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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2006-0022]

Availability of Environmental Assessment for a Proposed Field Trial of Genetically Engineered Bahiagrass

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability and request for comments.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that an environmental assessment has been prepared for a proposed field trial using two transgenic grass lines. The trial consists of Argentine bahiagrass plants that are genetically engineered to express resistance to the herbicide glufosinate and resistance to the antibiotic kanamycin. Each of 4 sets of 12 genetically engineered bahiagrass plants will be encircled with a ring of several untransformed cultivars of bahiagrass. The purpose of the field trial is to study the likelihood of hybrid formation as a result of pollen movement from the transgenic plants to the nontransgenic plants. Data gained from this field experiment will also be used to evaluate current confinement practices for this species of transgenic grass. The environmental assessment is available to the public for review and comment.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before April 6, 2006.

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

- **Federal eRulemaking Portal:** Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and, in the "Search for Open Regulations" box, select "Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service" from the agency drop-down menu, then click on "Submit." In the Docket ID column, select APHIS-2006-0022 to submit or

view public comments and to view supporting and related materials available electronically. After the close of the comment period, the docket can be viewed using the "Advanced Search" function in Regulations.gov.

- **Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery:** Please send four copies of your comment (an original and three copies) to Docket No. APHIS-2006-0022, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. APHIS-2006-0022.

Reading Room: You may read the environmental assessment and any comments that we receive 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: Additional information about APHIS and its programs is available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Patricia Beetham, Biotechnology Regulatory Services, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 147, Riverdale, MD 20737-1236; (301) 734-0664. To obtain copies of the environmental assessment, contact Ms. Ingrid Berlinger at (301) 734-4885; e-mail: Ingrid.E.Berlinger@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." A permit must be obtained or a notification acknowledged before a regulated article may be introduced. The regulations set forth the permit

application requirements and the notification procedures for the importation, interstate movement, or release into the environment of a regulated article.

On October 21, 2005, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) received a permit application (APHIS No. 05-294-02r) from the University of Florida in Marianna, FL, for a field trial using lines of transgenic Argentine bahiagrass. Permit application 05-294-02r describes two transgenic lines of Argentine bahiagrass, *Paspalum notatum* Flugge cv. Argentine:

- Line 'B9' has been genetically engineered to express the phosphinothricin acetyl transferase (bar) gene from *Streptomyces hygroscopicus*, which confers resistance to glufosinate herbicides. Expression of this gene is controlled by the polyubiquitin (*ubi*) promoter, *ubi* 5' flanking region and the *ubi* first intron sequences from *Zea mays*, and the 35S 3' region from Cauliflower Mosaic Virus (CaMV).

- In addition to the gene sequences above, line 'P' has also been genetically engineered to express the neomycin phosphotransferase gene (nptII) from *Escherichia coli*, which confers resistance to the antibiotic kanamycin. Expression of this gene is controlled by the enhanced 35S promoter from CaMV, heat shock protein 70 (HSP70) intron from *Zea mays*, and the 35S 3' region from CaMV.

Constructs were inserted into the recipient organisms by microprojectile bombardment.

The subject transgenic grasses are considered regulated articles under the regulations in 7 CFR part 340 because they were created using donor sequences from plant pests. The purpose of this proposed introduction is for research on transgenic bahiagrass plants, particularly to investigate the frequency of cross-hybridization between transgenic Argentine bahiagrass with different bahiagrass cultivars under field conditions. Additionally, the data gathered during this study will be used to assess the confined status of this field release and refine the confinement conditions necessary for future releases of this grass species.

To provide the public with documentation of APHIS' review and analysis of any potential environmental impacts and plant pest risk associated

with the proposed release of these transgenic grasses, an environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared. The EA was prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (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). Copies of the EA are available from the individual listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 7701–7772 and 7781–7786; 31 U.S.C. 9701; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.3.

Done in Washington, DC, this 1st day of March 2006.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. E6–3166 Filed 3–6–06; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–34–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS–2006–0003]

Horse Protection; Public Meeting in Springfield, MO

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Animal Care program will host a meeting to present current information on the enforcement of the Horse Protection Act (HPA) and provide a forum for horse industry members and other interested persons to comment on the Horse Protection Program, development of the HPA Operating Plan for 2007 and beyond, and other Horse Protection matters. This notice provides the meeting's agenda, location, and date.

DATES: The meeting will be held from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on March 13, 2006. Registration will take place from 12:30 p.m. to 1 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the University Plaza Hotel and Convention Center, 333 South John Q Hammons Parkway, Springfield, MO 65806.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Darby G. Holladay, APHIS Legislative and Public Affairs, 4700 River Road

Unit 51, Riverdale, MD 20737; (301) 734–3265.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Animal Care, is announcing a meeting to discuss the enforcement of the Horse Protection Act (HPA). This meeting is designed to provide a forum for information dissemination on current initiatives by Animal Care. Further, this meeting will provide the opportunity for industry members and other interested parties to provide suggestions for the HPA Operating Plan for 2007 and beyond and comments on other Horse Protection Program matters during the listening session period on the agenda. Each speaker will indicate at registration their intention to address the Deputy Administrator during the listening session and will be allotted a set amount of time. Additional meetings of this type are tentatively scheduled to occur on the following dates and times: April 19, 2006, in Dallas, TX; May 17, 2006, in Somerset, KY; June 12, 2006, in Pomona, CA; and September 11, 2006, in Chattanooga, TN. These meetings will be announced in future **Federal Register** notices.

The meeting will, with the exception of possible minor modifications, follow the agenda below:

12:30 p.m. to 1 p.m.—Registration.

1 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.—Welcome and Overview.

1:15 p.m. to 3 p.m.—Horse Protection Program Update.

3 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.—Listening Session.

4:45 p.m. to 5 p.m.—Remarks and Closing.

Meeting notices, copies of the Horse Protection Act, HPA regulations, the HPA Operating Plan for 2004–2006, and other relevant documents are available on the Animal Care Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ac/hpainfo.html>.

Please note that this meeting is being held to provide for the exchange of information on the enforcement of the Horse Protection Act and is not an opportunity to submit formal comments on proposed rules or other regulatory initiatives. Written comments will be accepted and should be mailed to: USDA, APHIS, Animal Care, 4700 River Road Unit 84, Riverdale, MD 20737.

Done in Washington, DC, this 2nd day of March 2006.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. E6–3169 Filed 3–6–06; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food and Nutrition Service

Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request—FNS–543, National Hunger Clearinghouse Database Form

AGENCY: Food and Nutrition Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) invites the general public and other public agencies to comment on this information collection on which FNS intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by May 8, 2006.

ADDRESSES: Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information has practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions that were used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to Pam Phillips, Director, Consumer and Community Affairs, Office of Communications and Governmental Affairs, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 912, Alexandria, VA 22302.

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.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Pam Phillips, (703) 305–2298. Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Gregory Walton at the address listed above.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: National Hunger Clearinghouse Database Form.

OMB Number: 0584–0474.

Form Number: FNS–543.

Expiration Date: 7/31/2006.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved information collection.