

Notices

Federal Register

Vol. 62, No. 40

Friday, February 28, 1997

This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Research, Education, and Economics

National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board Meeting

AGENCY: Research, Education, and Economics, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-463), the United States Department of Agriculture announces a meeting of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Secretary of Agriculture has asked the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board to obtain Stakeholder input on the priority issues for agricultural research, extension, education, and economics, and to establish an ongoing line of communication to the diverse stakeholder groups. The Advisory Board, which represents 30 constituent categories, as specified in the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (Pub. L. 104-127, 110 Stat. 1156-1184), has scheduled a Stakeholder Symposium on March 25th in Washington, D.C. The Advisory Board has broadly defined "stakeholder" within the context of its activities as follows: "any individual or group of individuals who have vested interested in, or are affected by, food and agricultural research, extension, education, and economics."

Approximately 150 individuals will participate in the Stakeholder Symposium, which represents one of several meetings being planned throughout the country to address the USDA Research, Education, and Economics (REE) draft Strategic Plans.

The March 25th Stakeholder Symposium will focus on the content of the REE Strategic Plans (i.e., plans of Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), Economic Research Service (ERS), the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), and REE mission area) and how well these plans contribute to the cross-cutting goals:

- (1) Agricultural System that is Highly Competitive in the Global Economy,
- (2) Safe and Secure Food and Fiber System,
- (3) Healthy, Well-Nourished Population,
- (4) Greater Harmony Between Agriculture and the Environment, and
- (5) Enhanced Economic Opportunity and Quality of Life for Americans.

Stakeholder input to the Strategic Plans will be organized around the following panel sessions: (a) Plant Systems; (b) Animal Systems; (c) Nutrition, Food Quality, and Health; (d) Natural Resources and Environment; (e) Processes and New Products; (f) Markets, Trade, and Policy; and (g) Human Capacity Building.

Each panelist will present a 10-minute formal statement on the Strategic Plans and how well they support the goals for USDA research, extension, education, and economics.

The general meeting of the Advisory Board will be held March 26-27, 1997. The meeting agenda includes: a report on the findings of the Stakeholder Symposium, a discussion of activities required under the FAIR Act of 1996, and the Board's recommendations for long-term agenda items. The Advisory Board will also begin discussions for its review and recommendations to the REE Implementation and Annual Performance Plans. The Advisory Board's Executive Committee and the REE Strategic Plan Working Group will provide progress reports to the Advisory Board. The membership of the newly formed agricultural facilities "Strategic Planning Task Force" will be announced. Invited speakers will provide the Advisory Board with an overview of the USDA National Research Initiative, USDA budget outlook, and farm concentration issues.

DATES: March 25, 1997, 8:15 a.m.-7:00 p.m.; March 26, 1997, 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; and March 27, 1997, 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

PLACE: Hotel Washington, Washington Room, 15th and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC.

TYPE OF MEETING: Open to the public.

COMMENTS: The public may file written comments before or after the meeting with the contact person listed below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Deborah Hanfman, Executive Director, National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board, Research, Education, and Economics Advisory Board Office, Room 3918 South, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP: 2255, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-2255. Telephone: 202-720-3684.

Done at Washington, D.C. this 21st day of February 1997.

Catherine E. Woteki,
Acting Under Secretary, Research, Education, and Economics.

[FR Doc. 97-4968 Filed 2-27-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-22-M

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 96-098-1]

Dupont Agricultural Products; Receipt of Petition for Determination of Nonregulated Status for Genetically Engineered Soybeans

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has received a petition from Dupont Agricultural Products seeking a determination of nonregulated status for soybeans designated as sublines G94-1, G94-19, and G168 derived from transformation event 260-05 that have been genetically engineered to produce high oleic acid oil. The petition has been submitted in accordance with our regulations concerning the introduction of certain genetically engineered organisms and products. In accordance with those regulations, we are soliciting public comments on whether these soybean sublines present a plant pest risk.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before April 29, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Please send an original and three copies of your comments to

Docket No. 96-098-1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Suite 3C03, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please state that your comments refer to Docket No. 96-098-1. A copy of the petition and any comments received may be inspected at USDA, room 1141, South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC, between 8 a.m. and 4:30p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. Persons wishing access to that room to inspect the petition or comments are asked to call in advance of visiting at (202) 690-2817.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Ved Malik, BSS, PPQ, APHIS, Suite 5B05, 4700 River Road Unit 147, Riverdale, MD 20737-1236; (301) 734-7612. To obtain a copy of the petition, contact Ms. Kay Peterson at (301) 734-7612; e-mail: mkipeterson@aphis.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The regulations in 7 CFR part 340, "Introduction of Organisms and Products Altered or Produced Through Genetic Engineering Which Are Plant Pests or Which There Is Reason to Believe Are Plant Pests," regulate, among other things, the introduction (importation, interstate movement, or release into the environment) of organisms and products altered or produced through genetic engineering that are plant pests or that there is reason to believe are plant pests. Such genetically engineered organisms and products are considered "regulated articles."

The regulations in § 340.6(a) provide that any person may submit a petition to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) seeking a determination that an article should not be regulated under 7 CFR part 340. Paragraphs (b) and (c) of § 340.6 describe the form that a petition for determination of nonregulated status must take and the information that must be included in the petition.

On January 8, 1997, APHIS received a petition (APHIS Petition No. 97-008-01p) from Dupont Agricultural Products (Dupont) of Wilmington, DE, requesting a determination of nonregulated status under 7 CFR part 340 for high oleic acid soybean sublines G94-1, G94-19, and G168 (sublines G94-1, G94-19, and G168) derived from transformation event 260-05. The Dupont petition states that the subject soybean sublines should not be regulated by APHIS because they do not present a plant pest risk.

As described in the petition, sublines G94-1, G94-19, and G168 have been

genetically engineered to contain the GmFad 2-1 gene, which causes a coordinate silencing of itself and the endogenous GmFad 2-1 gene. Suppression of the GmFad 2-1 gene in developing soybeans prevents the addition of a second double bond to oleic acid, resulting in a greatly increased oleic acid content only in the seed. The resulting oil contains an abundance of monosaturated oleic acid (82-85%), a reduced concentration of polysaturated fatty acids, and lower palmitic acid content. While the subject soybean sublines also contain the GUS and Amp marker genes, tests indicate that these genes are not expressed in the transgenic soybean plants. The added genes were introduced into meristems of the elite soybean line A2396 by the particle bombardment method, and their expression is controlled in part by gene sequences derived from the plant pathogens *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* and cauliflower mosaic virus.

Dupont's soybean sublines G94-1, G94-19, and G168 are currently considered regulated articles under the regulations in 7 CFR part 340 because they contain gene sequences derived from plant pathogenic sources. The subject soybean sublines have been evaluated in field trials conducted since 1995 under APHIS notifications. In the process of reviewing these notifications for field trials, APHIS determined that the vectors and other elements were disarmed and that the trials, which were conducted under conditions of reproductive and physical containment or isolation, would not present a risk of plant pest introduction or dissemination.

In the Federal Plant Pest Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 150aa *et seq.*), "plant pest" is defined as "any living stage of: Any insects, mites, nematodes, slugs, snails, protozoa, or other invertebrate animals, bacteria, fungi, other parasitic plants or reproductive parts thereof, viruses, or any organisms similar to or allied with any of the foregoing, or any infectious substances, which can directly or indirectly injure or cause disease or damage in any plants or parts thereof, or any processed, manufactured or other products of plants." APHIS views this definition very broadly. The definition covers direct or indirect injury, disease, or damage not just to agricultural crops, but also to plants in general, for example, native species, as well as to organisms that may be beneficial to plants, for example, honeybees, rhizobia, etc.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) published a statement of policy on foods derived from new plant varieties in the Federal Register on May

29, 1992 (57 FR 22984-23005). The FDA statement of policy includes a discussion of the FDA's authority for ensuring food safety under the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 201 *et seq.*), and provides guidance to industry on the scientific considerations associated with the development of foods derived from new plant varieties, including those plants developed through the techniques of genetic engineering. Dupont has begun the consultative process with FDA on the subject soybean sublines.

In accordance with § 340.6(d) of the regulations, we are publishing this notice to inform the public that APHIS will accept written comments regarding the Petition for Determination of Nonregulated Status from any interested person for a period of 60 days from the date of this notice. The petition and any comments received are available for public review, and copies of the petition may be ordered (see the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice).

After the comment period closes, APHIS will review the data submitted by the petitioner, all written comments received during the comment period, and any other relevant information. Based on the available information, APHIS will furnish a response to the petitioner, either approving the petition in whole or in part, or denying the petition. APHIS will then publish a notice in the Federal Register announcing the regulatory status of Dupont's high oleic acid soybean sublines G94-1, G94-19, and G168 derived from transformation event 260-05 and the availability of APHIS' written decision.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 150aa-150jj, 151-167, and 1622n; 31 U.S.C. 9701; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.2(c).

Done in Washington, DC, this 24th day of February 1997.

Terry L. Medley,
Administrator, Animal and Plant Health
Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 97-5023 Filed 2-27-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

Forest Service

Central Zone Noxious Weed Control Project; Idaho Panhandle National Forests, Kootenai and Shoshone Counties, Idaho

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: The USDA Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to disclose the potential