

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. 95-040-5]

Agency Information Collection Activities; OMB Approval Received

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, this notice announces the Office of Management and Budget's approval of a collection of information contained in the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service final rule amending the regulations pertaining to genetically engineered plants introduced under notification and to the petition process for the determination of nonregulated status.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Cheryl Jenkins, APHIS Information Collection Coordinator, AIM, APHIS, suite 2C42, 4700 River Road Unit 103, Riverdale, MD 20737-1235, (301) 734-5360.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

On May 2, 1997, we published in the **Federal Register** (62 FR 23945-23958, Docket No. 95-040-2) a final rule amending the regulations at 7 CFR part 340, "Genetically Engineered Organisms and Products; Simplification of Requirements and Procedures for Genetically Engineered Organisms." This rule contains information collection requirements. On July 24, 1997, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approved the collection of information requirements with respect to this final rule under OMB

control number 0579-0085 (expires September 30, 1998).

Done in Washington, DC, this 1st day of August 1997.

Craig A. Reed,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 97-20818 Filed 8-6-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 97-069-1]

Availability of Environmental Assessments and Findings of No Significant Impact

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that three environmental assessments and findings of no significant impact have been prepared by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service relative to the issuance of permits to allow the field testing of genetically engineered organisms. The environmental assessments provide a basis for our conclusion that the field testing of the genetically engineered organisms will not present a risk of introducing or disseminating a plant pest and will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Based on its findings of no significant impact, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has determined that environmental impact statements need not be prepared for these field tests.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the environmental assessments and findings of no significant impact are available for public inspection at USDA, room 1141, South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. Persons wishing to inspect those documents are requested to telephone before visiting on (202) 690-2817.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Arnold Foudin, Deputy Director,

Biotechnology Evaluation, BSS, PPQ, APHIS, Suite 5B05, 4700 River Road Unit 147, Riverdale, MD 20737-1237; (301) 734-7710. For copies of the environmental assessments and findings of no significant impact, contact Ms. Linda Lightle at (301) 734-8231; e-mail: llightle@aphis.usda.gov. Please refer to the permit numbers listed below when ordering the documents.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The regulations in 7 CFR part 340 (referred to below as the regulations) regulate the introduction (importation, interstate movement, and release into the environment) of genetically engineered organisms and products that are plant pests or that there is reason to believe are plant pests (regulated articles). A permit must be obtained or there must be a notification, specific requirements met, and approval by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) before a regulated article may be introduced into the United States. The regulations set forth the permit application requirements and the notification procedures for the importation, interstate movement, and release into the environment of a regulated article.

In the course of reviewing each permit application, APHIS assessed the impact on the environment that releasing the organisms under the conditions described in the permit application would have. APHIS has issued permits for the field testing of the organisms listed below after concluding that the organisms will not present a risk of plant pest introduction or dissemination and will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. The environmental assessments and findings of no significant impact, which are based on data submitted by the applicant and on a review of other relevant literature, provide the public with documentation of APHIS' review and analysis of the environmental impacts associated with conducting the field tests.

Environmental assessments and findings of no significant impact have been prepared by APHIS relative to the issuance of permits to allow the field testing of the following genetically engineered organisms:

Permit No.	Permittee	Date issued	Organisms	Field test location
97-071-01r ..	University of Wisconsin	6-3-97	<i>Rhizobium</i> and <i>Sinorhizobium</i> bacterial strains genetically engineered to enhance yield on host legumes.	Wisconsin.
97-083-02r ..	Sanford Scientific, Inc	6-3-97	Geranium plants genetically engineered for disease resistance and extended flower life.	California.
97-087-02r ..	Pure Seed Testing, Inc	6-24-97	Creeping bentgrass plants genetically engineered for tolerance to the herbicide glufosinate and to contain the proteinase inhibitor gene derived from potato.	Oregon.

The environmental assessments and findings of no significant impact have been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA)(42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (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 31st day of July 1997.

Terry L. Medley,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 97-20752 Filed 8-6-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Housing Service

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

Farm Service Agency

Inviting Preapplications for Rural Cooperative Development Grants

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) announces the availability of approximately \$1.7 million in competing Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG) funds for fiscal year (FY) 1997. This action will comply with legislation which authorizes grants for establishing and operating centers for rural cooperative development. The intended effect of this notice is to solicit preapplications for FY 1997 and award grants before September 15, 1997.

DATES: The deadline for receipt of a preapplication is August 20, 1997. Preapplications received after that date will not be considered for FY 1997 funding.

ADDRESSES: Entities wishing to apply for assistance should contact the Rural Development State Offices to receive

further information and copies of the preapplication package.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

James E. Haskell, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Cooperative Services, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Stop 3250, Room 4016, South Agriculture Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-3250. Telephone (202) 720-8460.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Rural Technology and Cooperative Development Grants (RTCDG) program was established by interim rule on August 12, 1994 (59 FR 41386-98) and published as a final rule February 12, 1996 (61 FR 3779-87) and was authorized by section 310B(f) through (h) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. § 1932). The Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (the 1996 Act) removed "technology" from RTCDG, thereby directing the focus of the program specifically to cooperative development. The 1996 Act also clarified that public bodies were not eligible applicants, and modified application requirements and applicant selection criteria. The primary objective of the RCDG program is to improve the economic condition of rural areas through cooperative development. The program is administered through Rural Development State Offices acting on behalf of RBS. RBS is one of the successors of the Rural Development Administration pursuant to the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (Pub. L. 103-354).

Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to nonprofit corporations and institutions of higher education based on specific selection criteria. The priorities described in this paragraph will be used by RBS to rate preapplications. RBS review of preapplications will include the complete preapplication package submitted to the Rural Development State Office. Points will be distributed according to ranking as compared with other preapplications on hand. All factors will receive equal weight with points awarded to each factor on a 5, 4,

3, 2, 1 basis depending on the applicant's ranking compared to other applicants.

(a) Preference will be given to applications that:

(1) demonstrate a proven track record in administering a nationally coordinated, regionally or State-wide operated project;

(2) demonstrate previous expertise in providing technical assistance in rural areas;

(3) demonstrate the ability to assist in the retention of business, facilitate the establishment of cooperatives and new cooperative approaches, and generate employment opportunities that will improve the economic conditions of rural areas;

(4) demonstrate the ability to create horizontal linkages among businesses within and among various sectors in rural areas of the United States and vertical linkages to domestic and international markets;

(5) commit to providing technical assistance and other services to underserved and economically distressed rural areas of the United States;

(6) commit to providing greater than a 25 percent matching contribution with private funds and in-kind contributions;

(7) evidence transferability or demonstration value to assist rural areas outside of project area; and

(8) demonstrate that any cooperative development activity is consistent with positive environmental stewardship.

Fiscal Year 1997 Preapplication Submission

Due to the short preapplication period for FY 1997 funds, qualified applicants should begin the preapplication process as soon as possible. Preapplications must include a clear statement of the goals and objectives of the project and a plan which describes the proposed project as required by the statute and 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F. Each preapplication received in the State Office will be reviewed to determine if the preapplication is consistent with the eligible purposes outlined in 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F. Preapplications without supportive data to address