

 **NEWS RELEASE**

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

Comment Period on Proposed Rule Ends June 29, 2009

WASHINGTON, April 8, 2009--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) invites interested parties to attend an issue-focused public meeting on a proposed rule to revise existing regulations regarding the importation, interstate movement and environmental release of certain genetically engineered (GE) organisms. The public meeting will be on April 29 and 30, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day, in Riverdale, Md.

“Public input is a crucial part of the rulemaking process and has helped us identify several issues that warrant further discussion as we seek to revise our biotechnology regulations,” said Kevin Shea acting administrator of APHIS. “The April meeting is an important opportunity to have focused, substantive dialogue with the public on these issues.”

Issues to be discussed at the public meeting include scope of the proposed regulations, incorporation of the noxious weed provisions of the Plant Protection Act into the proposed regulations and elimination of the notification procedure--a streamlined procedure for authorizing the importation, interstate movement or environment release of certain GE organisms.

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

Transcripts of the public meeting will be made part of the rulemaking record. In order to ensure all transcriptions are available for public consideration, the comment period for the proposed rule was extended until 60 days following the April meeting and now ends June 29.

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

Consideration will be given to comments received on or before June 29. 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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