

ensuring that meat, poultry, and egg products are safe, wholesome, unadulterated, and properly labeled and packaged. FSIS intends to collect information from food industry and academic experts on vulnerabilities and research activities in the areas of food defense for FSIS-regulated food products.

*Need and Use of the Information:* FSIS will collection information using a series of questionnaires to food industry and academic experts on vulnerabilities and research activities in food defense for FSIS-regulated food products.

*Description of Respondents:* Business or other for-profit.

*Number of Respondents:* 170.

*Frequency of Responses:* Reporting: On Occasion.

*Total Burden Hours:* 113.

**Ruth Brown,**

*Departmental Information Collection Clearance Officer.*

[FR Doc. 2018-22521 Filed 10-16-18; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-DM-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE); Advisory Committee on Minority Farmers and Ranchers Request for Nominations

**AGENCY:** Office of Advocacy and Outreach, USDA.

**ACTION:** Solicitation for applications.

**SUMMARY:** We are giving notice that U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is soliciting nominations and applications to serve on the Advisory Committee on Minority Farmers and Ranchers (the "Committee"). Interested persons must submit applications and nomination packages which can be downloaded at the link below: <https://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/ad-755>.

**DATES:** Consideration will be given to nominations received on or before November 1, 2018.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mrs. Kenya Nicholas, Designated Federal Official, USDA OPPE, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 520-A, Washington, DC 20250-0601; Telephone (202) 720-6350; Fax (202) 720-7704; Email: [kenya.nicholas@osec.usda.gov](mailto:kenya.nicholas@osec.usda.gov).

**ADDRESSES:** Nomination packages may be sent by postal mail or commercial delivery to: Mrs. Kenya Nicholas, Designated Federal Official, USDA OPPE, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 520-A, Washington, DC 20250-0601. Nomination packages may also be faxed to (202) 720-7704.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On March 7, 2017, we published in the **Federal Register** (FR DOC# 2017-11216, Page 25224) a Notice of Solicitation for Nominations. Applications were required to be received on or before June 16, 2017. Previous applicants do not need to reapply.

We are soliciting nominations from socially disadvantaged farming and ranching producers; civil rights professionals; private nonprofit organizations that support socially disadvantaged producers; and higher education institutions that work with socially disadvantaged producers. The membership term shall not exceed 2 years from the date of appointment. The Secretary may also appoint others as deemed necessary and appropriate to fulfill the Committee charter. An organization may nominate individuals from within or outside its membership; alternatively, an individual may nominate herself or himself. Nomination packages should include a nomination form along with a cover letter or resume that documents the nominee's background and experience.

The Secretary will fill 15 vacancies from among those organizations and individuals solicited in order to obtain the broadest possible representation on the Committee. Equal opportunity practices, in line with the USDA policies, will be followed in all appointments to the Committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the Committee have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by the Department, membership should include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

Signed in Washington, DC, this 13th day of September, 2018.

**Christian Obineme,**

*Deputy Director, Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement.*

[FR Doc. 2018-22149 Filed 10-16-18; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2017-0097]

#### Texas A&M AgriLife Research; Determination of Nonregulated Status of Cotton Genetically Engineered for Ultra-low Gossypol Levels in the Cottonseed

**AGENCY:** Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** We are advising the public of our determination that cotton designated as event TAM66274, which has been genetically engineered for ultra-low gossypol levels in the cottonseed, 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 Texas A&M AgriLife Research in its petition for a determination of nonregulated status, our analysis of available scientific data, and comments received from the public in response to our previous notices announcing the availability of the petition for nonregulated status and its associated environmental assessment and plant pest risk assessment. This notice also announces the availability of our written determination and finding of no significant impact.

**DATES:** This change in regulatory status will be recognized October 17, 2018.

**ADDRESSES:** You may read the documents referenced in this notice and the comments we received at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2017-0097> 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) 7997039 before coming.

Supporting documents are also available on the APHIS website at [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/petitions\\_table\\_pending.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/petitions_table_pending.shtml) under APHIS Petition 17-292-01p.

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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 the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) seeking a determination that an article should not be regulated under 7 CFR part 340. APHIS received a petition (APHIS Petition Number 17–292–01p) from Texas A&M AgriLife Research of College Station, TX (Texas A&M), seeking a determination of nonregulated status of cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum*) designated as event TAM66274, which has been genetically engineered for ultra-low gossypol levels in the cottonseed. The Texas A&M petition states that information collected during field trials and laboratory analyses indicates that TAM66274 cotton is not likely to be a plant pest and therefore should not be a regulated article under APHIS’ regulations in 7 CFR part 340.

According to our process<sup>1</sup> for soliciting public comment when considering petitions for determinations of nonregulated status of GE organisms, APHIS accepts written comments regarding a petition once APHIS deems it complete. In a notice<sup>2</sup> published in the **Federal Register** on December 5, 2017 (82 FR 57426–57427, Docket No. APHIS–2017–0097), APHIS announced the availability of the Texas A&M petition for public comment. APHIS solicited comments on the petition for 60 days ending on February 5, 2018, in order to help identify potential environmental and interrelated economic issues and impacts that APHIS may determine should be considered in our evaluation of the petition.

APHIS received 47 comments on the petition. Of those, 44 were supportive, two opposed, and one was not related to the petition.

APHIS decided, based on its review of the petition and its evaluation and analysis of the comments received during the 60-day public comment period on the petition, that the petition

involves a GE organism that raises substantive new issues. According to our public review process for such petitions (see footnote 1), APHIS is following Approach 2, where we first solicit written comments from the public on a draft environmental assessment (EA) and a draft plant pest risk assessment (PPRA) for a 30-day comment period through the publication of a **Federal Register** notice. Then, after reviewing and evaluating the comments on the draft EA and the draft PPRA and other information, APHIS revises the draft PPRA as necessary and prepares a final EA and, based on the final EA, a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) finding document (either a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) or a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement). If a FONSI is reached, APHIS furnishes a response to the petitioner, either approving or denying the petition. APHIS also publishes a notice in the **Federal Register** announcing the regulatory status of the GE organism and the availability of APHIS’ final EA, PPRA, FONSI, and our regulatory determination.

APHIS sought public comment on a draft EA and a draft PPRA from August 1, 2018, to August 31, 2018.<sup>3</sup> APHIS solicited comments on the draft EA, the draft PPRA, and whether the subject cotton is likely to pose a plant pest risk. APHIS received two comments on the petition, both of which supported a decision of nonregulated status for event TAM66274 cotton.

#### National Environmental Policy Act

After reviewing and evaluating the comments received during the comment period on the draft EA and draft PPRA and other information, APHIS has prepared a final EA. The EA has been prepared to provide the public with documentation of APHIS’ review and analysis of any potential environmental impacts associated with the determination of nonregulated status of cotton designated as event TAM66274. The EA was prepared in accordance with: (1) NEPA, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1b), and (4) APHIS’ NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372). Based on our EA, the response to public comments, and other pertinent scientific data, APHIS has reached a FONSI with regard to the preferred alternative identified in the EA (to make

a determination of nonregulated status of cotton designated as event TAM66274).

#### Determination

Based on APHIS’ analysis of field and laboratory data submitted by Texas A&M, references provided in the petition, peer-reviewed publications, information analyzed in the EA, the PPRA, comments provided by the public, and information provided in APHIS’ response to those public comments, APHIS has determined that cotton designated as event TAM66274 is unlikely to pose a plant pest risk and therefore is no longer subject to our regulations governing the introduction of certain GE organisms.

Copies of the signed determination document, PPRA, final EA, FONSI, and response to comments, as well as the previously published petition and supporting documents, are available as indicated in the **ADDRESSES** and **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** sections of this notice.

**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 10th day of October 2018.

**Kevin Shea,**

*Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.*

[FR Doc. 2018–22545 Filed 10–16–18; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410–34-P**

#### COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

##### Notice of Public Meeting of the Connecticut Advisory Committee

**AGENCY:** Commission on Civil Rights.

**ACTION:** Announcement of meeting.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given, pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Commission), and the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), that a meeting of the Connecticut Advisory Committee to the Commission will convene by conference call at 12:00 p.m. (EST) on Wednesday, November 14, 2018. The purpose of the meeting is project planning and decision-making on next steps.

**DATES:** Wednesday, November 14, 2018 at 12:00 p.m. (EST). Public Call-In Information: Conference call-in number: 1–877–260–1479 and conference call 5634706.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Evelyn Bohor at [ero@usccr.gov](mailto:ero@usccr.gov) or by phone at 202–376–7533.

<sup>1</sup> On March 6, 2012, we published in the **Federal Register** (77 FR 13258–13260, Docket No. APHIS–2011–0129) a notice describing our process for soliciting public comments and information when considering petitions for determinations of nonregulated status for GE organisms (see <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2011-0129>).

<sup>2</sup> To view the notice, the petition, and the comments we received, go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2017-0097>.

<sup>3</sup> 83 FR 37459–37460.