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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

9 CFR Parts 71, 83, and 93

[Docket No. APHIS–2007–0038]

RIN 0579–AC74

Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia; Interstate Movement and Import Restrictions on Certain Live Fish

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Interim rule; withdrawal.

SUMMARY: We are withdrawing an interim rule that established regulations to restrict the interstate movement and importation into the United States of live fish that are susceptible to viral hemorrhagic septicemia, a highly contagious disease of certain fresh and saltwater fish. We are taking this action after considering the comments we received following the publication of the interim rule, which subsequently delayed the effective date of the interim rule indefinitely.

DATES: The interim rule published on September 9, 2008 (73 FR 52173–52189, Docket No. APHIS–2007–0038), and delayed in documents published on October 28, 2008 (73 FR 63867, Docket No. APHIS–2007–0038), and January 2, 2009 (74 FR 1, Docket No. APHIS–2007–0038), is withdrawn effective January 16, 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Lynn Creekmore, Senior Staff Veterinary Medical Officer, Surveillance, Preparedness and Response Services, VS, APHIS, 2150 Centre Avenue, Building B, Fort Collins, CO 80526; 970–494–7354; or Dr. Christa L. Speckmann, Senior Staff Officer, National Import Export Services, VS, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 39,

Riverdale, MD 20737–1231; (301) 851–3365.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) is a highly contagious disease of certain fresh and saltwater fish, caused by a rhabdovirus. It is listed as a notifiable disease by the World Organization for Animal Health. The pathogen produces variable clinical signs in fish including lethargy, skin darkening, exophthalmia, pale gills, a distended abdomen, and external and internal hemorrhaging. The development of the disease in infected fish can result in substantial mortality. Other infected fish may not show any clinical signs or die, but may be lifelong carriers and shed the virus.

Federal Order

The Animal Health Protection Act (AHPA, 7 U.S.C. 8301–8317) authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to prohibit or restrict the importation or movement in interstate commerce of any animal, article, or means of conveyance if the Secretary determines that the prohibition or restriction is necessary to prevent the introduction or dissemination of any pest or disease of livestock into or within the United States.

In response to outbreaks of VHS in wild fish populations in the Great Lakes, the Administrator determined that it was necessary, in order to prevent the spread of VHS into aquaculture facilities, to prohibit or restrict the interstate movement and importation of VHS-regulated species of live fish. Accordingly, on October 24, 2006, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) issued a Federal Order prohibiting the importation of VHS-susceptible species of live fish from two Canadian provinces (Ontario and Quebec) into the United States and the interstate movement of the same species of live fish from the eight States bordering the Great Lakes (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin). Subsequent modifications to the Federal Order were made in response to additional information provided by States, Tribes, and other interested stakeholders in order to alleviate impacts on industry and related businesses in the Great Lakes region while still protecting against the

spread of VHS. The Federal Order was meant to be a temporary measure to be replaced in time by a rule.

Taking into consideration the information we received, on September 9, 2008, we published an interim rule¹ in the **Federal Register** (73 FR 52173–52189, Docket No. APHIS–2007–0038) to codify the Federal Order by amending 9 CFR parts 71, 83, and 93 to establish regulations to restrict the interstate movement and the importation into the United States of certain live fish species that are susceptible to VHS. We announced that the provisions of the interim rule would become effective November 10, 2008, and that we would consider all comments on the interim rule received on or before November 10, 2008, and all comments on the environmental assessment for the interim rule received on or before October 9, 2008.

Delay of Effective Date

After the publication of the interim rule, we received comments that addressed a variety of issues, including the feasibility of implementing certain requirements.

Based on our review of those comments, on October 28, 2008, we published a document in the **Federal Register** (73 FR 63867, Docket No. APHIS–2007–0038) announcing that we were delaying the effective date of the interim rule from November 10, 2008, until January 9, 2009, while retaining November 10, 2008, as the close of the comment period for the interim rule and October 9, 2008, as the close of the comment period for the environmental assessment.

On January 2, 2009, we published a document in the **Federal Register** (74 FR 1, Docket No. APHIS–2007–0038) announcing that we were delaying the effective date of the interim rule indefinitely to provide APHIS with time to make adjustments to the interim rule that we considered necessary for the rule to be successfully implemented.

After completing a risk assessment of the disease and evaluating surveillance and the latest science, we determined that the Federal Order, which had become duplicative with State regulations, could safely be removed as

¹ To view the interim rule, related documents, and the comments we received, go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2007-0038>.

long as States maintain existing VHS regulations and other practices to reduce risk. Therefore, on April 14, 2014, APHIS announced that the VHS Federal Order first issued in October 2006 would be rescinded on June 2, 2014.

Accordingly, we are also withdrawing the September 9, 2008, interim rule. APHIS will continue to work with our stakeholders to provide guidance and promote sound biosecurity practices to prevent the spread of VHS and other aquatic animal diseases of concern.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1622 and 8301–8317; 21 U.S.C. 136 and 136a; 31 U.S.C. 9701; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.4.

Done in Washington, DC, this 12th day of January 2015.

Kevin Shea,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 2015–00594 Filed 1–15–15; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Bureau of Industry and Security

15 CFR Parts 736, 740, 746 and 748

[Docket No. 150102002–5002–01]

RIN 0694–AG42

Cuba: Providing Support for the Cuban People

AGENCY: Bureau of Industry and Security, Commerce.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This rule amends the Export Administration Regulations to create License Exception Support for the Cuban People (SCP) to authorize the export and reexport of certain items to Cuba that are intended to improve the living conditions of the Cuban people; support independent economic activity and strengthen civil society in Cuba; and improve the free flow of information to, from, and among the Cuban people. It also amends existing License Exception Consumer Communications Devices (CCD) by eliminating the donation requirement, thereby authorizing sales of certain communications items to eligible end users in Cuba. Additionally, it amends License Exception Gift Parcels and Humanitarian Donations (GFT) to authorize exports of multiple gift parcels in a single shipment. Lastly, this rule establishes a general policy of approval for exports and reexports to Cuba of items for the environmental protection of U.S. and international air quality, and waters, and coastlines.

These actions are among those announced by the President on December 17, 2014, aimed at supporting the ability of the Cuban people to gain greater control over their own lives and determine their country's future.

DATES: This rule is effective January 16, 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Foreign Policy Division, Office of Nonproliferation and Treaty Compliance, Bureau of Industry and Security, Phone: (202) 482–4252.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The United States maintains a comprehensive embargo on trade with Cuba. Pursuant to that embargo, all items that are subject to the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) require a license for export or reexport to Cuba unless authorized by a license exception. The Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) administers export and reexport restrictions on Cuba consistent with the goals of that embargo and with relevant law. Accordingly, BIS may issue specific or general authorizations for specific types of transactions that support the goals of United States policy while the embargo remains in effect.

On December 17, 2014, the President announced that the United States is taking historic steps to chart a new course in bilateral relations with Cuba and to further engage and empower the Cuban people. The President explained that these steps build upon actions taken since 2009 that have been aimed at supporting the ability of the Cuban people to gain greater control over their own lives and determine their country's future. Today, the Commerce and Treasury Departments are taking coordinated actions to implement this policy.

The President's announcement necessitates changes to the EAR related to exports and reexports to promote more effectively positive change in Cuba, consistent with U.S. support for the Cuban people and in line with U.S. national security interests. This rule implements those changes by adding license exceptions and revising licensing policy as appropriate.

This rule enables the export and reexport to Cuba of items intended to empower the nascent Cuban private sector by supporting private economic activity. Items include building materials for use by the private sector to construct or renovate privately-owned buildings including privately-owned residences, businesses, places of worship and buildings for private sector social or recreational use; goods for use

by private sector entrepreneurs such as auto mechanics, barbers and hairstylists and restaurateurs; and tools and equipment for private sector agricultural activity. It is intended to facilitate Cuban citizens' lower-priced access to certain goods to improve their living standards and gain greater economic independence from the state. It also enables the export and reexport to Cuba of items to further support civil society in Cuba.

Additionally, this rule enables the export to Cuba of certain items intended to contribute to the ability of the Cuban people to communicate with one another and with people in the United States and the rest of the world. Those exports include commercial sales of items for the establishment and upgrade of communications-related systems as well as certain consumer communications devices, related software, applications, and hardware. Such exports are consistent with Department of Commerce authorities including with Section 1705(e) of the Cuban Democracy Act (22 U.S.C. 6004(e)), which authorizes export of “[t]elecommunications facilities . . . in such quantity and of such quality as may be necessary to provide efficient and adequate telecommunications services between the United States and Cuba.”

This rule also enables more donations to the Cuban people by simplifying the process to export and reexport gift parcels to Cuba. Lastly, this rule establishes licensing policy relating to environmental protection and makes technical and conforming changes to the EAR.

The Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is also making changes to its regulations to implement the President's December 17, 2014, policy announcement.

Specific Changes Made by This Rule

Creation of License Exception Support for the Cuban People (SCP)

This rule creates a new § 740.21 of the EAR—License Exception Support for the Cuban People (SCP). Prior to publication of this rule, the export or reexport to Cuba of items now eligible under this new license exception generally required a license from BIS.

To support improved living conditions and support independent economic activity in Cuba, License Exception SCP authorizes the export and reexport of commercially sold or donated:

- Building materials, equipment, and tools for use by the private sector to construct or renovate privately-owned