

farmers' organizations, State department of agriculture officials, private individuals, tobacco growers' cooperatives, tobacco marketing organizations, university cooperative extension centers, members of the U.S. Congress, a foundation seed producer, an agronomic consultant, a county chamber of commerce, and a consumer organization. Twenty-three of the comments were in favor of a determination of nonregulated status for Vector 21-41 tobacco, and 22 comments either opposed deregulation or recommended no action on the petition until certain concerns are addressed about the effects of Vector 21-41 deregulation on traditional tobacco growers and markets. A majority of commenters in favor of deregulation stressed that Vector 21-41 did not present a plant pest risk, displayed disease and insect susceptibilities and agronomic characteristics similar to conventionally bred tobacco, and noted the benefits to local economies from growing Vector 21-41. Those commenters not expressing support for deregulation of the subject tobacco at this time generally expressed the following concerns about Vector 21-41: Blue mold and insect susceptibilities, the limited number of years of field testing, the potential for gene transfer to conventional tobacco, and the potential for commingling with conventional tobacco in the absence of growing and processing guidelines. One commenter found the environmental assessment inadequate, alleging that it failed to address the impacts of Vector 21-41 on organic farmers and certain human health effects, including the impacts of an antibiotic resistance gene. We have provided a response to the comments as an attachment to our finding of no significant impact, which is available from the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

Analysis

Vector 21-41 tobacco has been genetically engineered to express a quinolinic acid phosphoribosyltransferase (QPTase) in the reverse, or antisense position, which disrupts the normal expression of QPTase, a key enzyme in the biosynthetic pathway leading to the production of nicotine and related alkaloids. The effect of this genetic change is to reduce the nicotine levels of nicotine, nor-nicotine, and total alkaloids in the leaves of Vector 21-41 tobacco. The subject tobacco also contains the *nptII* marker gene derived from the bacterium *Escherichia coli*. The *nptII* gene encodes the enzyme neomycin phosphotransferase type II

(NPTII) and is used as a selectable marker in the initial laboratory stages of plant cell selection. Expression of the added genes is controlled in part by gene sequences from the plant pathogen *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*. The *A. tumefaciens* method was used to transfer the added genes into the parental recipient Burley 21-LA tobacco variety.

The subject tobacco has been considered a regulated article under the regulations in 7 CFR part 340 because it contains gene sequences from a plant pathogen. Vector 21-41 tobacco has been field tested since 1999 in the United States under APHIS notifications. In the process of reviewing the notifications for field trials of this tobacco, APHIS determined that the vectors and other elements were disarmed and that the trials, which were conducted under conditions of reproductive and physical containment or isolation, would not present a risk of plant pest introduction or dissemination.

Determination

Based on its analysis of the data submitted by Vector, a review of other scientific data, field tests of the subject tobacco, and comments submitted by the public, APHIS has determined that Vector 21-41 tobacco: (1) Exhibits no plant pathogenic properties; (2) is no more likely to become a weed than tobacco developed by traditional breeding techniques; (3) is unlikely to increase the weediness potential for any other cultivated or wild species with which it can interbreed; (4) will not cause damage to raw or processed agricultural commodities; and (5) will not harm threatened or endangered species or organisms, such as bees, that are beneficial to agriculture. Therefore, APHIS has concluded that the subject tobacco and any progeny derived from hybrid crosses with other nontransformed tobacco varieties will be as safe to grow as tobacco in traditional breeding programs that is not subject to regulation under 7 CFR part 340.

The effect of this determination is that Vector's 21-41 tobacco is no longer considered a regulated article under APHIS' regulations in 7 CFR part 340. Therefore, the requirements pertaining to regulated articles under those regulations no longer apply to the subject tobacco or its progeny. However, importation of Vector 21-41 tobacco or seeds capable of propagation are still subject to the restrictions found in APHIS' foreign quarantine notices in 7 CFR part 319.

National Environmental Policy Act

An environmental assessment has been prepared to examine the potential environmental impacts associated with this determination. The environmental assessment was prepared in accordance with (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (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 that environmental assessment, APHIS has reached a finding of no significant impact with regard to its determination that Vector 21-41 tobacco and lines developed from it are no longer regulated articles under its regulations in 7 CFR part 340. Copies of the petition and the environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact are available upon request from the individual listed under the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section of this notice.

Done in Washington, DC, this 26th day of November 2002.

Peter Fernandez,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 02-30518 Filed 12-2-02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Notice of Proposed Change to the Natural Resources Conservation Service's National Handbook of Conservation Practices

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Department of Agriculture, New York State Office.

ACTION: Notice of availability of proposed changes in the NRCS National Handbook of Conservation Practices, section IV of the New York State Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) for review and comment.

SUMMARY: It is the intention of NRCS to issue an interim conservation practice standard in its National Handbook of Conservation Practices. This standard is: Transition to Organic Production (NY000).

DATES: Comments will be received for a 30-day period commencing with the date of this publication.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Inquire in writing to Joseph R. DeVecchio, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), 441 S. Salina Street, Fifth Floor, Suite 354, Syracuse, New York 13202-2450.

A copy of this standard is available from the above individual.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 343 of the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 states that revisions made after enactment of the law to NRCS State Technical Guides used to carry out highly erodible land and wetland provisions of the law shall be made available for public review and comment. For the next 30 days the NRCS will receive comments relative to the proposed changes. Following that period, a determination will be made to the NRCS regarding disposition of those comments and final determination of change will be made.

Dated: November 19, 2002.

Tyrone M. Goddard,

State Soil Scientist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Syracuse, NY.

[FR Doc. 02-30582 Filed 12-2-02; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Rural Housing Service****Notice of Request for Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection**

AGENCY: Rural Housing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed collection; comment request.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Rural Housing Service's (RHS) intention to request an extension for a currently approved information collection in support of Housing Application Packaging Grants.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by February 3, 2003 to be assured of consideration.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Gloria L. Denson, Loan Specialist, Single Family Housing Direct Loan Division, RHS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 0783, South Building, Washington, DC 20250, Telephone 202-720-1474. (This is not a toll free number.)

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Housing Application Packaging Grants.

OMB Number: 0575-0157.

Expiration Date of Approval: September 30, 2003.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: The Rural Housing Service (RHS) under section 509 of the Housing Act of 1949, 42 U.S.C. 1479, provides grants to public and private nonprofit organizations and state and local governments to package housing applications for loans under sections 502, 504, 514, 515, and 524 grants under section 533 of the Housing Act of 1949 in colonias and designated underserved counties. RHS reimburses eligible organizations for part or all of the costs of conducting, administering and coordinating an effective housing application packaging program in colonias and designated underserved counties. Eligible organizations assist very low and low-income families that are without adequate housing to buy, build, or repair housing for their own use. Also, the organizations package applications for loans to buy, build or repair rental units for lower income families.

RHS will be collecting information from grantees to assure the organizations participating in this program are eligible entities and have participated in RHS training in application packaging. The respondents are nonprofit organizations, States, State agencies, and units of general local government. The information required for approval of housing application packaging grants is used by RHS personnel to verify program eligibility requirements. The information is collected at the RHS field office responsible for the processing of the application being submitted. The information is also used to ensure the program is administered in a manner consistent with legislative and administrative requirements. If not collected, RHS would be unable to determine if a grantee would qualify for grant assistance.

The grantees facilitate the application process by helping applicants submit complete applications to RHS. This saves RHS time by prescreening applicants, making preliminary determinations of eligibility, ensuring that the application is complete, and helping the applicant understand the program.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1.12 hours per response.

Respondents: Private and public nonprofit organizations and State and local governments.

Estimate Number of Respondents: 300.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 1.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 900 hours.

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Brigitte Sumter, Regulations and Paperwork Management Branch, at (202) 692-0040.

Comments

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of RHS, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of RHS's estimates of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to Brigitte Sumter, Regulations and Paperwork Management Branch, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Stop 0742, Washington, DC 20250. All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Dated: November 18, 2002.

Arthur A. Garcia,

Administrator, Rural Housing Service.

[FR Doc. 02-30519 Filed 12-2-02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-XV-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**Bureau of the Census**

[Docket Number 021121280-2280-01]

Annual Surveys in the Manufacturing Area

AGENCY: Bureau of the Census, Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of determination.

SUMMARY: The Bureau of the Census (Census Bureau) is conducting the 2002 Annual Surveys in the Manufacturing Area. The 2002 Annual Surveys consist of the Current Industrial Reports surveys, the Survey of Industrial Research and Development, and the Survey of Plant Capacity Utilization. We have determined that annual data collected from these surveys are needed to aid the efficient performance of