

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

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2014-0097]

Monsanto Co.; Availability of Petition for Determination of Nonregulated Status of Maize Genetically Engineered for Increased Ear Biomass

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has received a petition from the Monsanto Company (Monsanto) seeking a determination of nonregulated status of maize designated as event MON 87403, which has been genetically engineered for increased ear biomass. The petition has been submitted in accordance with our regulations concerning the introduction of certain genetically engineered organisms and products. We are making the Monsanto petition available for review and comment to help us identify potential environmental and interrelated economic issues and impacts that APHIS may determine should be considered in our evaluation of the petition.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before March 23, 2015.

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

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2014-0097>.

- *Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery:* Send your comment to Docket No. APHIS-2014-0097, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238.

Supporting documents and any comments we receive on this docket

may be viewed at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2014-0097> or in our reading room, which 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) 799-7039 before coming.

The petition is also available on the APHIS Web site at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/brs/aphisdocs/14_21301p.pdf.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. John Turner, Director, Environmental Risk Analysis Programs, Biotechnology Regulatory Services, APHIS, 4700 River Road, Unit 147, Riverdale, MD 20737-1236; (301) 851-3954, email: john.t.turner@aphis.usda.gov. To obtain copies of the supporting documents for this petition, contact Ms. Cindy Eck at (301) 851-3892, email: cynthia.a.eck@aphis.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Under the authority of the plant pest provisions of the Plant Protection Act (7 U.S.C. 7701 *et seq.*), 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 (GE) organisms and products are considered "regulated articles."

The regulations in § 340.6(a) provide that any person may submit a petition to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) seeking a determination that an article should not be regulated under 7 CFR part 340. Paragraphs (b) and (c) of § 340.6 describe the form that a petition for a determination of nonregulated status must take and the information that must be included in the petition.

APHIS has received a petition (APHIS Petition Number 14-213-01p) from the Monsanto Company (Monsanto) of St. Louis, MO, seeking a determination of nonregulated status of maize (*Zea mays*)

designated as event MON 87403, which has been genetically engineered for increased ear biomass. The petition states that information collected during field trials and laboratory analyses indicates MON 87403 maize is unlikely to pose a plant pest risk and, therefore, should not be a regulated article under APHIS' regulations in 7 CFR part 340.

MON 87403 maize is currently regulated under 7 CFR part 340. Interstate movements and field tests of MON 87403 maize have been authorized by APHIS. Field tests conducted under APHIS oversight allowed for evaluation in a natural agricultural setting while imposing measures to minimize the risk of persistence in the environment after completion of the tests. Data are gathered on multiple parameters and used by the applicant to evaluate agronomic characteristics and product performance. These and other data are used by APHIS to determine if the new variety poses a plant pest risk.

Paragraph (d) of § 340.6 provides that APHIS will publish a notice in the **Federal Register** providing 60 days for public comment for petitions for a determination of nonregulated status. On March 6, 2012, we published in the **Federal Register** (77 FR 13258-13260, Docket No. APHIS-2011-0129) a notice¹ describing our process for soliciting public comment when considering petitions for determinations of nonregulated status for GE organisms. In that notice we indicated that APHIS would accept written comments regarding a petition once APHIS deemed it complete.

In accordance with § 340.6(d) of the regulations and our process for soliciting public input when considering petitions for determinations of nonregulated status for GE organisms, we are publishing this notice to inform the public that APHIS will accept written comments regarding the petition for a determination of nonregulated status from interested or affected persons for a period of 60 days from the date of this notice. The petition is available for public review and comment, and copies are available as indicated under **ADDRESSES** and **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** above. We are interested in receiving comments regarding potential

¹ To view the notice, go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2011-0129>.

environmental and interrelated economic issues and impacts that APHIS may determine should be considered in our evaluation of the petition. We are particularly interested in receiving comments regarding biological, cultural, or ecological issues, and we encourage the submission of scientific data, studies, or research to support your comments. We also request that, when possible, commenters provide relevant information regarding specific localities or regions as maize growth, crop management, and crop utilization may vary considerably by geographic region.

After the comment period closes, APHIS will review all written comments received during the comment period and any other relevant information. Any substantive issues identified by APHIS based on our review of the petition and our evaluation and analysis of comments will be considered in the development of our decisionmaking documents.

As part of our decisionmaking process regarding a GE organism's regulatory status, APHIS prepares a plant pest risk assessment to assess its plant pest risk and the appropriate environmental documentation—either an environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS)—in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), to provide the Agency with a review and analysis of any potential environmental impacts associated with the petition request. For petitions for which APHIS prepares an EA, APHIS will follow our published process for soliciting public involvement (see footnote 1) and publish a separate notice in the **Federal Register** announcing the availability of APHIS' EA and plant pest risk assessment. Should APHIS determine that an EIS is necessary, APHIS will complete the NEPA EIS process in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508) and APHIS' NEPA implementing regulations (7 CFR part 372).

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 14th day of January 2015.

Kevin Shea,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 2015–00722 Filed 1–16–15; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS–2013–0043]

Monsanto Co.; Determination of Nonregulated Status of Herbicide Resistant Soybean and Cotton

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public of our determination that soybean and cotton genetically engineered for herbicide resistance by the Monsanto Company are no longer considered regulated articles under our regulations governing the introduction of certain genetically engineered organisms. Our determination is based on our evaluation of data submitted by the Monsanto Company in its two petitions for a determination of nonregulated status, our analysis of publically available scientific data, and comments received from the public on the petition for nonregulated status and its associated environmental impact statement and plant pest risk assessments. This notice also announces the availability of our written determination and record of decision.

DATES: *Effective Date:* January 20, 2015.

ADDRESSES: You may read the documents referenced in this notice and any comments we received 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) 799–7039 before coming. Those documents are also available on the Internet at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/petitions_table_pending.shtml under APHIS Petition Numbers 10–188–01p (soybean) and 12–185–01p (cotton) and are posted with the comments we received on the Regulations.gov Web site at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2013-0043>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. John Turner, Director, Environmental Risk Analysis Programs, Biotechnology Regulatory Services, APHIS, 4700 River Road, Unit 147, Riverdale, MD 20737–1236; (301) 851–3954, email: john.t.turner@aphis.usda.gov. To obtain copies of the documents referenced in this notice, contact Ms. Cindy Eck at (301) 851–3892, email: cynthia.a.eck@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 (GE) organisms and products are considered “regulated articles.”

The regulations in § 340.6(a) provide that any person may submit a petition to APHIS seeking a determination that an article should not be regulated under 7 CFR part 340. Paragraphs (b) and (c) of § 340.6 describe the form that a petition for a determination of nonregulated status must take and the information that must be included in the petition.

APHIS received two petitions (referred to below as “the petitions”) from the Monsanto Company seeking determinations of nonregulated status for soybean and cotton cultivars genetically engineered to be resistant to herbicides. The first petition, APHIS Petition Number 10–188–01p, seeks a determination of nonregulated status of soybean (*Glycine max*) designated as event MON 87708, which has been genetically engineered for tolerance to the herbicide dicamba. The second petition, APHIS Petition Number 12–185–01p, seeks a determination of nonregulated status of cotton (*Gossypium* spp.) designated as event MON 88701, which has been genetically engineered for tolerance to the herbicides dicamba and glufosinate. The petitions state that these articles are unlikely to pose a plant pest risk and, therefore, should not be regulated articles under APHIS' regulations in 7 CFR part 340.

Notices were published¹ in the **Federal Register** for each petition advising the public that APHIS had received the petition and was seeking public comments on the petition. The notices also announced that APHIS would prepare either an environmental assessment or an environmental impact

¹ Docket No. APHIS–2012–0047 published on July 13, 2012, 77 FR 41356–41357; Docket No. APHIS–2012–0097 published on February 27, 2013, 78 FR 13308–13309. The **Federal Register** notices for the petitions and supporting and related materials, including public comments, are available at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2012-0047> and <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2012-0097>.