

 **NEWS RELEASE**

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA HOLDS SCOPING MEETING ON PROPOSED RULE FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY REGULATIONS

Comment Period on Proposed Rule Extended

WASHINGTON, March 6, 2009--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) invites interested parties to discuss the agenda and format for public meeting(s) to be held in April 2009 on a proposed rule to revise existing regulations regarding the importation, interstate movement and environmental release of certain genetically engineered (GE) organisms. The public scoping session will be on March 13, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., in Riverdale, Md.

"Revising our biotechnology regulations is a significant undertaking and we are seeking active participation from the public. In order to have focused, substantive dialogue at our April meeting(s), we want to identify topics for discussion as well as possible meeting formats," said Kevin Shea acting administrator of APHIS. "We strongly encourage interested parties to share their suggestions so we can better serve their needs."

Transcripts of the March scoping session and April public meeting(s) will be made part of the rulemaking record. In order to ensure all transcriptions are available for public consideration, APHIS is extending the comment period for the proposed rule, which currently closes on March 17, until 60 days following the April meeting(s).

The scoping meeting will be at USDA Center at Riverside, 4700 River Road, Riverdale, Md., in Conference Room A. For directions or facilities information, call (301) 734-8010. Additional details regarding the format of the meeting are available at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/340/340_index.shtml.

Notice of the scoping meeting and extended public comment will soon be published in the *Federal Register*.

Consideration will be given to comments received until 60 days after the April public meeting(s). Send two copies of postal or commercial delivery comments to Docket No. APHIS-2008-0023, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Comments can be submitted on the Federal eRulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2008-0023>.

Comments received are posted on the Regulations.gov Web site and also can be viewed at USDA, Room 1141, South Building, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. To facilitate entry into the comment reading room, please call (202) 690-2817.

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