

Done in Washington, DC, this 30th day of September 2003.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 03-25253 Filed 10-3-03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 03-079-1]

Notice of Request for Extension of Approval of an Information Collection

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Extension of approval of an information collection; comment request.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's intention to request an extension of approval of an information collection in support of regulations for the importation of fruits and vegetables.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before December 5, 2003.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by postal mail/commercial delivery or by e-mail. If you use postal mail/commercial delivery, please send four copies of your comment (an original and three copies) to: Docket No. 03-079-1, 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. 03-079-1. If you use e-mail, address your comment to regulations@aphis.usda.gov. Your comment must be contained in the body of your message; do not send attached files. Please include your name and address in your message and "Docket No. 03-079-1" on the subject line.

You may read 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.

APHIS documents published in the **Federal Register**, and related information, including the names of organizations and individuals who have commented on APHIS dockets, are

available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For information regarding regulations for the importation of fruits and vegetables, contact Dr. Paul Gadh, Import Specialist, Phytosanitary Issues Management Team, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road, Unit 140, Riverdale, MD 20737; (301) 734-5210. For copies of more detailed information on the information collection, contact Mrs. Celeste Sickles, APHIS' Information Collection Coordinator, at (301) 734-7477.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Importation of Fruits and Vegetables.

OMB Number: 0579-0158.

Type of Request: Extension of approval of an information collection.

Abstract: The United States Department of Agriculture is responsible for preventing plant pests from entering the United States, preventing the spread of pests not widely distributed within the United States, and eradicating plant pests when feasible. Under the Plant Protection Act (7 U.S.C. 7701-7772), the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, among other things, is responsible for carrying out this mission.

The regulations in "Subpart—Fruits and Vegetables" (7 CFR 319.56 through 319.56-8) prohibit or restrict the importation of fruits and vegetables into the United States from certain parts of the world to prevent the introduction and spread of plant pests that are new to or not widely distributed within the United States.

Before entering the United States, certain fruits and vegetables from various foreign countries are subject to inspection and disinfection at their port of first arrival to ensure that no plant pests are inadvertently brought into the United States. These precautions, along with other requirements, ensure that these articles can be imported into the United States with minimal risk of introducing exotic plant pests such as fruit flies.

Allowing these fruits and vegetables to be imported necessitates the use of certain information collection activities including the completion of import permits, phytosanitary inspection certificates, and fruit fly monitoring records.

We are asking the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to approve our use of these information collection activities for an additional 3 years in connection with our efforts to

prevent an introduction of fruit flies or other plant pests into the United States.

The purpose of this notice is to solicit comments from the public (as well as affected agencies) concerning our information collection. These comments will help us:

(1) Evaluate whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(2) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(3) Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(4) Minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, through use, as appropriate, of automated, electronic, mechanical, and other collection technologies; e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

Estimate of burden: The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 0.2807 hours per response.

Respondents: U.S. importers of fruits and vegetables; plant health officials of exporting countries.

Estimated annual number of respondents: 150.

Estimated annual number of responses per respondent: 76.

Estimated annual number of responses: 11,400.

Estimated total annual burden on respondents: 3,200 hours. (Due to averaging, the total annual burden hours may not equal the product of the annual number of responses multiplied by the reporting burden per response.)

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.

Done in Washington, DC, this 30th day of September, 2003.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

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