

Notices

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Friday, January 8, 1999

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

Office of the Secretary

Research, Education, and Economics; Notice of Strategic Planning Task Force Meeting

AGENCY: Research, Education, and Economics, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The United States Department of Agriculture announces a meeting of the Strategic Planning Task Force on Research Facilities.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Strategic Planning Task Force on Research Facilities, currently consisting of 14 members, is scheduled to meet for the seventh of eight planned meetings. The meeting is scheduled to be held at the River Inn, 924 25th Street, Washington, DC, beginning at 8:00 a.m. on February 24 and concluding at 11:00 a.m. on February 26. The meeting will be a review of the data collected by the Task Force and will continue discussion of the draft report.

TIMES AND DATES: February 24, 1999, 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; February 25, 1999, 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; and February 26, 1999, 8:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m.

PLACE: The River Inn, Washington, DC.

TYPE OF MEETING: Open to the public.

COMMENTS: The public may file written comments before or after the meeting with the contact person listed below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mitch Geasler, Project Director, Strategic Planning Task Force on Research Facilities, Room 344–A Jamie L. Whitten Building, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250–0113. Telephone 202–720–3803.

Done at Washington, DC, this 4th day of January 1999.

I. Miley Gonzalez,

Under Secretary, Research, Education, and Economics.

[FR Doc. 99–360 Filed 1–7–99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 98–079–2]

Novartis Seeds and Monsanto Co.; Availability of Determination of Nonregulated Status for Sugar Beet Genetically Engineered for Glyphosate Herbicide Tolerance

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public of our determination that the Novartis Seeds and Monsanto Company's sugar beet line designated as GTSB77, which has been genetically engineered for tolerance to the herbicide glyphosate, is no longer considered a regulated article under our regulations governing the introduction of certain genetically engineered organisms. Our determination is based on our evaluation of data submitted by Novartis Seeds and Monsanto Company in their petition for a determination of nonregulated status and an analysis of other scientific data. This notice also announces the availability of our written determination document and its associated environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact.

EFFECTIVE DATE: December 23, 1998.

ADDRESSES: The determination, an environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact, the petition, and all written comment 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 those documents are asked to call in advance of visiting at (202) 690–2817 to facilitate entry into the reading room.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. James White, Biotechnology and Biological Analysis, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 147, Riverdale, MD

20737–1236; (301) 734–5940. To obtain a copy of the determination or the environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact, contact Ms. Kay Peterson at (301) 734–4885; e-mail: Kay.Peterson@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

On June 22, 1998, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) received a petition (APHIS Petition No. 98–173–01p) from Novartis Seeds (Novartis) of Research Triangle Park, NC, and Monsanto Company (Monsanto) of St. Louis, MO, (Novartis/Monsanto) seeking a determination that a sugar beet (*Beta vulgaris* L.) line designated as GTSB77, which has been genetically engineered for tolerance to the herbicide glyphosate, does not present a plant pest risk and, therefore, is not a regulated article under APHIS' regulations in 7 CFR part 340.

On August 20, 1998, APHIS published a notice in the **Federal Register** (63 FR 44604–44605, Docket No. 98–079–1) announcing that the Novartis/Monsanto petition had been received and was available for public review. The notice also discussed the role of APHIS, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Food and Drug Administration in regulating the subject sugar beet line and food products derived from it. In the notice, APHIS solicited written comments from the public as to whether this sugar beet line posed a plant pest risk. The comments were to have been received by APHIS on or before October 19, 1998. APHIS received one comment on the subject petition during the designated 60-day comment period. The comment was from an organization representing North American sugar beet processors, and it was in support of the petition.

Analysis

The GTSB77 sugar beet line has been genetically engineered to express an enolpyruvylshikimate-3-phosphate synthase (EPSPS) enzyme derived from *Agrobacterium* sp. strain CP4 (CP4 EPSPS), and the ^b-D-glucuronidase (GUS) protein from *Escherichia coli*. The CP4 EPSPS enzyme confers tolerance to the herbicide glyphosate, and the GUS protein serves as a marker in the plant transformation process. The subject sugar beet line also expresses a novel protein known as 34550, which