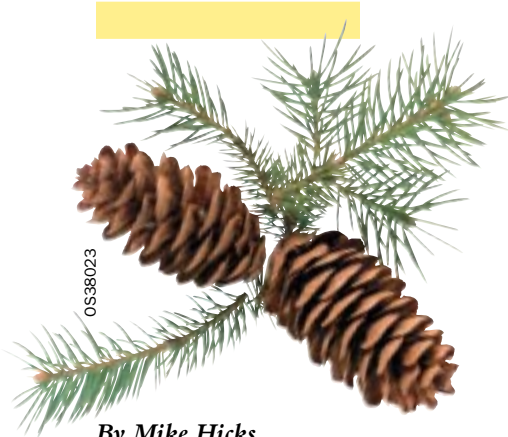


New Regs in the European Union (EU) Require Treatment for Wood Packing Material



By Mike Hicks

Two events have recently heightened concern that the pinewood nematode could become established in Europe: an outbreak in Portugal that likely began with infected packing material, and actual interceptions of the destructive pest in packing material shipped from the United States, Canada, China and Japan.

Member states of the European Union (EU), understandably, wish to bar the nematode from the continent's extensive forests.

The European Commission has adopted emergency measures requiring the treatment and marking of all new and used coniferous (e.g., pine, spruce, fir) non-manufactured wood packing material (NMWP) originating in the United States, Canada, China or Japan beginning October 1, 2001, to prevent the introduction of the pinewood nematode.

Work is currently underway in the United States to set up a program to meet the measures adopted by the EU Commis-

sion. Of the methods of pest-elimination that are acceptable to the Commission (see sidebar, page 22), the United States has settled on the "heat-treated or kiln-dried" mitigation method to eliminate this pest on NMWP.

The International Plant Protection Convention, recognized by the World Trade Organization as the official plant protection body, will likely adopt worldwide measures that are very similar to those of the EU in

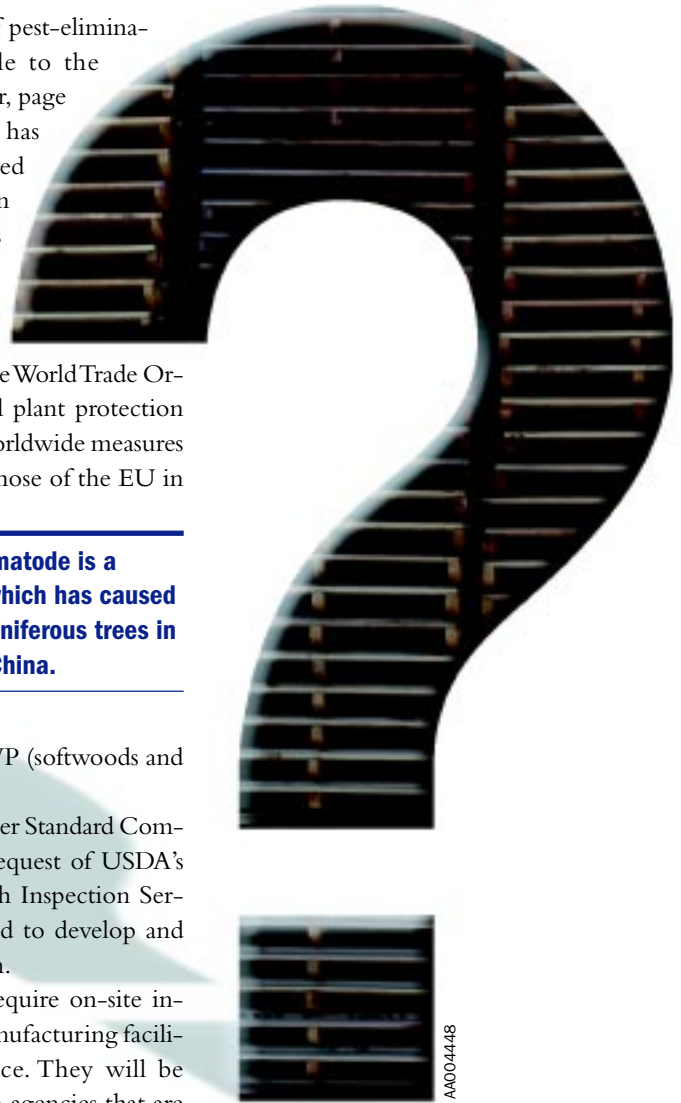
The pinewood nematode is a microscopic eelworm which has caused significant losses to coniferous trees in Japan and China.

April 2003 for all NMWP (softwoods and hardwoods).

The American Lumber Standard Committee (ALSC), at the request of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), has agreed to develop and oversee the U.S. program.

The program will require on-site inspections of NMWP manufacturing facilities to verify compliance. They will be conducted by inspection agencies that are accredited by ALSC. ■

The author is the Trade Policy Coordinator for the FAS Forest and Fisheries Products Division. Tel.: (202) 720-0638; Fax: (202) 720-8461; E-mail: hicks@fas.usda.gov



FAQs: How Will the New Measures Impact My Business in the EU?

When Do the New Measures Take Effect?

On Oct. 1, 2001. Exporters with shipments leaving the United States on or after that date for the EU and containing new or used NMWP made either entirely or partially of coniferous lumber will need to ensure that the NMWP meets the new requirements.

Will I Be Affected?

The answer to this question lies in the composition of packing materials you select for shipping. Overall, a significant portion of U.S. exports will be affected by the measures since most goods are transported using NMWP (e.g., pallets, boxes, crates). It is estimated that upward of 30 percent of the 450 million new pallets produced annually—as well as a higher percentage of the new pallets used for exports—are made entirely or partially of coniferous lumber.

Of the pallets and containers already in circulation, a significant proportion contain coniferous lumber.

What Do the New Measures Require?

The emergency measures require that all new and used NMWP originating from the four countries be:

- heat-treated or kiln-dried to a minimum core temperature of 56°C for at least 30 minutes in a closed chamber or kiln which has been tested, evaluated and approved for this purpose;

- pressure-treated with an approved chemical in accordance with an officially recognized technical specification; or
- fumigated with an approved chemical in accordance with an officially recognized technical specification.

The coniferous NMWP must also display an officially approved mark enabling the identification of the treater and the location of treatment. The use of the mark will be limited to NMWP manufacturers participating in the APHIS-ALSC program. (Coniferous NMWP originating in China must also be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate.)

If I Don't Comply, What Happens?

The EU has indicated that any NMWP that does not comply will be treated to eliminate the risk of the pinewood nematode prior to entry, be refused entry, or be destroyed. This will likely necessitate the off-loading of any cargo from the NMWP, and may lead to considerable delay.

Where Can I Get More Info?

Questions concerning the NMWP program should be directed to

- USDA/APHIS/Export Services, Tel.: (301) 734-8537 or visit APHIS' website for NMWP at www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/swp/eunmwp.html
- the American Lumber Standard Committee, Tel.: (301) 972-1700.



OS38023

For a list of NMWP facilities participating in the program, contact:

- California Lumber Inspection Service, Tel.: (209) 334-6956
- Northeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association, Tel.: (207) 829-6901
- Northern Softwood Lumber Bureau, Tel.: (207) 829-6901
- Pacific Lumber Inspection Bureau, Tel.: (253) 835-3344
- Redwood Inspection Service, Tel.: (415) 382-0662
- Renewable Resource Associates, Inc., Tel.: (770) 482-9385
- Southern Pine Inspection Bureau, Tel.: (850) 434-2611
- Timber Products Inspection, Tel.: (770) 922-8000
- West Coast Lumber Inspection Bureau, Tel.: (503) 639-0651
- Western Wood Products Association, Tel.: (503) 224-3930