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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

7 CFR Part 301

[Docket No. 98-072-1]

Gypsy Moth Generally Infested Areas

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Interim rule and request for comments.

SUMMARY: We are amending the gypsy moth quarantine and regulations by adding Indiana to the list of States quarantined because of gypsy moth. We are also adding Steuben County in Indiana to the list of generally infested areas. As a result, the interstate movement of certain articles from Steuben County will be restricted. This action is necessary to prevent the artificial spread of gypsy moth to noninfested States.

DATES: Interim rule effective July 16, 1998. Consideration will be given only to comments received on or before September 14, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Please send an original and three copies of your comments to Docket No. 98-072-1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, suite 3C03, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please state that your comments refer to Docket No. 98-072-1. 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: Ms. Coanne E. O'Hern, Operations Officer, Domestic and Emergency Programs,

PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 134, Riverdale, MD 20737-1236, (301) 734-8247; or e-mail: cohern@aphis.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The gypsy moth, *Lymantria dispar* (Linnaeus), is a destructive pest of forest and shade trees. The gypsy moth regulations (contained in 7 CFR 301.45 through 301.45-12 and referred to below as the regulations) quarantine certain States because of the gypsy moth and restrict the interstate movement of certain articles from generally infested areas in the quarantined States to prevent the artificial spread of the gypsy moth.

In accordance with § 301.45-2 of the regulations, generally infested areas are, with certain exceptions, those States or portions of States in which a gypsy moth general infestation has been found by an inspector, or each portion of a State that the Administrator deems necessary to regulate because of its proximity to infestation or its inseparability for quarantine enforcement purposes from infested localities. Less than an entire State will be designated as a generally infested area only if: (1) The State has adopted and is enforcing a quarantine or regulation that imposes restrictions on the intrastate movement of regulated articles that are substantially the same as those that are imposed with respect to the interstate movement of such articles; and (2) the designation of less than the entire State as a generally infested area will be adequate to prevent the artificial interstate spread of infestations of the gypsy moth.

Designation of Areas as Generally Infested Areas

In § 301.45, paragraph (a) lists States quarantined because of gypsy moth. Section 301.45-3 lists generally infested areas in the quarantined States. We are amending 301.45(a) of the regulations by adding Indiana to the list of States quarantined because of gypsy moth. We are also amending § 301.45-3 of the regulations by adding Steuben County, IN, to the list of generally infested areas. As a result, the interstate movement of regulated articles from Steuben County will be restricted.

We are taking this action because, in cooperation with the States, the United States Department of Agriculture

conducted surveys that detected all life stages of the gypsy moth in Steuben County. Based on these surveys, we determined that reproducing populations exist at significant levels in this area. Eradication of these populations is not considered feasible because this area is immediately adjacent to areas currently recognized to be generally infested and therefore subject to continued reinfestation.

Emergency Action

The Administrator of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has determined that an emergency exists that warrants publication of this interim rule without prior opportunity for public comment. Immediate action is necessary because of the possibility that the gypsy moth could be spread artificially to noninfested areas of the United States, where it could cause economic losses due to defoliation of susceptible forest and shade trees.

Because prior notice and other public procedures with respect to this action are impracticable and contrary to the public interest under these conditions, we find good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553 to make it effective upon publication in the **Federal Register**. We will consider comments that are received within 60 days of publication of this rule in the **Federal Register**. After the comment period closes, we will publish another document in the **Federal Register**. It will include a discussion of any comments we receive and any amendments we are making to the rule as a result of the comments.

Executive Order 12866 and Regulatory Flexibility Act

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12866. For this action, the Office of Management and Budget has waived its review process required by Executive Order 12866.

This action amends the list of generally infested areas under the gypsy moth quarantine and regulations by adding Steuben County, IN. Immediate action is necessary to prevent the artificial spread of gypsy moth to noninfested areas of the United States.

This emergency situation makes compliance with section 603 and timely compliance with section 604 of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*) impracticable. If we determine that this rule would have a significant economic impact on a substantial

number of small entities, then we will discuss the issues raised by section 604 of the Regulatory Flexibility Act in our Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis.

Executive Order 12372

This program/activity is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under No. 10.025 and is subject to Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. (See 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V.)

Executive Order 12988

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12988, Civil Justice Reform. This rule: (1) Preempts all State and local laws and regulations that are inconsistent with this rule; (2) has no retroactive effect; and (3) does not require administrative proceedings before parties may file suit in court challenging this rule.

Paperwork Reduction Act

This rule contains no information collection or recordkeeping requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*).

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 301

Agricultural commodities, Plant diseases and pests, Quarantine, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Transportation.

Accordingly, we are amending 7 CFR part 301 as follows:

PART 301—DOMESTIC QUARANTINE NOTICES

1. The authority citation for part 301 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 147a, 150bb, 150dd, 150ee, 150ff, 161, 162, and 164–167; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.2(c).

§ 301.45 [Amended]

2. In § 301.45, paragraph (a) is amended by adding “Indiana,” immediately before “Maine.”.

3. In § 301.45–3, paragraph (a) is amended by adding an entry for Indiana, in alphabetical order, to read as follows:

§ 301.45–3 Generally infested areas.

(a) * * *

Indiana

Steuben County. The entire county.

* * * * *

Done in Washington, DC, this 10th day of July 1998.

Craig A. Reed,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 98–19001 Filed 7–15–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–34–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

7 CFR Part 931

[Docket No. FV98–931–1 IFR]

Fresh Bartlett Pears Grown in Oregon and Washington; Decreased Assessment Rate

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Interim final rule with request for comments.

SUMMARY: This interim final rule decreases the assessment rate established for the Northwest Fresh Bartlett Pear Marketing Committee (Committee) under Marketing Order No. 931 for the 1998–99 and subsequent fiscal periods from \$0.03 to \$0.02 per standard box handled. The Committee is responsible for local administration of the marketing order which regulates the handling of fresh Bartlett pears grown in Oregon and Washington. Authorization to assess fresh Bartlett pear handlers enables the Committee to incur expenses that are reasonable and necessary to administer the program. The 1998–99 fiscal period began July 1 and ends June 30. The assessment rate will continue in effect indefinitely unless modified, suspended, or terminated.

DATES: Effective July 17, 1998. Comments received by September 14, 1998, will be considered prior to issuance of a final rule.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit written comments concerning this rule. Comments must be sent to the Docket Clerk, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, Room 2525–S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090–6456; Fax (202) 205–6632. Comments should reference the docket number and the date and page number of this issue of the **Federal Register** and will be available for public inspection in the Office of the Docket Clerk during regular business hours.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Teresa L. Hutchinson, Northwest Marketing Field Office, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, 1220 SW Third Avenue, Room 369, Portland, OR 97204; telephone: (503) 326–2724,

Fax: (503) 326–7440 or George J. Kelhart, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, Room 2525–S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090–6456; telephone: (202) 720–2491, Fax: (202) 205–6632. Small businesses may request information on compliance with this regulation by contacting Jay Guerber, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, Room 2525–S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090–6456; telephone: (202) 720–2491, Fax: (202) 205–6632.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This rule is issued under Marketing Agreement No. 141 and Order No. 931 (7 CFR part 931), regulating the handling of fresh Bartlett pears grown in Oregon and Washington hereinafter referred to as the “order.” The marketing agreement and order are effective under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, as amended (7 U.S.C. 601–674), hereinafter referred to as the “Act.”

The Department of Agriculture (Department) is issuing this rule in conformance with Executive Order 12866.

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12988, Civil Justice Reform. Under the marketing order now in effect, fresh Bartlett pear handlers are subject to assessments. Funds to administer the order are derived from such assessments. It is intended that the assessment rate as issued herein will be applicable to all assessable fresh Bartlett pears beginning July 1, 1998, and continuing until modified, suspended, or terminated. This rule will not preempt any State or local laws, regulations, or policies, unless they present an irreconcilable conflict with this rule.

The Act provides that administrative proceedings must be exhausted before parties may file suit in court. Under section 608c(15)(A) of the Act, any handler subject to an order may file with the Secretary a petition stating that the order, any provision of the order, or any obligation imposed in connection with the order is not in accordance with law and request a modification of the order or to be exempted therefrom. Such handler is afforded the opportunity for a hearing on the petition. After the hearing the Secretary would rule on the petition. The Act provides that the district court of the United States in any district in which the handler is an inhabitant, or has his or her principal place of business, has jurisdiction to review the Secretary's ruling on the petition, provided an action is filed not