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Trade Policy Monitoring

EU Votes to Delay Debarking Requirement for Wood Packaging Material

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Report Highlights:

On January 17, 2006 the EU Standing Committee on Plant Health (SCPH) voted to delay implementation of Directive 2004/102/EC until January 1, 2009. Originally scheduled to enter into force on March 1, 2005, the European Commission Directive contains a requirement that wood packaging material (WPM) be made from debarked wood - a phytosanitary measure intended to prevent the introduction of pests into the EU. The intent of this new delay is to allow the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) time to evaluate the merits of a debarking requirement. The European Commission (DG SANCO - Health and Consumer Protection) is expected to conduct a progress review by September 2007.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
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[E3]

Summary

On January 17, 2006, the EU Standing Committee on Plant Health ([SCPH](#)) voted to delay implementation of Directive [2004/102/EC](#) until January 1, 2009. Originally scheduled to enter into force on March 1, 2005, the European Commission Directive contains a requirement that wood packaging material (WPM) be made from debarked wood - a phytosanitary measure intended to prevent the introduction of pests into the EU. The intent of this new delay is to allow the International Plant Protection Convention ([IPPC](#)- Technical Panel on Forestry Quarantine) time to evaluate the merits of a debarking requirement. The European Commission ([DG SANCO](#) - Health and Consumer Protection) is expected to conduct a progress review by September 2007.

Background

A number of WTO members have questioned the scientific justification of the EU debarking requirement. During the development of the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures ([ISPM-15](#)), the international standard for WPM, the IPPC specifically considered the merits of debarking. However, ISPM-15 currently only recognizes two approved pest control measures: heat treatment and fumigation by methyl bromide. The IPPC allows members to impose additional requirements (such as debarking), only if these requirements are "technically justified." Within the IPPC process, a measure is deemed to be "technically justified" when it is adopted on the basis of conclusions reached after an appropriate pest risk analysis, or after a comparable examination and evaluation of available scientific information.

Clearly, mitigating the risk of pest infestation is a very important objective for the broader international community. This risk will continue to motivate scientific discussions within the IPPC and ad hoc scientific advisory groups like the International Forestry Quarantine Research Group ([IFORG](#)). At the same time, many of the affected industries are hoping that regulatory agencies will carefully weigh all the cost-benefit realities before widely implementing any new pest control measures. WPM remains a vital part of international trade. An estimated 80 billion USD of US agricultural and commercial exports to the EU are shipped using WPM.

The European Commission is expected to conduct a progress review on Directive 2004/102/EC by September 2007. At the same time, starting July 5, 2006, the United States will be moving to full enforcement of ISPM-15 (Phase 3) on all imports containing WPM. For more information, visit the USDA/APHIS website: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/wpm/import.html>

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