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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 98-085-3]

Aquaculture; Public Meeting

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: This is to notify the aquaculture industries, interested parties, and the general public that a public meeting will be held to discuss how and to what extent the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service should regulate aquatic species, and to discuss any other issues concerning possible regulation of aquaculture by the Agency.

DATES: The public meeting will be held on Friday, February 16, 2001, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The public meeting will be held at the Radisson Inn Cincinnati Airport, Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport, Hebron, KY, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the North Central Regional Aquaculture Center.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For information about the APHIS public meeting, contact Dr. Otis Miller, Jr., National Aquaculture Coordinator, Center for Planning, Certification, and Monitoring, VS, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 46, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231, (301) 734-6188.

For information regarding the annual meeting of the North Central Regional Aquaculture Center, contact Liz Bartels at bartels@pilot.msu.edu or (517) 353-1962.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On May 4, 1999, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) published in the *Federal Register* (64 FR 23795-23796, Docket No. 98-085-1) an advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPR) titled "Aquaculture: Farm-

Raised Fin Fish." We published this ANPR after receiving petitions¹ asking us to regulate aquaculture in various ways. Many petitioners asked us to define farmed aquatic animals as livestock. In general, the petitioners seemed to be interested in receiving the same services that domestic producers of livestock receive for animals moving in interstate and foreign commerce. However, based on the petitions alone, it was difficult for us to determine what segments of the industry want services and exactly what services they want. It was also difficult to determine the objectives sought by the petitioners who were requesting Federal regulation. We published the ANPR in an attempt to clarify the industry's needs, the nature of the services sought, and the concerns the petitioners had with regard to such regulations.

We received 55 comments² in response to the ANPR. A majority of the commenters supported the idea of APHIS regulation of cultured fin fish. Unfortunately, the commenters generally did not clearly distinguish between fin fish raised for food and ornamental fin fish. Commenters who wanted regulation were, however, very clear that they want programs to prevent and control disease and to support increased commerce, both domestic and export.

The commenters also suggested that any rulemaking initiated by APHIS be a negotiated rulemaking. In negotiated rulemaking, industry representatives and other interested persons meet with APHIS officials and draft proposed regulations together. The proposed regulations are then published for public comment. Negotiated rulemaking is designed to ensure that all interested

persons are involved together from the start in the development of regulations.

Unfortunately, negotiated rulemaking is not suitable for all situations. It works well when there is a small number of interested parties, and the parties are easy to identify. This is not the case with regard to aquaculture. The aquaculture industry is very large and diverse. It would be difficult for us to identify everyone who should be represented in a negotiated rulemaking. In addition, there are many parties outside aquaculture that would have a substantial interest in such a rulemaking. In our view, the number of people who would need to participate in a negotiated rulemaking would be too large and would suggest that negotiated rulemaking is not appropriate. Furthermore, a negotiated rulemaking would be expensive, and APHIS does not have adequate funds. Therefore, we have concluded that it would not be appropriate to pursue an aquaculture negotiated rulemaking.

We have not, however, decided whether to pursue aquaculture rulemaking by other means. Before we make that decision, we want to have as much information as possible from all interested persons, and we want to provide the aquaculture industries and other interested persons with as much opportunity as possible to discuss with us and inform us regarding the relevant issues.

Therefore, we are holding a series of public meetings. Public meetings allow anyone who is interested—industry representatives, producers, consumers, and others—to present their views and to exchange information among themselves and with APHIS.

There are no set agendas for the meetings. Any issues and concerns related to aquaculture and possible APHIS regulatory action can be discussed. However, there are three specific issues on which we would like more information. These are issues that the people and organizations who commented on our ANPR either did not address or were unclear about. Specifically, if APHIS does propose regulations: (1) Should our program be mandatory or voluntary; (2) should we cover shell fish; and (3) should we cover ornamental fin fish?

Information elicited at the meetings could result in a new APHIS regulatory program, or in changes to aquaculture-

¹ All the petitions and comments we received are a part of the rulemaking record for Docket No. 98-085-1. You may read the petitions and comments 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.

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related services currently provided by APHIS.

We have scheduled this public meeting, the second meeting in our series, for Friday, February 16, 2001, at the Radisson Inn Cincinnati Airport. If you wish to speak at the meeting, please register in advance by calling the Regulatory Analysis and Development voice mail at (301) 734-8139. Leave a message with your name, telephone number, organization, if any, and an estimate of the time you need to speak. You may also register at the meeting itself. Please register at the meeting room between 8:30 a.m. and 9 a.m., before the meeting officially begins. Starting with the advance registrants, we will call speakers in the order in which they registered.

The meeting will begin at 9 a.m. and is scheduled to end at 3 p.m. We may end the meeting early if all the registered speakers have had a chance to speak and if no one else wants to speak. We may also extend the meeting, or limit the time allowed for each speaker, if necessary, so all interested persons have an opportunity to participate.

An APHIS representative will preside at the meeting. The meeting will be recorded. We encourage speakers to present written statements, though it is not required. If you choose to present a written statement, please provide the chairperson with a copy. The complete record, including the transcript and all written comments, will be available to the public.

This meeting is the second in our series of public meetings. The first public meeting will be held on January 25, 2001, in Lake Buena Vista, FL. We plan to hold additional meetings in Idaho, Maine, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, and Washington. We will publish a notice or notices in the **Federal Register** announcing the dates, times, and locations of the meetings.

Done in Washington, DC, this 9th day of January 2001.

Bobby R. Acord,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 01-1199 Filed 1-12-01; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Research Service; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service Biotechnology Risk Assessment Research Grants Program for Fiscal Year 2001; Request for Proposals and Request for Input

AGENCY: Agricultural Research Service; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of request for proposals and request for input.

SUMMARY: The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) are announcing the Biotechnology Risk Assessment Research Grants Program (the "Program") for fiscal year (FY) 2001. Proposals are hereby requested from eligible institutions as identified herein for competitive consideration of Biotechnology Risk Assessment Grant awards. The authority for the Program is contained in section 1668 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 5921). The Program is administered by CSREES and ARS of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

CSREES also requests comments regarding this request for proposals (RFP) from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFP for this program. Such comments will be used in meeting the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA).

DATES: All proposals must be received at USDA on or before March 15, 2001. Proposals not received on or before this date will not be considered for funding.

User comments are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

ADDRESSES: Proposals must be submitted to the following mailing address: Biotechnology Risk Assessment Research Grants; c/o Proposal Services Unit; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2245; 1400 Independence Ave., SW.; Washington DC 20250-2245.

The address for hand-delivered proposals or proposals submitted using an express mail or overnight courier service is: Biotechnology Risk Assessment Research Grants; c/o Proposal Services Unit; Office of

Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Room 1307, Waterfront Centre; 800 9th Street, S.W.; Washington DC 20024. Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

Written user comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Program Liaison Staff; Office of Extramural Programs; USDA-CSREES; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW.; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFP-OEP@reeusda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving stakeholder input comments regarding this RFP, and not for requesting information or forms.)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Deborah Sheely; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Stop 2241; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW.; Washington, DC 20250-2241; Telephone: (202) 401-1924; e-mail: dsheely@reeusda.gov; or Dr. Robert M. Faust; Agricultural Research Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Room 338, Building 005, BARC-West; Beltsville, MD 20705; Telephone: (301) 504-6918; e-mail: rmf@ars.usda.gov.

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Stakeholder Input

CSREES is requesting comments regarding this RFP from any interested party. In your comments, please include the name of the program and the fiscal year of the RFP to which you are responding. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFP for the program. Such comments will be used in meeting the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). Comments should be submitted as provided for in the