

R.D., Food and Nutrition Information Center, NAL/ARS/USDA, Room 304, 10301 Baltimore Avenue, Beltsville, MD 20705-2351, (301) 504-7374. 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.

Keith W. Russell,

Deputy Director, NAL.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 98-027-1]

International Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standard-Setting Activities

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and solicitation of comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with legislation implementing the results of the Uruguay Round of negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, we are informing the public of international standard-setting activities of the Office International des Epizooties, the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention, and the North American Plant Protection Organization, and we are soliciting public comment on the standards to be considered.

ADDRESSES: Please send an original and three copies of your comments to Docket No. 98-027-1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Suite 3C03, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please state in your letter that your comments refer to Docket No. 98-027-1, and state the name of the committee or working group to which your comments are addressed. Comments received may be inspected 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 comments are requested to call ahead on (202) 690-2817 to facilitate entry into the comment reading room.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. John Greifer, Acting Director, Trade Support Team, International Services, APHIS, room 1128, South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC, 20250, (202) 720-7677; or e-mail: jgreifer@aphis.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The World Trade Organization (WTO) was established on January 1, 1995, as the common international institutional framework for the conduct of trade relations among its members in matters related to the Uruguay Round Agreements. The WTO is the successor organization to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. U.S. membership in the WTO was approved by Congress when it enacted the Uruguay Round Agreements Act, which was signed into law (Public Law 103-465) by the President on December 8, 1994. The Uruguay Round Agreements Act amended title IV of the Trade Agreements Act of 1979 (19 U.S.C. 2531 *et seq.*) by adding a new subtitle F, "International Standard-Setting Activities." Subtitle F requires the President to designate an agency to be responsible for informing the public of the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standard-setting activities of each international standard-setting organization. The designated agency must inform the public by publishing a notice in the **Federal Register** that provides the following information: (1) The sanitary or phytosanitary standards under consideration or planned for consideration by the international standard-setting organization; and (2) for each sanitary or phytosanitary (SPS) standard specified: a description of the consideration or planned consideration of the standard; whether the United States is participating or plans to participate in the consideration of the standard; the agenda for United States participation, if any; and the agency responsible for representing the United States with respect to the standard.

Subtitle F defines "international standard" as a standard, guideline, or recommendation: (1) Adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) regarding food safety; (2) developed under the auspices of the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) regarding animal health and zoonoses; (3) developed under the auspices of the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) in cooperation with the North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO) regarding plant health; or (4) established by or developed under any other international organization agreed to by the member countries of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or by member countries of the WTO.

The President, pursuant to Proclamation No. 6780 of March 23, 1995 (60 FR 15845), designated the United States Department of Agriculture as the agency responsible for informing

the public of the SPS standard-setting activities of Codex, OIE, IPPC, and NAPPO. This responsibility was delegated to the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) for Codex activities and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for OIE, IPPC, and NAPPO activities.

FSIS is responsible for publishing an annual notice in the **Federal Register** to inform the public of SPS standard-setting activities for Codex. Codex was created in 1962 by two United Nations organizations, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization. It is the major international organization for encouraging international trade in food and protecting the health and economic interests of consumers.

APHIS is responsible for publishing notice of OIE, IPPC, and NAPPO activities related to international standards and representing the United States with respect to these standards.

Following are descriptions of OIE, IPPC, and NAPPO scheduled activities for the coming year. In some cases, working groups and committees have not yet set meeting dates and locations or determined specific standards to be discussed. The OIE, IPPC, and NAPPO sanitary and phytosanitary standard-setting activities for the coming year may be modified as emergency situations may affect the agenda of each standard-setting body.

OIE Standard-Setting Activities

The OIE was created in Paris, France, in 1924 with the signing of an international agreement by 28 countries. It is currently composed of 151 member nations, each of which is represented by a delegate, who, in most cases, is the chief veterinary officer of that country.

The WTO has designated the OIE as the international forum for setting animal health standards, reporting global animal situations and disease status, and presenting guidelines and recommendations on sanitary measures.

The OIE facilitates intergovernmental cooperation to prevent the spread of contagious diseases in animals through the sharing of scientific research among its members. The major function of the OIE is to ensure that scientifically justified standards govern international trade in animals and animal products. The OIE aims to achieve this through the development and revision of international standards for diagnostic tests and vaccines for the safe international trade of animals and animal products.

The OIE provides annual reports on the global distribution of animal diseases, recognizes disease-free status of member countries, categorizes animal diseases with respect to their international significance, publishes bulletins on global disease status and timely reviews of pertinent animal health issues, and provides animal disease control guidelines to member countries.

Positions, policies, and standards established by the OIE can be adopted by consensus or by vote of the delegates upon recommendations from various commissions and working groups within the OIE. The following is a list of those commissions and groups. Each listing contains a description of the general purpose of the commission or group, the items on its current agenda, and the dates and locations of its meetings. Also listed are the U.S. agencies represented or serving as contact points on each commission or group. Commission and working group members are drawn from the five OIE regional commissions and are selected based on their expertise; each commission is made up of three to six members. The scientific community of the United States has the honor of being represented on most, but not all, of the commissions.

OIE Commissions and Working Groups

1. *Committee/Working Group:* General Session.

U.S. Participant: Veterinary Services, USDA-APHIS; Alternate—International Services, USDA-APHIS.

General Purpose: Establish, review, and adopt international standards dealing with animal health.

Date of Meeting: May (annually).

Location of Meeting: Paris, France.

Major Discussion/Agenda: Animal health standards related to trade, including risk assessment standards, global disease control procedures, regionalization, specific disease issues, and quality assurance of veterinary services.

2. *Committee/Working Group:* Regional Commission for the Americas.

U.S. Participant: Veterinary Services, USDA-APHIS.

General Purpose: The Regional Commission for the Americas is one of five OIE Regional Commissions. Regional Commissions nominate candidates for election to the expert commissions and working groups, discuss regional animal health issues, and propose topics of regional concern as agenda items or for scientific review at upcoming meetings of the OIE General Session.

Date of Meeting: May (annually) and March or April (every 2 years).

Location of Meeting: Variable.

Major Discussion/Agenda: Location of regional office for the Americas, animal health disease control issues of regional concern.

3. *Committee/Working Group:* Standards Commission.

U.S. Participant: Veterinary Services, USDA-APHIS.

General Purpose: The Standards Commission recommends new standards and changes in existing international standards for diagnostic tests and vaccines. These changes, when approved by the General Session, are published in the *OIE Manual of Standards for Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines*.

Dates of Meetings: February and September (twice annually).

Location of Meetings: Paris, France.

Major Discussion/Agenda: Review and recommend revisions to international diagnostic test standards published in the *OIE Manual of Standards for Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines*; review OIE reference laboratories, OIE reference sera, and laboratory quality assurance, and make recommendations to the OIE International Animal Health Code Commission; discuss the most appropriate diagnostic procedures for specific animal and poultry diseases.

4. *Committee/Working Group:* International Animal Health Code Commission.

U.S. Participant: International Services, USDA-APHIS.

General Purpose: The International Animal Health Code Commission develops and updates disease-specific international standards regarding the movement of animals and animal products and generic standards for animal transport, regionalization and risk assessment procedures, surveillance and monitoring guidelines, and evaluation of animal health infrastructures. The Director General appoints ad-hoc groups of experts to assist the Commission in the drafting and review of disease standards. When adopted by the General Session, these standards are published in the *OIE International Animal Health Code*, the WTO-recognized manual of standards for international movement of animals and animal products.

Date of Meeting: January and September (twice annually).

Location of Meeting: Paris, France.

Major Discussion/Agenda: The International Animal Health Code Commission reviews and updates the Code. Proposed changes are circulated twice yearly to member countries for

comments, and are then submitted for adoption at the General Session.

5. *Committee/Working Group:* Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Other Epizootics Commission.

U.S. Participant: None.

General Purpose: The FMD and Other Epizootics Commission monitors the world status of FMD and other major animal diseases and prepares epidemiological recommendations for adoption by the General Assembly.

Date of Meeting: January and September (twice annually).

Location of Meeting: Paris, France.

Major Discussion/Agenda: Current issues facing the Commission: International standards for FMD serological testing, protocols for endorsement of FMD-free areas, standards for epidemiological surveillance for contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, surveillance and monitoring standards for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), and criteria for recognition of BSE-free status.

6. *Committee/Working Group:* Fish Diseases Commission.

U.S. Participant: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Interior.

General Purpose: The Fish Diseases Commission drafted an *Aquatic Animal Health Code* and a *Diagnostic Manual for Aquatic Animal Diseases* that contain international standards for fish diseases. These manuals have been approved by the General Session.

Date of Meeting: September (annually).

Location of Meeting: Paris, France.

Major Discussion/Agenda: Current activities of the Fish Diseases Commission: Continual updating of the OIE fish disease manuals, preparation of the annual OIE report on the worldwide status of fish diseases, and planning and hosting international conferences on current topics in aquatic animal health.

7. *Committee/Working Group:* Ad Hoc Working Group on Biotechnology.

U.S. Participant: Animal Disease Research Unit, Agricultural Research Service, USDA.

General Purpose: The Ad Hoc Working Group on Biotechnology reviews the biotechnological aspects of each chapter of the *OIE Manual for Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines* and prepares an annual report and recommendations dealing with biotechnology for consideration by the General Session. The Working Group has also developed an international database on sources of biotechnologically engineered vaccines and diagnostic reagents.

Date of Meeting: The working group meets when called by the Director General.

Location of Meeting: Paris, France.

Major Discussion/Agenda: Current issues facing the working group: Ongoing reviews of diagnostic test kits, applications of genetic engineering to animal health, veterinary products developed using biotechnology, and possible uses of new biotechnological techniques in veterinary medicine.

8. *Committee/Working Group:*

Working Group on Veterinary Drug Registration.

U.S. Participant: Center for Veterinary Medicine, Food and Drug Administration, in cooperation with USDA-APHIS.

General Purpose: Prepares recommendations for the General Session.

Date of Meeting: Every 2 years.

Location of Meeting: Paris, France.

Major Discussion/Agenda: Current issues facing the working group: Developing training programs for veterinary drug registration officials of OIE member countries and assisting an OIE ad hoc group in developing draft international guidelines for veterinary drug registration.

9. *Committee/Working Group:* Working Group on Informatics and Epidemiology.

U.S. Participant: USDA-APHIS is a consultant to the working group.

General Purpose: The Working Group on Informatics and Epidemiology develops programs to increase the efficiency of OIE communications and to assist animal health officials of member countries to more effectively utilize contemporary communications technology. One project of the working group is HandiStatus, an information network on animal diseases of international importance.

Date of Meeting: The working group meets when called by the Director General.

Location of Meeting: Paris, France.

Major Discussion/Agenda: The working group is currently developing a Windows version of HandiStatus and designing and developing the OIE web page.

10. *Committee/Working Group:* Working Group on Wildlife Diseases.

U.S. Participant: Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Georgia.

General Purpose: The working group addresses the relationship between diseases of wildlife and those of domestic animals and poultry.

Date of Meeting: The working group meets when called by the Director General, usually annually in the summer or fall.

Location of Meeting: Paris, France.

Major Discussion/Agenda: Some issues currently facing the working group are: development of reporting methods for wildlife diseases (particularly those naturally transmissible between domesticated and wild species); facilitating worldwide wildlife disease surveillance and the applicability of routine diagnostic tests to wildlife species; and problems related to propagation of wildlife species in captivity and the disease hazards associated with their release from zoos or game farms.

11. *Committee/Working Group:* Ad Hoc Group on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs): Coordination of Research and Epidemiological Studies

U.S. Participant: Veterinary Services, USDA-APHIS (periodically, depending upon expertise required at each specific meeting).

General Purpose: The group reports its findings and research recommendations on TSEs and BSE to the Code Commission.

Date of Meeting: At the request of the Director General.

Location of Meeting: Paris, France.

Major Discussion/Agenda: Updating information on TSEs.

For further information on any of the OIE standards, publications, or commissions or working groups, contact Dr. Robert F. Kahrs, Trade Policy Liaison, National Center for Import and Export, VS, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 38, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231; (301) 734-6194; or e-mail: rfkahrs@aphis.usda.gov.

IPPC Standard-Setting Activities

The IPPC is an international treaty, first ratified in 1952, aimed at promoting international cooperation to control and prevent the spread of harmful plant pests associated with the movement of people and commodities.

The Convention has been, and continues to be, administered at the national level by plant quarantine officials whose primary objective is to safeguard plant resources from injurious pests. Under the IPPC, the understanding of plant protection has been, and continues to be, broad, encompassing the protection of both cultivated and noncultivated plants from direct or indirect injury by plant pests.

In last year's notice, we explained that the IPPC was undergoing revision as a result of the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO SPS Agreement). Signatory countries agreed on the need to revise the Convention to reflect significant changes in

international trade and plant quarantine since the last revision of the IPPC. New revised text was adopted by the FAO Conference in November 1997.

One of the primary objectives of the revision process was to ensure that the IPPC was able to develop international standards, guidelines, and recommendations as envisioned in the SPS Agreement. The standards, guidelines, and recommendations developed by the IPPC are important within the framework of the SPS Agreement for two reasons. First, a WTO member is required to base its phytosanitary measures on international standards, guidelines, and recommendations where they exist, or justify a measure that achieves a higher level of protection. Second, a standard, guideline, or recommendation developed by the IPPC serves as a "safe haven" standard, i.e., a national phytosanitary measure that conforms to an IPPC standard will be presumed to be consistent with the requirements set forth in the WTO SPS Agreement and in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Member countries agreed that in order for the IPPC to fulfill its role as a standard-setting body, the IPPC would have to strengthen its capability to develop phytosanitary standards. Although the IPPC began developing and adopting standards following the establishment of the Secretariat in 1993, it had not formalized the institutional capability for producing phytosanitary standards in the Convention. The revision of the IPPC began with the primary intent to (1) Institutionalize a standard-setting capability within the IPPC and (2) ensure consistency between the IPPC and the WTO SPS Agreement by incorporating and clarifying within the IPPC a number of phytosanitary concepts contained in the WTO SPS Agreement. The revised IPPC established the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures as the body responsible for carrying out the objectives of the revised IPPC. However, the revised IPPC will not be in force until two-thirds of the member countries accept the revisions. Until this happens, FAO has approved the meeting of an Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures, which will serve in the role designed for the Commission in the revised IPPC, but actions will not receive official recognition without FAO council action.

The revised IPPC also formalized the role of the IPPC Secretariat, which is responsible for implementing the policies and activities of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures. The Secretariat is appointed by the

Director General of FAO and is responsible for the dissemination of information to IPPC member countries regarding (1) Proposed and approved standards; (2) lists of regulated pests; (3) phytosanitary requirements, restrictions, and prohibitions; and (4) translations of all standards and meeting documentation into the official languages of FAO.

The Commission on Phytosanitary Measures

The Commission on Phytosanitary Measures actively examines the state of plant protection in the world and proposes and establishes standards that help to eliminate plant pests and control their spread. The Commission is composed of technically competent officials from member countries who are ultimately responsible for implementing IPPC standards and policies in their countries. The Commission provides member countries with a forum in which to propose international standards and discuss and exchange information on phytosanitary measures, standards, and other issues of concern.

IPPC standards are proposed in a number of ways. The IPPC Secretariat may initiate development of a draft standard by forming a working group to develop a standard deemed a priority by IPPC members. Draft standards or discussion papers may also be submitted to the Secretariat for IPPC consideration by regional or national plant protection organizations or other interested parties. The IPPC Secretariat refers draft standards to the Committee of Experts on Phytosanitary Measures (CEPM), which considers the drafts and recommends action. Drafts approved by the CEPM are then submitted to member countries for consultation and comment (country consultation). Comments made during country consultation are then considered by the Secretariat, which revises the standard before resubmitting it to the CEPM.

If the CEPM approves the revised draft, it is submitted to the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures for adoption.

Each member country is represented on the Commission by a single delegate. Although experts and advisers may accompany the delegate to meetings of the Commission, only the delegate or an authorized alternate may vote on proposed standards or other initiatives. Parties involved in a vote by the Commission are to make every effort to reach agreement on all matters by consensus. Only after all efforts to reach a consensus have been exhausted may a decision on a standard be passed by a vote of two-thirds of delegates present and voting.

Technical experts from the United States have participated directly in working groups and indirectly as reviewers of all IPPC draft standards. In addition, documents and positions developed by APHIS and NAPPO have served as the basis for many of the standards adopted to date.

Scheduled IPPC Meetings

The first meeting of the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures will be held in Rome, November 3–6, 1998.

The 10th Technical Consultation of Regional Plant Protection Organizations will be held in Rome, November 9–10, 1998.

The Regulated Non-quarantine Pest Working Group will convene during the first week of October 1998 (tentative), at a location to be determined.

The next meeting of the Committee of Experts on Phytosanitary Measures (CEPM) is tentatively scheduled for the second week in May, 1999.

Status of International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures

Various formal documents and standards are currently moving through different stages of development, review, and approval. The status of all IPPC formal documents and standards (existing, drafted, and proposed) is listed below.

Existing Standards (subject to revision):

- *The International Plant Protection Convention* (existing, and new revised text), revised November 1997.
- *Principles of Plant Quarantine as Related to International Trade* (reference standard), adopted in 1993.
- *Code of Conduct for the Import and Release of Biological Control Agents*, adopted November 1995.
- *Guidelines for Pest Risk Analysis*, adopted November 1995.
- *Requirements for the Establishment of Pest Free Areas*, adopted November 1995.
- *Glossary of Phytosanitary Terms* (reference standard), revised in September 1995.
- *Guidelines for Surveillance*.
- *Export Certification System*.

Proposed standards to be submitted to the Commission for final approval in November 1998:

- Determination of pest status.
- Guidelines for pest eradication programs. Draft standards undergoing country consultation prior to meeting of regional plant protection organizations in November 1998:
- Requirements for the establishment of pest-free places of production.
- Inspection methodology.

• Pest risk analysis for quarantine pests. Draft standards to be reviewed by the Council of Experts on Phytosanitary Measures in May 1999:

- Guidelines for an import regulatory system.
- Guidelines for phytosanitary certificates.
- Guidelines for surveillance for specific pests: Citrus canker.

Existing standards being updated for alignment with the revised IPPC (1997):

- *Principles of Plant Quarantine as Related to International Trade* (first draft prepared by the Secretariat).
- *Guidelines for Pest Risk Analysis* (first draft prepared by the Secretariat).

Standards under development by the IPPC. The following standards will be prioritized at the November 1998 meeting:

- Guidelines for the preparation of regulated pest lists (no draft or discussion paper).
- Technical justification for regulating nonquarantine pests (draft discussion paper by the IPPC Secretariat; working group for fall 1998).
- Guidelines for notification—interceptions and noncompliance (no draft or discussion paper).
- Systems approaches for risk management (discussion paper in preparation).
- Low pest prevalence (no draft or discussion paper).
- Quarantine nomenclature for plants and plant products (no draft or discussion paper).
- Dispute settlement (draft in preparation).
- Procedures for the preparation of a standard (pending discussion by the Commission).
- Pest-specific monitoring and testing requirements (no draft or discussion paper).
- Training and accreditation of inspectors (no draft or discussion paper).
- Pest control procedures (no draft or discussion paper).
- Procedures for post-entry quarantine (no draft or discussion paper).
- Systems for approving phytosanitary treatments (no draft or discussion paper).
- Guidelines for research requirements for treatment efficacy (no draft or discussion paper).
- Commodity-specific standards (no draft or discussion paper).

Further information on the IPPC standards is available from the FAO web page at: <http://www.fao.org/waicent/faoinfo/agricult/agp/agpp/PQ/Default.htm>. This page may contain outdated information but is tentatively

scheduled to be updated by July 31, 1998.

Information on U.S. participation in IPPC standard setting, as well as up-to-date information on activities and meetings, is also available by contacting Mr. Alfred Elder, Acting Deputy Administrator, APHIS, USDA, room 302-E, Whitten Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250.

NAPPO Standard-Setting Activities

NAPPO was created in 1976 to coordinate plant protection activities in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. NAPPO provides a mechanism by which the three countries can exchange information related to plant pest control. NAPPO cooperates with other regional plant protection organizations and the FAO to achieve the objectives of the IPPC.

NAPPO conducts its business through permanent and ad hoc panels and annual meetings of the three member countries. The NAPPO Executive Committee charges individual panels with the responsibility for drawing up proposals for NAPPO positions, policies, and standards. These panels are made up of representatives from each member country who have scientific expertise related to the policy or standard being considered.

Proposals drawn up by the individual panels are then circulated for review to government and industry by Canada, Mexico, and the United States, which may suggest revisions. Once revisions are made, the proposal is then sent to the NAPPO Working Group and the NAPPO Standards Panel for technical reviews, and finally to the Executive Committee for final approval, which is made by consensus.

The following is a summary of panel charges as they relate to the development of standards (see the NAPPO web page for more information, including a list of U.S. participants on the panels, at <http://www.nappo.org>):

NAPPO Standards Panel

The NAPPO Standards Panel handles or supports development of NAPPO standards and other cross-commodity issues, reviews proposed international standards, and recommends NAPPO positions on proposed international standards. This panel reviews the standards proposed by the other panels before they are sent out for full review, with a focus on modifying such proposed standards where necessary to clarify whether NAPPO or FAO definitions and standards will apply to particular NAPPO activities.

Other current charges to the Standards Panel include:

- Proposing elements for an international standard on regulated nonquarantine pests to submit to the FAO.
- Providing updates to the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures and NAPPO Standards for the NAPPO Newsletter.

Accreditation Panel

The panel will continue the development of the draft *NAPPO Standard for Laboratory Accreditation* for consideration by the NAPPO Working Group in July 1998 and approval by the Executive Committee in October 1998.

Biological Control Panel

No charges are currently available for this panel.

Biotechnology Panel

The panel will continue working on issues related to transgenic crops in their centers of origin. This includes completion of the report of the workshop on transgenic maize held in Mexico City in October 1997.

Citrus Panel

The panel will develop a draft NAPPO Standard for Phytosanitary Measures establishing requirements for the importation of citrus into a NAPPO member country.

Forestry Panel

The panel will:

- Incorporate comments from the Standards Panel into the draft *NAPPO Dunnage Standard*, circulate the draft for review, and revise it by June 30, 1998, for consideration by the NAPPO Working Group in July 1998. This draft standard is expected to require extensive review, and action may be suspended until each of the three countries has an opportunity for consultation with and input from affected parties.
- Develop a glossary of phytosanitary terms unique to the forestry sector by June 30, 1998, for consideration by the NAPPO Working Group in July 1998 and approval by the Executive Committee in October 1998.

Fruit Fly Panel

The panel will incorporate comments from the Standards Panel, circulate the draft *Surveillance for Fruit Flies Standard* for full review, and revise by June 30, 1998, for consideration by the Working Group in July 1998 and Executive Committee approval in October 1998.

Fruit Tree and Grapevine Nursery Stock Certification Panel

The panel will:

- Incorporate comments from the Standards Panel and circulate the draft *Grapevine Standard* for full review by June 30, 1998, for consideration by the NAPPO Working Group in July 1998. The policy of this draft standard is being carefully reviewed to determine its impact on current industry practice. The review period will be extended as necessary to accommodate further consultation and review.
- Continue work on development of *Citrus*, *Prunus*, and *Malus* standards; draft citrus standard for initial review by Standards Panel in July 1998, and circulate for full review in August 1998.

Grains Panel

The panel will:

- Review the treatment options available for risk management of *Tilletia indica* (Karnal bunt) and recommend treatments for endorsement by NAPPO.
- Identify whether there are phytosanitary or commercial problems associated with weed seeds imported into, or shipped within, North America.
- Develop harmonized procedures to deal with contaminated grain shipments.
- Develop a harmonized regulatory approach to deal with shipments of grain contaminated with *Tilletia* species of ryegrass.

Pest Risk Analysis Panel

The panel will classify areas within North America (as requested by the Grains Panel) according to the relative risk of the introduction (entry and establishment) of *Tilletia indica*.

Potato Panel

The panel will begin work with the European Plant Protection Organization on a global standard for potatoes.

Training Panel

The panel will develop criteria to assess the proficiency of persons to perform tasks described in the *NAPPO Standard for the Accreditation of Individuals to Issue Phytosanitary Certificates* by July 1998.

The current NAPPO meeting schedule is as follows:

NAPPO Annual Meetings

July 19–23, 1998, Halifax, Canada.
October 18–22, 1998, Guanajuato, Mexico.

NAPPO Working Group

July 20–22, 1998, Ottawa, Canada.
October 18, 1998, Halifax, Canada.

NAPPO Executive Committee

August 18, 1998, Grand Rapids, Michigan, United States.

October 19, 1998, Halifax, Canada.
Up-to-date information on NAPPO policies, standard setting activities, U.S. participants, and meeting agendas and dates is available on the NAPPO web page at <http://www.nappo.org>. Interested individuals may also contact Mr. Alfred Elder, Acting Deputy Administrator, PPQ, APHIS, room 302-E, Whitten Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250.

Comments on standards being considered or to be considered by any of the OIE, IPPC, or NAPPO committees or working groups listed above may be sent to APHIS as directed under the heading **ADDRESSES**.

Done in Washington, DC, this 9th day of July, 1998.

Craig A. Reed,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 98-18839 Filed 7-14-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Forest Service**

Texas Blowdown Changed Condition Analysis, National Forests and Grasslands in Texas, Angelina, Montgomery, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, and Walker Counties, Texas

AGENCY: Forest Service.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice is to announce that the U.S. Forest Service will prepare an analysis of storm-damaged areas on the Angelina, Sabine, and Sam Houston National Forests to determine changed conditions due to a catastrophic windstorm. The changed condition analysis will be used to identify proposed actions for site preparation and reforestation on national forest lands extensively damaged by the February 1988 windstorm. Initial plans are for the analysis to consider only areas within Management Area 1—Upland Forest Ecosystems and Management Area 2—Red cockaded Woodpecker (RCW) Emphasis on the three affected National Forests. The analysis will determine the existing conditions of these management areas, the desired future conditions for the areas as directed in the 1996 Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) for the National Forests and Grassland in Texas (NFGT), and potential

management actions to achieve the desired future conditions.

In addition to the determination of appropriate reforestation needs, the information gathered in this process would be used to analyze the need to amend the forest plan's allocation of Management Area 2 on the Angelina and Sabine National Forests due to changed conditions on these forest caused by the storm damage.

Public involvement will be requested and accepted continually throughout these efforts. Public involvement will also be conducted as part of "scoping" following the issuance on the Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement based on the results of the Changed Condition Analysis.

DATES: The Texas Blowdown Changed Condition Analysis is scheduled to be completed by October 1998.

ADDRESSES: Requests for information, and comments concerning the notice can be sent to: Team Leader, Texas Blowdown Changed Condition Analysis, National Forests and Grasslands in Texas, 701 North First Street, Lufkin, Texas 75961.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Keith Baker, Project Environmental Coordinator. Phone: 409-344-6205 (New Waverly, TX).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

1. Background on the Changed Conditions and Actions Taken to Date

On the afternoon of February 10, 1998, a storm with hurricane-force winds struck the forests of east Texas. The storm left a path of destruction from near Houston to Toledo Bend Reservoir, a distance of approximately 150 miles. Approximately 103,000 acres of national forest land on the Sabine, Angelina and Sam Houston National Forests were damaged by the windstorm. The LRMP had allocated the majority of the lands affected by the storm to Management Area 1 (upland forest ecosystems) and Management Area 2 (red-cockaded woodpecker emphasis). Other Management Areas (MAs) were also affected, including MA-4 (streamside management zones), MA-8 (special area management), MA-9 (recreation area management), and MA-10 (administrative and special use sites).

The Forest Service categorized the storm damage severity and extent on the three affected national forests as follows:

- extensive damage—loss of greater than 60 percent of the existing trees (11,600 acres),
- moderate damage—loss of 30 to 60 percent of the existing trees (65,400 acres), and

- light damage—loss of 10 to 30 percent of the existing trees (26,000 acres).

The NFGT determined that an emergency response was needed to meet three objectives: (A) reduce the potential for high intensity wildfires spreading into the intermingled private ownerships that include individual homes, subdivisions, and rural communities; (B) minimize further damage to RCW and bald eagle habitat; and (C) reduce the risk of anticipated bark beetle attack to living trees that could kill additional federal and private timber, RCW habitat, and bald eagle habitat. The Forest Service requested approval for alternative arrangements for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) from the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to expedite the removal of the blown down and damaged timber. On March 10, 1998, CEQ approved the Forest Service's request for alternative arrangements and the NFGT undertook actions to remove blown down and damaged trees to meet the three objectives. As part of these alternative arrangements, the Forest Service and CEQ agreed that the actions taken to reforest the damaged areas of the three affected national forests would be analyzed and the effects disclosed in an Environmental Impact Statement.

2. Preparation of the Texas Blowdown Changed Condition Analysis

The objectives of the Changed Condition Analysis are twofold: (1) to provide the basis for reforestation proposals in the storm damaged areas of the NFGT and (2) to analyze the need to adjust land allocations to MA-2 on the Angelina and Sabine National Forests to meet LRMP objectives for red-cockaded woodpecker habitat. The analysis will synthesize a range of information about the affected areas, including inventories of existing vegetation and special features such as heritage sites, threatened, endangered, and sensitive species; potential vegetation as guided by the Ecological Classification System (ECS) developed in conjunction with the Kisatchie National Forest and the Nature Conservancy; and management direction from the 1996 LRMP.

The inventory information will be used to define the existing conditions within the blowdown-affected areas. The ECS information and LRMP direction will provide the basis for the desired future conditions. Comparing the existing conditions to the desired future conditions will identify the management opportunities to meet the objectives of the LRMP.