

has no known biological activity, and was apparently created when a truncated glyphosate oxidoreductase (*gox*) gene fused to sugar beet DNA. Expression of the added genes is controlled in part by gene sequences derived from the plant pathogens figwort mosaic virus and cauliflower mosaic virus. The *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* method was used to transfer the added genes into the parental proprietary sugar beet A1012 line.

The subject sugar beet line has been considered a regulated article under APHIS' regulations in 7 CFR part 340 because it contains gene sequences derived from plant pathogens. However, evaluation of field data reports from field tests of this sugar beet line conducted under APHIS permits and notifications since 1996 indicates that there were no deleterious effects on plants, nontarget organisms, or the environment as a result of the environmental release of the GTSB77 sugar beet line.

Determination

Based on its analysis of the data submitted by Novartis/Monsanto, and a review of other scientific data and field tests of the subject sugar beet, APHIS has determined that sugar beet line GTSB77: (1) Exhibits no plant pathogenic properties; (2) is no more likely to become a weed than herbicide-tolerant sugar beet developed by traditional breeding techniques; (3) is unlikely to increase the weediness potential for any other cultivated or wild species with which it can interbreed; (4) will not cause damage to raw or processed agricultural commodities; and (5) will not harm threatened or endangered species or other organisms, such as bees, that are beneficial to agriculture, or have an adverse impact on the ability to control nontarget insect pests. Therefore, APHIS has concluded that the subject sugar beet line and any progeny derived from crosses with other sugar beet varieties will be as safe to grow as sugar beets that are not subject to regulation under 7 CFR part 340.

The effect of this determination is that the Novartis/Monsanto GTSB77 sugar beet line is no longer considered a regulated article under APHIS' regulations in 7 CFR part 340. Therefore, the requirements pertaining to regulated articles under those regulations no longer apply to the subject sugar beet line or its progeny. However, importation of GTSB77 sugar beet or seeds capable of propagation are still subject to the restrictions found in

APHIS' foreign quarantine notices in 7 CFR part 319.

National Environmental Policy Act

An environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared to examine the potential environmental impacts associated with this determination. 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). Based on that EA, APHIS has reached a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) with regard to its determination that the Novartis/Monsanto GTSB77 sugar beet line and lines developed from it are no longer regulated articles under its regulations in 7 CFR part 340. Copies of the EA and the FONSI are available upon request from the individual listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

Done in Washington, DC, this 30th day of December 1998.

Craig A. Reed,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 99–362 Filed 1–7–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–34–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Service Agency

Temporary Suspension of Direct and Guaranteed Farm Ownership and Farm Operating Loan Programs To Construct Specialized Facilities Used for Hog Production

AGENCY: Farm Service Agency, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of temporary suspension.

SUMMARY: The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is announcing a temporary suspension, effective on the date of this notice, of direct and guaranteed farm ownership and farm operating loan financing for the construction of specialized facilities used for the production of hogs.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 8, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

James F. Radintz, Director, Farm Loan Programs Loan Making Division, Farm Service Agency, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, STOP 0522, Washington, DC 20250–0522, telephone (202) 720–1632; email

Jim_Radintz@wdc.fsa.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

A specialized facility, hereafter referred to as a facility, is defined for the purposes of this temporary suspension as any building or enclosure and related equipment specifically designed to house, raise or feed hogs of any size, age, or market class.

This action is necessary for USDA to adopt consistent policies to address the economic crisis in the pork industry. The Secretary of Agriculture has taken a variety of administrative actions to mitigate the current over-supply and historic low price conditions being experienced by hog producers. It is inconsistent with USDA policies for FSA to continue to finance construction of additional production facilities through direct loans and loan guarantees while other agencies within USDA expend resources to ameliorate over-supply conditions.

FSA is concerned that during this period of low prices, the availability of its credit programs may facilitate additional production capacity that will prolong the current hog price depression. Additional capacity is also likely to damage the prospects for long-term financial recovery in the industry. These results would be damaging to individual hog producers and the public interest. Without the moratorium, the effect will be increased Federal outlays as the time necessary for USDA amelioration of over-supply will be extended. Producers will experience continued severe financial stress and delayed financial recovery. Further, USDA is concerned that continued financial stress on hog producers may force and accelerate concentration of the production, processing, and marketing of hogs into fewer hands. Such a concentrated structure would result in a significant reduction in the diversity of agricultural production and in the independence of family farmers across the country.

In many cases, a producer would be unable to obtain the required capital for new facilities were it not for FSA's direct and guaranteed farm ownership and farm operating loan programs. Loan guarantees limit the loss risk to commercial lenders up to 95 percent, while qualified applicants may receive 100 percent financing through the direct loan program. The current price levels for hogs ready for slaughter will not generate adequate cash flow to support new loans. However, through production contracts or other means, some loan applicants may be able to meet loan repayment requirements and qualify for credit for the construction of new facilities. The Agency is

particularly mindful that the availability of an FSA loan guarantee may induce commercial lenders to finance facilities that they would otherwise not consider viable under current market conditions.

Direct and guaranteed loan applications that were received by FSA county offices on or before the date of this notice will be processed through to completion and will not be affected by this temporary suspension. Loan applications for purchase, refinancing, maintenance or repair of facilities currently in production will continue to be processed, as will loan requests for operating loans for annual production purposes. In all other cases, applications will only be processed when the government's interest will be imperiled. All other loan applications submitted to FSA county offices during the temporary suspension will be accepted but held in abeyance until the suspension is lifted.

This temporary moratorium will be lifted upon determination by the Secretary that economic and financial conditions have improved to the extent that USDA action is no longer necessary to alleviate financial stress on hog producers.

Signed in Washington, DC, on January 4, 1999.

Parks Shackelford,

Acting Administrator, Farm Service Agency.
[FR Doc. 99-377 Filed 1-7-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-05-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council will meet in Washington, DC, February 18-20, 1999. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss emerging issues in urban and community forestry.

DATES: The meeting will be held February 18-20, 1999.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Doyle Washington Hotel, 1500 New Hampshire, NW, Washington, DC. A tour of local projects will be given on February 18 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Individuals who wish to speak at the meeting or to propose agenda items must send their names and proposals to Suzanne M. del Villar, Executive Assistant, National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council, 20628 Diane Drive, Sonoma, CA 95370.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Suzanne M. del Villar, Cooperative Forestry Staff, (209) 536-9201.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The meeting is open to the public. Persons who wish to bring urban and community forestry matters to the attention of the Council may file written statements with the Council staff before or after the meeting. Public input sessions will be provided during the meeting and individuals who have made written requests by January 29 will have the opportunity to address the Council at those sessions. Council discussions is limited to Forest Service staff and Council members.

Dated: January 4, 1999.

Larry Payne,

Acting Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry.

[FR Doc. 99-411 Filed 1-7-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, DOA.

ACTION: Notice of change.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to Section 343 of Subtitle E of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (FAIRA) that requires the Secretary of Agriculture to provide public notice and comment under Section 553 of Title 5, United States Code, with regard to any future technical guides that are used to carry out Subtitles A, B, and C of Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3801 *et seq.*), the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, gives notice of revisions to all conservation practices in Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guides (FOTG) located in Washington State.

These revisions to conservation practices in Section IV of State technical guides are subject to these provisions, since one or more could be used as part of a conservation management system to comply with the Highly Erodible Land Conservation or Wetland Conservation requirements.

At this time, four conservation practices are being added/and or revised to Section IV of the state's FOTG's:

- Contour Buffer Strips: NRCS Code Number: 332.
- Riparian Forest Buffer: NRCS Code Number: 391.
- Nutrient Management: NRCS Code Number: 590.

- Best Management: NRCS Code Number: 595.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Frank R. Easter, Watershed Planning Team Leader, USDA-NRCS, 316 West Boone Avenue, Suite 450, Spokane, WA 99201-2348 Telephone number: (509) 323-2961.

Dated: January 4, 1999.

Frank R. Easter,

State Conservationist.

[FR Doc. 99-369 Filed 1-7-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4410-16-M

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Bureau of Export Administration Information Systems Technical Advisory Committee; Notice of Partially Closed Meeting

The Information Systems Technical Advisory Committee (ISTAC) will meet on January 26 & 27, 1999, 9:00 a.m., at the SPAWAR Systems Center, Catalina Boulevard (Point Loma area), San Diego, California. Committee members and visitors are asked to check in at Visitor Reception before the meeting. The public session will be held on January 26 in the Training Center Conference Room. The closed session will be held in the Cloud Room, Building 33. The Committee advises the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Export Administration on technical questions that affect the level of export controls applicable to information systems equipment and technology.

January 26

Public Session 9:00 am-12:00 pm

1. Opening remarks by the Chairman.
2. Discussion on alternatives to High Performance Computers.
3. Update on export regulations, including those regarding License Exception CIV and encryption products.
4. Update on the Bureau of Export Administration Website.
5. Comments on presentations by the public.

January 26 & 27

Closed Session

6. Discussion of matters properly classified under Executive Order 12958, dealing with U.S. export control programs and strategic criteria related thereto.

A limited number of seats will be available for the public session. Reservations are not required. To the extent time permits, members of the public may present oral statements to the Committee. The public may submit