Notices

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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

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 04–135–1]

Notice of Request for Extension of Approval of an Information Collection

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Extension of approval of an information collection; comment request.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's intention to request an extension of approval of an information collection for self-certification medical statements.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before March 29, 2005.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

EDOCKET: Go to *http://www.epa.gov/feddocket* to submit or view public comments, access the index listing of the contents of the official public docket, and to access those documents in the public docket that are available electronically. Once you have entered EDOCKET, click on the ''View Open APHIS Dockets'' link to locate this document.

Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery: Please send four copies of your comment (an original and three copies) to Docket No. 04–135–1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3C71, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737–1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. 04–135–1.

E-mail: Address your comment to *regulations@aphis.usda.gov*. Your comment must be contained in the body of your message; do not send attached files. Please include your name and address in your message and ''Docket No. 04–135–1'' on the subject line.

Reading Room: You may read any comments that we receive on this docket in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690–2817 before coming.

Other Information: You may view APHIS documents published in the **Federal Register** and related information, including the names of groups and individuals who have commented on APHIS dockets, on the Internet at *http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html*.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For information on self-certification medical statements, contact Ms. Linda L. Lane, Human Resources Specialist, Human Resources Division, MRPBS, room 1726, South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250; (202) 720–3519. For copies of more detailed information on the information collection, contact Mrs. Celeste Sickles, APHIS' Information Collection Coordinator, at (301) 734–7477.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Self-Certification Medical Statement.

OMB Number: 0579–0196.

Type of Request: Extension of approval of an information collection.

Abstract: The Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture facilitate the domestic and international marketing of U.S. agricultural products and protect the health of domestic animal and plant resources. The MRP agencies are the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), and the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA). Resource management and administrative services, including human resource management, for the three MRP agencies are provided by the MRP Business Services unit of APHIS, which is the lead agency in providing administrative support for MRP.

In accordance with 5 CFR part 339, Federal agencies are authorized to obtain medical information from applicants for positions that have approved medical standards. Medical standards may be established for positions for which the duties are arduous or hazardous or require a certain level of health status or fitness.

Certain positions in MRP agencies have medical standards. An example of such a position is the agricultural commodity grader position in AMS. Each year, AMS hires a number of agricultural commodity graders. These employees work under dusty conditions, around moving machinery and slippery surfaces, and in areas with high noise levels. They have direct contact with meat and dairy products, fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, and poultry products intended for human consumption or cotton and tobacco products intended for human use.

The MRP agencies require a self-certification statement from applicants for these positions regarding their fitness for the positions. The MRP agencies need this information to determine whether the applicants can perform the duties of the positions. Inability to collect this information would adversely affect the MRP agencies' ability to recruit and hire qualified individuals and carry out their missions.

We are asking the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to approve our use of this information collection activity for an additional 3 years.

The purpose of this notice is to solicit comments from the public (as well as affected agencies) concerning our information collection. These comments will help us:

(1) Evaluate whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(2) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the burden of the information collection, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(3) Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(4) Minimize the burden of the information collection on those who are to respond, through use, as appropriate, of automated, electronic, mechanical,

and other collection technologies, *e.g.*, permitting electronic submission of responses.

Estimate of burden: The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 0.1666 hours per response.

Respondents: Applicants for MRP positions with approved medical standards.

Estimated annual number of respondents: 300.

Estimated annual number of responses per respondent: 1.

Estimated annual number of responses: 300.

Estimated total annual burden on respondents: 50 hours. (Due to averaging, the total annual burden hours may not equal the product of the annual number of responses multiplied by the reporting burden per response.)

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

Done in Washington, DC, this 24th day of January 2005.

Elizabeth E. Gaston,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. E5–329 Filed 1–27–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–34–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 04–051–1]

Syngenta Seeds, Inc.; Availability of Petition and Environmental Assessment for Determination of Nonregulated Status for Cotton Genetically Engineered for Insect Resistance

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 Syngenta Seeds, Inc., seeking a determination of nonregulated status for cotton designated as transformation Event COT102, which has been genetically engineered for insect resistance. 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 this cotton presents a plant pest risk. We are also making available for public comment an environmental assessment for the proposed determination of nonregulated status.

DATES: We will consider all comments we receive on or before March 29, 2005.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

• EDOCKET: Go to *http://www.epa.gov/feddocket* to submit or view public comments, access the index listing of the contents of the official public docket, and to access those documents in the public docket that are available electronically. Once you have entered EDOCKET, click on the ''View Open APHIS Dockets'' link to locate this document.

• Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery: Please send four copies of your comment (an original and three copies) to Docket No. 04–051–1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3C71, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737–1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. 04–051–1.

• E-mail: Address your comment to *regulations@aphis.usda.gov*. Your comment must be contained in the body of your message; do not send attached files. Please include your name and address in your message and ''Docket No. 04–051–1'' on the subject line.

Reading Room: You may read the petitions, the environmental assessment, and any comments that we receive on this docket in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690–2817 before coming.

Other Information: You may view APHIS documents published in the **Federal Register** and related information, including the names of groups and individuals who have commented on APHIS dockets, on the Internet at *http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html*.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Margaret Jones, Biotechnology Regulatory Services, APHIS, Suite 5B05, 4700 River Road Unit 147, Riverdale, MD 20737–1236; (301) 734–4880. To obtain copies of the petition or the environmental assessment, contact Ms. Terry Hampton at (301) 734–5715; e-mail: *Terry.A.Hampton@aphis.usda.gov*. The petition and the EA are also available on the Internet at *http://www.aphis.usda.gov/brs/aphisdocs/03_15501p.pdf* and *http://www.aphis.usda.gov/brs/aphisdocs/03_15501p_ea.pdf*.

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 a determination of nonregulated status must take and the information that must be included in the petition.

On June 4, 2003, APHIS received a petition (APHIS Petition Number 03–155–01p) from Syngenta Seeds, Inc., (Syngenta) of Research Triangle Park, NC, requesting a determination of nonregulated status under 7 CFR part 340 for cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum* L.) designated as transformation Event COT102, which has been genetically engineered for selective lepidopteran insect resistance. The Syngenta petition states that the subject cotton should not be regulated by APHIS because it does not present a plant pest risk.

As described in the petition, Event COT102 cotton has been genetically engineered to contain an insecticidal *vip3A(a)* gene derived from *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) strain AB88 under the control of the actin-2 promoter derived from *Arabidopsis thaliana,* which confers expression of the VIP3A(a) protein throughout the plant with the exception of the fiber. Event COT102 cotton also contains the selectable marker gene *aph4* derived from *Escherichia coli.* The *aph4* gene encodes the enzyme hygromycinB phosphotransferase and its expression is controlled by the ubiquitin-3 promoter from *A. thaliana.* Agrobacterium-mediated gene transfer was used to transfer the added genes into the recipient Coker 312 cotton variety. The petitioner states that while the VIP3A protein shares no homology with known Cry proteins, testing has shown that VIP3A is similarly specific in toxicity