

Done in Washington, DC, this 16th day of February, 2005.

Elizabeth E. Gaston,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. E5-701 Filed 2-22-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 05-006-1]

Ventria Bioscience; Availability of Environmental Assessment for Field Test of Genetically Engineered Rice Expressing Lactoferrin

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has prepared an environmental assessment for a confined field planting of rice plants genetically engineered to express the protein lactoferrin. This environmental assessment is available for public review and comment.

DATES: We will consider all comments we receive on or before March 25, 2005.

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

- **EDOCKET:** Go to <http://www.epa.gov/feddoctet> to submit or view public comments, access the index listing of the contents of the official public docket, and to access those documents in the public docket that are available electronically. Once you have entered EDOCKET, click on the "View Open APHIS Dockets" link to locate this document.

- **Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery:** Please send four copies of your comment (an original and three copies) to Docket No. 05-006-1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3C71, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. 05-006-1.

Reading Room: You may read the environmental assessment and any comments that we receive on this docket 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.

Other Information: You may view APHIS documents published in the **Federal Register** and related information on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Levis Handley, Biotechnology Regulatory Services, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 147, Riverdale, MD 20737-1236; (301) 734-5721. To obtain copies of the environmental assessment, contact Ms. Ingrid Berlangier, at (301) 734-4885; e-mail ingrid.e.berlangier@aphis.usda.gov. The environmental assessment is also available on the Internet at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/brs/aphisdocs/04_30201r_ea.pdf.

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 organisms and products are considered "regulated articles." A permit must be obtained or a notification acknowledged before a regulated article may be introduced into the United States. The regulations set forth the permit application requirements and the notification procedures for the importation, interstate movement, and release into the environment of a regulated article.

On October 28, 2004, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) received a permit application (APHIS permit number 04-302-01r) from Ventria Bioscience, Sacramento, CA, for a permit for a confined field planting of rice (*Oryza sativa*) plants genetically engineered to express a gene coding for the protein lactoferrin, rice line LF164-12. The field planting is to be conducted in Scott County, MO. The subject rice plants have been genetically engineered, using micro-projectile bombardment, to express human lactoferrin protein. Expression of the gene is controlled by the rice glutelin 1 promoter, the rice glutelin 1 signal peptide, and the NOS, (nopaline synthase) terminator sequence from *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*. The gene is expressed only in the endosperm. In addition, the plants contain the coding sequence for the gene hygromycin phosphotransferase (*hpt*), an enzyme which confers

tolerance to the antibiotic hygromycin. This gene is a selectable marker that is only expressed during plant cell culture and is not expressed in any tissues of the mature plant. Expression of the gene is controlled by the rice glucanase 9 (*Gns 9*) promoter and the Rice Alpha Amylase 1A (RAmy1A) terminator. The genetically engineered rice plants are considered regulated articles under the regulations in 7 CFR part 340 because they contain gene sequences from plant pathogens.

The purpose of the field planting is for pure seed production and for the extraction of lactoferrin for a variety of research and commercial products. The planting will be conducted using physical confinement measures. In addition, the experimental protocols and field plot design, as well as the procedures for termination of the field planting, are designed to ensure that none of the subject rice plants persist in the environment beyond the termination of the experiments.

To provide the public with documentation of APHIS' review and analysis of any potential environmental impacts and plant pest risk associated with the proposed confined field planting of the subject rice plants, an environment assessment (EA) has been prepared. The EA 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). Copies of the EA are available from the individual listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

Done in Washington, DC, this 16th day of February 2005.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Rehabilitation of Floodwater Retarding Structure No. 4 of the Martinez Creek Watershed, Bexar County, TX

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service.