefit Redemption Division, Food and Consumer Service, USDA, Room 718, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. Comments may also be datafaxed to the attention of Mr. Cohen at (703) 605-0232. All written comments will be open for public inspection at the office of the Food and Consumer Service during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday) at the above indicated address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions regarding this solicitation for comments should be addressed to Mr. Cohen at the above address or by telephone at (703) 305-2517.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Executive Order 12866

This Notice has been reviewed under Executive Order 12866 and has been classified not major. This Notice will not have an annual effect of \$100 million or more, nor will it cause a major increase in costs or prices for consumer, individual industries, Federal, State or local government agencies, or geographic regions. This notice will not have significant adverse effects on competition, employment, investment, productivity, innovation, or on the ability of U.S.-based enterprise to compete with foreign-based enterprises in domestic or export markets.

Executive Order 12372

The Food Stamp Program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under No. 10.551. For the reasons set forth in the final rule in 7 CFR 3015, Subpart V and related Notice (48 FR 29115), this Program is excluded from the scope of Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

This action is not a rule as defined by the Regulatory Flexibility Act of 1980 (5 U.S.C. 601-612) and thus is exempt from the provisions of the Act.

Paperwork Reduction Act

This Notice does not contain reporting or recordkeeping requirements subject to approval by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under

the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 (44 U.S.C. 3507).

Executive Order 12988

This Notice has been reviewed under Executive Order 12988, Civil Justice Reform and found to be exempt from its provisions.

Background

The Food and Consumer Service has actively supported the implementation of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) systems by State agencies to issue and redeem food stamp benefits. To date, 18 State agencies operate food stamp EBT systems (along with other cash programs), eight of which are statewide operations. During the next two years, it is estimated that more than half the States will be operating food stamp EBT systems. Recently passed legislation mandates implementation of EBT systems for the Food Stamp Program by the year 2002.

As defined in the Food Stamp EBT regulations at 7 CFR 274.12, State agencies are required to provide the necessary point-of-sale (POS) equipment, telecommunications and other support to each authorized food stamp retailer at no cost. This State-provided POS equipment may be used solely for the Food Stamp Program and other welfare programs. When a retailer chooses to use its own commercial POS equipment, the State agency (or their EBT contractor) must be prepared to interface with that store's equipment. Any costs associated with the interface may be negotiated between the State and the retailers.

The Food Stamp EBT regulations also require State agencies to assess food stamp household access needs and equip those food retailers across project borders that are necessary for household access to their food stamp benefits. The State agencies have the flexibility to determine the access criteria. For other non-State retailers who desire access, the State agencies are encouraged to negotiate with these retailers to allow them to participate in their system. The specific terms for participation have differed across States and may involve leasing any necessary POS equipment, equipment purchases, and/or payment of transaction fees. All terms are negotiated with each retailer. These current retailer interoperability policies are designed to strike a balance between ensuring adequate retailer and recipient access, on one hand, and maximizing state flexibility and minimizing EBT costs on the other.

Extending access beyond the immediate borders of the States where current systems operate is only

beginning to be addressed by States. The States of Texas and New Mexico, for example, have developed the capability to exchange transactions with one another. As more State agencies implement EBT systems, access to benefits beyond the immediate borders of a State is becoming an important issue. Food retailers that operate stores in several States have expressed a desire to have interoperability much like the coupon system. They argue that such interoperability would provide greater access to their goods.

In part to facilitate interoperability and address retailer concerns regarding standardization of EBT systems, EBT Operating Rules have been developed by State agencies, food retailers, financial institutions, networks and others under the auspices of the National Automated Clearing House Association (NACHA). NACHA established an EBT Council to complete these national Operating Rules and have adopted them under the QUEST service mark. The QUEST Operating Rules define the responsibilities of retailers, financial institutions, networks and commercial third party providers in an interoperable EBT environment. By definition, these rules require retailers participating in the QUEST system to provide access to *all* QUEST cards and require States to arrange for their cards to be accessible at any POS or ATM terminal that displays the QUEST service mark. Several State agencies have elected to require use of the QUEST Operating Rules by their EBT contractor.

Recent proposals by EBT contractors have offered to meet the State agencies' requirements for QUEST interoperability through an EBT gateway or switch. The gateway would have the capability of switching a food stamp purchase or credit transaction to the correct EBT processor for authorization. Third party processors servicing food retailers for commercial debit or credit could connect to this single point, the gateway, and thus provide interoperability to their retailer customers for any food stamp card presented at the checkout lane. Any store, regardless of its location or the State card being presented, would thereby be able to accept any QUEST transaction. However, the providers of this service argue that this capability comes at a cost and have proposed to charge a gateway fee to retailers or their service providers for this switching service. The precise fee amount or who will pay this fee is still being discussed by the affected parties. The appropriateness of these fees is still being questioned as well. The

Department has been requested by both State agencies and retailers to establish policy in this area.

Requested Information

In light of the discussions that continue to take place, the Department is interested in obtaining information. Interoperability is recognized as being good for recipients and good for retailers, but it would appear to raise costs. We want to learn more about these costs: the nature of these costs and to what degree they will appear. Towards that end, the Department wishes to obtain input regarding the anticipated frequency of interoperable food stamp transactions, the relative costs to provide interoperability, and who might best bear the costs. More formally stated:

(1) How many interstate transactions are expected to occur and how often will they occur?

(2) Should interoperability between State EBT systems be required?

(3) What are the interstate costs and the factors that make up those costs?

Comments are encouraged on these specific issues proposed for consideration as well as any additional issues that should be considered within the scope of this review. Comments will assist the Department in determining whether policy changes are appropriate.

Dated: March 11, 1997.

William E. Ludwig,

Administrator, Food and Consumer Service.

[FR Doc. 97-7453 Filed 3-24-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-30-U

Foreign Agricultural Service

Notice of a Request for Extension and Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Department's intention to request an extension for, and amendment to, a currently approved information collection in support of the Dairy Tariff-Rate Import Quota Licensing program.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received on or before April 21, 1997 to be assured of consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS: Contact Richard P. Warsack, Dairy Import Quota Manager, STOP 1021, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW,

Washington, D.C. 20250-1021, or telephone (202) 720-2916. All comments received will be available for public inspection in room 5541-S at the above address.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Dairy Import Tariff-Rate Quota Import Licensing Program.

OMB Number: 0551-0001.

Expiration Date of Approval: June 30, 1997.

Type of Request: Extension and revision of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: The currently approved information collection supports Import Regulation 1, Revision 8 (Revision 8) (7 CFR 6.20-6.36) which was published in the **Federal Register** on October 9, 1996 (61 FR 53002), and governs the administration of the import licensing system for certain dairy products subject to tariff-rate quotas (TRQs). The TRQs were established in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) as a result of entry into force of certain provisions in the Uruguay Round Agreement. Imports of nearly all cheese made from cow's milk (except soft-ripened cheeses such as Brie) and certain noncheese dairy products are subject to TRQs and the licensing provisions of Revision 8. Import licenses are issued each quota year to eligible licensees and are valid for 12 months (January 1 through December 31). Holders of such licenses may enter dairy articles at the lower in-quota tariff rates. Importers who do not hold licenses may enter dairy articles at the higher over-quota tariff rates. Under Revision 8, there are three types of licenses: (1) historical licenses (listed in Appendix 1); (2) nonhistorical licenses (listed in Appendix 2); and (3) designated licenses under which U.S. importers are designated by the government of a foreign country to import certain cheese articles from that country (listed in Appendix 3).

For each quota year, all applicants must submit form FAS 923 (Rev. 7-96). This form requests applicants to: (1) identify whether they are applying for a license as an importer, designated importer, manufacturer, or exporter of certain dairy products; and (2) certify they meet the eligibility requirements of § 6.23 of the Import Regulation (7 CFR 6.23). Importers or exporters must attach documentation required by § 6.23 and § 6.24 as proof of eligibility for import licenses. Applicants for nonhistorical licenses for cheese and/or noncheese dairy products must also submit form FAS-923A and/or FAS-923B (Rev. 7-96). This form requires applicants identify requests for licenses listed on the form in descending rank-order.

After licenses are issued, § 6.26 requires licensees to surrender by October 1 any license amount that a licensee does not intend to enter that year. To the extent practicable, the Licensing Authority reallocates these amounts to existing licensees for the remainder of that year. The information collection is being amended to include: (1) form FAS-924A, License Surrender Form, and (2) form FAS-924B, Application for Additional License Amounts. Form FAS-924A will require licensees to complete a table listing the license number and surrender amount for each license being surrendered. Form FAS-924B will accompany a Notice to Importers which identifies license amounts available for reallocation. Form FAS-924B will require licensees to complete a table listing (1) the additional amounts being requested for specific dairy articles and the supplying country, and (2) the existing license to which the additional amount should be added, if applicable. The Department is currently developing an automated scanning system to expedite the surrender and reallocation process which will require uniform submission of such information.

The estimated total annual burden in the OMB inventory for the currently approved information collection is 375 hours. The estimated burden will be reduced by 105 hours to 270 hours. The estimated reduction is based on a reduction in the number of respondents which has mainly resulted from the strengthened eligibility requirements and increased disciplines of Revision 8, and recent widespread consolidation of firms among licensees. The estimated public reporting burden for the 1997 quota year and each quota year thereafter is set forth in the table below.

Estimates	FAS-923, 923A, 923B (Rev. 7-96) (one form)	FAS-924A, 924B (one form)
Est. number of respondents ...	340.00	100.00
Est. responses per respondent	1.00	1.00
Est. hours per response	0.75	0.15
Est. total annual burden in hours	255.00	15.00
Aggregate total ..	270.00 estimated annual burden in hours	

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Valerie Countiss, the Agency Information Collection Coordinator, at (202) 720-6713.

The Department requests comments regarding the accuracy of the burden