# USDA APHIS Virtual Meeting on Freeze Tolerant Eucalyptus, April 17, 2013

**Jennifer Wood:** Good evening, I'm Jennifer Wood, your technical support for this broadcast. Welcome to the first of two virtual public meetings sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

First, I would like to go over a few housekeeping items. This virtual meeting uses audio broadcast technology. As an attendee, you will be able to hear the panelists and presenters but we are not able to hear you. If you are registered to speak today, you have received separate instructions on how to connect to the meeting so that you will be heard when it is your turn to provide your public comment. You should see a welcome sign on the left side of your screen. On the right side, you will see the panelists via webcam, the names of the panelists who will be conducting the meeting, and your name. You will not see the names of other attendees. There are several blue bars, called panels, all on the right side of the screen – participants, chat, and media viewer. You can open and close these panels by using the small half arrows next to the panel title. If you experience technical difficulties joining the WebEx session, please contact WebEx technical support at 1-866-229-3239. This number will also appear on all slides used in this meeting.

If you are registered to speak on today's call, please be sure you are dialed in via a phone line. You will see a phone icon next to your name in the participant panel. If you do not see a phone icon, please disconnect with your phone line only, and redial in. Please make sure to enter your attendee ID slowly. You must have a phone next to your name in order to provide a public comment.

If you are having difficulty during this meeting, such as with your panels, please use the chart panel located in the center of your panel to send me a communication. You can also use the green toolbar at the edge of your screen if viewing in full screen mode. Please type your question in the text field and hit "send." Please keep the send to default as all panelists. I will respond as promptly as possible. I may also contact you via the chat panel if you're speaking today and I see you are not dialed in currently.

With that, we invited you to sit back, relax, and enjoy today's presentation. Without further delay, I would like to hand the broadcast off to Dick George.

**Dick George:** Welcome and thank you for joining us. I'm Dick George, Communications Branch Chief of Biotechnology Regulatory Services, or BRS. BRS is part of APHIS, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Soliciting public comments is a very important part of our process. We value your input and are pleased that you've chosen to be with us today either to make a public comment or to listen to the comments of others. Technicians are standing by to assist anyone having difficulty in accessing this meeting. Please call 1-866-229-3239 for help. This number is at the bottom of each slide.

On the left side of your screen, you should see the slide that's currently displayed for the meeting. On the right side, you should see the projection of me and my colleague, Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel. You will also notice that there are other panels you can navigate, such as the media viewer. To access closed captioning for this meeting, open the media viewer to the right of your screen.

The purpose of this meeting is to solicit your comments on a notice of intent to do an environmental impact statement – or EIS – for a line of eucalyptus that has been genetically engineered to be tolerant of freezing temperatures. For more information on this eucalyptus, go to www.APHISVirtualMeeting.com. This site contains background information and also links to other documents and websites. In the past, we've traveled around the country to conduct meetings where interested parties can make public comments on our regulatory actions. Today, for the first time, we're holding an online virtual public meeting to allow more people the opportunity to comment.

Joining me is Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel, my colleague at BRS. Rebecca is the supervisor of our Biotechnology Environmental Analysis branch.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Before we start taking comments from our online audience, we'd like to go over some of the specifics for the virtual meeting. We will be taking only spoken comments today. If you'd prefer to make a written comment, you can do so by going to Regulations.gov. Enter the word "eucalyptus" in the search box. This will take you to a link for the freeze-tolerant eucalyptus comment site. The public comment period ends on April 29, 2013. You can go to Regulations.gov any time between now and the 29th and leave a written comment, which will become part of the public record. Or you can make a spoken comment here tonight at this meeting, which will go until 9:00 p.m. Eastern. Those of you wishing to speak will be recognized in the order in which you were registered. Today we are here to receive your input, not to answer questions about eucalyptus. For background information, please go to www.APHISVirtualMeeting.com. If you haven't already registered to speak and wish to do so, please click on the raised hand icon. This will indicate that you wish to speak and you will be placed in a queue. You will be provided with instructions on how to proceed via the chat feature.

The statements received during the public comment period, whether spoken today or submitted in writing to Regulations.gov, will be considered in the development of the draft EIS for freeze-tolerant eucalyptus. After we have published the draft EIS, we will solicit and receive comments on it. Those comments will be considered in the development of a final EIS. After the final EIS is published, there will be a decision on the regulatory status of freeze-tolerant eucalyptus.

We welcome your comments today because they will help us to determine what issues to consider as we prepare our draft Environmental Impact Statement.

**Dick George:** You should see a list of commenters in the order in which they will speak on your screen, so you will know when your turn is approaching. We ask that you keep your comments to three minutes or less. A recording of this meeting will be available within forty-eight hours on our site, www.APHISVirtualMeeting.com, and written transcripts will be available there within a few weeks.

At the conclusion of the virtual meeting, a survey will appear on the screen. Please complete it before you log off. Your feedback is very important to us. If you would like to be seen, as well as heard today, please turn on your webcam when it's your turn to speak and click on the camera icon next to your name on the screen. If you're experiencing technical difficulties, again, the number to call, the WebEx Technical Support team, is 1-866-229-3239. As a reminder, we're here to receive your comments only, not to answer questions on eucalyptus or to discuss or debate biotechnology.

At that, we will hear from our first commenter, who is Nancy Beecham. It may take a moment to unmute her phone so that she can speak so please bear with us just for a second. Okay, Nancy, are you there? No. In that case, we'll move ahead to our second commenter, who is William Bennington. Can we unmute his phone, please?

**William Bennington:** Hello.

**Dick George:** Yes, hello, William.

**William Bennington:** Yes.

**Dick George:** Yes, please go ahead with your comment.

**William Bennington:** Alright, I'll try to keep it under two minutes. It would've been good to know about that ahead of time. So my name's Will Bennington. I'm a small-scale farmer in Vermont and I have a background in forest ecology, ecological forest management. And I'm on the call today to bring up two important issues pertaining to ArborGen's petition to deregulate its freeze-tolerant GE eucalyptus.

First, I think it's a problem of widespread non-native invasive plants in this country and across the world is a serious issue that I've dealt with in my work. I think there are far too many cases of unintentional introduction of non-invasive species that has led to widespread invasion, oftentimes resulting in ecosystem level impacts. And a lot of times, these different plants and animals that are introduced are introduced under the assumption that there will be no impact and that they will not become invasive. But the reality of it is the science really can't ever dictate whether or not it's going to happen, especially when we're talking about trees, which have a much longer lifecycle than many other plants and can persist in ecosystems for a very long time.

The only way that APHIS and the USDA can do its job to serve the public and ensure the highest level of protection against highly invasive species like GE eucalyptus and to protect our forest resources is by outright banning their release. And unfortunately, the agency failed to protect the public interest several years ago when they allowed ArborGen to release several field trials of GE eucalyptus in the U.S. South. So I'm here to demand that the USDA correct their past mistakes and stop this pending ecological disaster before it's too late. And absolutely consider to be the utmost importance the fact that there is no way to tell that eucalyptus will not be invasive and that it is more likely than not that genetically engineered eucalyptus will become highly invasive.

I'm also concerned about this issue because GE eucalyptus has been likened to flammable kudzu. It's invasive and it's highly flammable. And planting vast plantations of eucalyptus in the U.S. South, which is a drought-stricken region that's very prone to wildfires, is only going to increase the risk of catastrophic wildfires, which are going to become an increasing problem as we face the impact of global warming over the coming decade.

So basically, we're looking at a highly invasive, non-native plant that is incredibly flammable, like an explosive firecracker in a drought-stricken region. So it's just about the worst combination of factors you could imagine.

And then, one final thing that I want to bring up is this, what many people call a revolving door between ArborGen and biotech giant, Monsanto. ArborGen was initially envisioned in 1999 by Fletcher Challenge Forests, International Paper, Westvaco, and biotech giant, Monsanto. Before beginning the sixty-million-dollar venture that was actually ArborGen, Monsanto backed out. However, several CEOs and other upper level management of ArborGen have come from Monsanto and ArborGen frequently cites itself as the next Monsanto and the Monsanto of the forest industry. And if what Monsanto has done to the agricultural section in the United States and across the world is any example of what ArborGen is planning to do to the forest product industry, that is a serious problem. Monsanto and their products have caused massive ecological degradation, the destruction of local agricultural systems, and the increased use of pesticides and herbicides, the privatization of genetic matter in seeds, mounting economic problems for farmers. And it's abundantly clear that this is the direction ArborGen is intending to go.

So as countries across the world are banning Monsanto's products and banning Monsanto from doing business in the country, I think it's about time that the United States follows suit. And we have a real opportunity to do that with ArborGen by saying no to their GE products today so that they cannot pursue the kind of model of economic domination and ecological destruction that Monsanto has pursued throughout the world.

And I'm sure I've gone well over three minutes, so I'll just wrap up by saying that I demand the USDA and APHIS deny ArborGen's petition to deregulate cold-tolerant genetically engineered eucalyptus, and I hope that you will consider all the concerns I brought up while preparing the environmental impact statement. Thank you.

**Dick George:** Thank you so much for your comment. Our next speaker is Orin Langelle. Please forgive me if I have butchered your name. Please go ahead.

**Orin Langelle:** Yes, hello, can you hear me?

**Dick George:** Yes, thank you.

**Orin Langelle:** Okay, yeah, you didn't butcher me. Actually, you said it in the correct way. The international pronunciation is Lon-gell. Anyway, I've worked on the study of genetically engineered trees, and written on them, since 1999. And I'm going to start out with a harsh paragraph here. "If ArborGen is allowed to sell genetically-engineered eucalyptus in the Southeastern United States, it will be potentially a criminal action that should lead to the prosecution and incarceration of ArborGen's board of directors and its parents companies of IP, – that's International Paper – MeadWestvaco, and Rubicon, Ltd. They are knowingly allowing health risks to the human and non-human inhabitants of the region, furthering global warming and decreasing the ecological sustainability of that region.

The USDA should pay attention to that scenario, in case they are not listening to all the arguments against genetically engineered trees. Traditionally, eucalyptus trees are extremely flammable and invasive. They require extreme amounts of water to grow. The U.S. South is suffering from a major drought. As Mr. Bennington stated, if they're allowed, they'll become the flammable kudzu of the South."

And now, we're going to get into some stuff by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, who stated that, "The average annual temperatures in the region are projected to increase by four to nine degrees by 2080.

Higher temperatures, longer periods between rainfall events, and greater demand for water will likely strain water resources in the Southeast. Incidents of extreme weather, increased temperatures, and flooding will likely impact human health. Higher temperatures will likely affect the growth and productivity of crops and forests in the region.

The EPA continues on the impact on water resources, stating, "Water resources scarcity can affect many sectors of the Southeast economy, as well as the region's natural ecosystems. Periodic droughts, overconsumption of water resources, and other factors can create water shortages. Managing water resources will likely become more challenging with projected climate changes and anticipated population and economic growth; higher temperatures increase in that duration and water loss from plants. Projected increases in temperature will likely increase the frequency, duration, and intensity of droughts in the area. Projected changes in the surface water runoff to the coast and groundwater recharge will likely allow saltwater to intrude and mix with shallow aquifers in sub-coastal areas in the Southeast, particularly in Florida and Louisiana. If the region increases groundwater pumping to offset water shortfalls, then aquifers will be further depleted. In the long term, the depletion of groundwater supply would place additional strain on surface water resources. Growth and demand will also likely strain water resources.

The Southeast region is attracting a great deal of people, investment, and industry. The population of Florida has more than doubled during the past thirty years. Growth rates in most other Southeastern states are forty-five to seventy-five percent over the same period. Decreased water availability will challenge future growth and the quality of lives of residents in the region."

Now, from another radical organization here, the National Wildlife Federation, whose report will, I'm going to quote the global warming and drought stage that… "The Southeast drought, as historic records show, that regular droughts are more typical through the Southeast. Global warming suggests that more is yet to come. Continued climate changes will potentially cause both more extremely dry periods and more heavy rainfall events. And sea level rise could contaminate critical underground freshwater reserves. The Southeast should take the following actions to plan for increasing variability in water supply, improved water use, efficiency, and conservation. Take global warming into account when choosing water management strategies to meet multiple demand. Maintain and restore a natural forest and wetland systems that store floodwaters and provide efficient water storage…"

**Dick George:** I have to ask you to please complete your thought and wrap it up, please.

**Orin Langelle:** Okay, I will. "…a rapidly expanding population, irrigation, and power generation have increased water demand. In the states in the National Wildlife Federation for some of the states slated for GE trees, it would be increased water (inaudible) from 1950 to (inaudible). Florida, one hundred and ninety-six percent. Alabama, a hundred and ninety-six percent. Mississippi, two hundred and twenty-three percent. Florida, two hundred and fifty-nine percent. And ArborGen's home base, South Carolina, a whopping nine hundred and forty-seven percent. And I have not even gotten into Florida's water aquifer, which is polluted and it probably will be, it's going to be a major health and economic hazard for the entire Southeastern region, especially the citizens of Florida. Thank you.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Thank you for your comments. The next caller on the phone is Anne Peterman.

**Anne Peterman:** Hello, can you hear me?

**Dick George:** Yes, we can.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Yes, we can.

**Dick George:** Please go ahead.

**Anne Peterman:** Okay, great. I guess I jumped the queue. I just wanted to add onto what has been reported already, that another concern that I have regarding genetically engineered eucalyptus trees – and I am, incidentally, the International Coordinator of the Stop Genetically Engineered Trees Campaign and have been working on this issue since 1999. I have spoken at United Nations meetings, including the Convention of Biological Diversity, the UN Forum on Forests, and the UN Climate Convention all over the world. One of the things that I'm additionally concerned about with regard to genetically engineered eucalyptus approval is that it would set a dangerous precedent that could enable the approval of GE poplar pine and other native species native to this continent. And the release of these genetically engineered versions of native species would lead to the inevitable and irreversible genetic contamination of native forests throughout the continent. It was for this reason, and many others, that we have been campaigning to stop the release of genetically engineered trees.

In 2008, we traveled to Bonn, Germany for the Conference of the Parties of the US Convention on Biological Diversity where we had the unanimous agreement of all of the NGOs that were there, all of the indigenous people's organizations that were there, the entire African delegation, and many countries in Latin America who agreed that the release of genetically engineered trees should be totally suspended. And they weren't just talking about commercial release, they were talking about test plots, as well. In fact, the decision that the entire conference made was that the conference of the parties recognizing the uncertainties related to potential environmental and socioeconomic impact, including long-term and transplantation-boundary impacts of genetically engineered trees on global forests, biological diversity, as well as all the livelihoods of indigenous and local communities and given the absence of reliable data and the capacity of some countries to undertake risk assessments and to evaluate those potential impacts, recommends parties to take a precautionary approach when addressing the issue of genetically modified trees.

The reason why this is so important is because these freeze-tolerant eucalyptus are not just being grown for release in the United States but they would be released all over the world. And eucalyptus plantations are already a disaster in countries like Brazil and Chile and South Africa, and many other places where they're being grown. And if they are developed to be freeze-tolerant, they will be able to spread further north, further south, higher in elevation, and spread the disaster of eucalyptus plantations to new locations that are yet untouched by them.

So this is not just about the United States. This is about what these trees could do all over the world where they would be released, endangering communities, endangering forest ecosystems, biodiversity, and so on.

So I wanted to just point out the international implications of this decision and how the US Convention on Biological Diversity recommends a precautionary approach, which means proving they're safe before they're released which clearly cannot happen with a tree as invasive and dangerous as eucalyptus. So that's good for me.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Thank you very much for your comments.

**Dick George:** Our next commenter is Lillian Kui. Excuse me I've mispronounced your name. Are you there?

**Lillian Kui:** Hi, hello?

**Dick George:** Yes, hi. Please go ahead.

**Lillian Kui:** Okay, it's Lillian Kui, but no problem. It's not something you come across every day.

Basically, like the previous speakers before me, I'm just not even sure why genetically engineered trees are even being considered to be planted amongst natural trees, natural ecology. I mean, if USDA wants to find a cold-hardy plant, there are plenty of other natural trees that are not genetically modified or genetically engineered. We do not know the potential harm that these genetically engineered trees will potentially wreak havoc on the ecosystem of not just the United States, but around the world, like previous speakers just spoke of.

There are so many things we do not know of that can endanger hundreds of different kinds of species, wildlife, not excluding us ourselves. You know, in ecology, everything is connected. If you introduce an invasive species, everything else is going to be affected. It won't be just insects or birds or any other species that we might not think will affect us because we live in cities or whatever the idea may be. You know, genetically engineering anything should not be considered something that… I can't even get the words. Because it's so absurd for me to even consider something like this. I just want the USDA to really, really consider not approving this at all. I think it will have very, very, very dangerous effects – very, very, probably irreparable ramification if this species is released. Please consider the dangers that you are potentially putting everyone in – not just in these small forests or whatever states. It's going to affect everyone. Please, please reconsider. Thank you.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Thank you for your comment.

**Dick George:** Thank you, Lillian. I'm looking for the next commenter and it doesn't look like we have another commenter ready to speak at the moment. If Nancy Beecham is there or ready, we can hear from her, and we have a couple others. So what we'll do is we'll take a pause. I will remind folks that if you're listening in on this call and you've changed your mind and would like to make a comment, you could still do so. Click on the raised-hand icon and you will receive instructions via the chat feature of what you need to do to call in and to make a comment. We welcome your comments and hope that if you do have something to say that you would call.

So until we have another person who's lined up and ready to make a comment, we're just going to take a pause. We do intend to stay here until 9:00, as advertised, so if people come onto the call late or if they're on the call and they change their mind and would like to make a comment, we're here to receive that comment. So until we have another person lined up and ready to make a comment – we're getting some notes here from our producer that there's nobody set at the moment to do so – we're going to take a pause until someone does. And again, if anybody who's listening in cares to make a comment, please use the raised-hand icon if you haven't signed up to make a comment already, and we'll be happy to receive your comment. Thanks.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Thank you.

**[Pause]**

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Mr. Bennington, are you on the line?

**William Bennington:** I believe so.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Okay, we can hear you.

**Dick George:** Please go ahead.

**William Bennington:** Great. Thank you so much for doing a second chance. I didn't want to leave you both hanging there for another hour and fifteen minutes. Thank you.

So I just wanted to make a couple more quick comments. First, I just want to talk about the importance that forests play in mitigating and impacting climate change and particularly, the importance that the role of native biodiverse – by biodiverse, I mean species-diverse and age class numbers for it – so not monoculture plantations, though, they're, in fact, not forest and do not serve the same function that forests do. And I'm sure you're aware, worldwide forests sequester anywhere between eleven and twelve, or more conservative, up to twenty percent of carbon is released in the atmosphere. So they're incredibly important to the global carbon cycle. And rates of deforestation that has been happening worldwide are causing serious problems with the amounts of release of C02. And one driver of this deforestation is, in fact, the increased use of forest monocultures; in particular, species like pine and eucalyptus in South America and increasingly so. If ArborGen's request to deregulate GE eucalyptus is granted, we'll start seeing that happen more in the South. And as several speakers commented on earlier, eucalyptus is incredibly flammable so that risk of forest loss is even greater.

And then, another point I wanted to make is that you both, and the USDA and APHIS, have a real opportunity here to do the right thing and to make a quite historic decision that can impact the future, all future generations on this planet. You can say no to this. The science is out there. The social, the public opposition is out there. You can say no to this and it will be okay, and it will be the right choice. And it's not very frequently that you have such an amazing opportunity to make such an important decision. And as Ms. Peterman pointed out before, this decision is going to have implications far beyond the borders of the seven states in the U.S. South. It's far beyond borders of the United States. This decision is going to have implications worldwide, and so I just hope that in making their decision to hopefully not allow the deregulation of commercial sale of genetically engineered eucalyptus that you'll consider that. And consider that this is a decision that is going to potentially negatively impact generations to come well into the future, and I certainly wouldn't want to have that on the weight of my shoulders. But I would love to be on the right side of history, and I really encourage the USDA and APHIS to stand on the right side of history and stand up to the interest that ArborGen is presenting in trying to release genetically engineered eucalyptus across the U.S. South. Thank you very much.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Thank you for your comment. Is there anyone else that wants to make an additional comment? If anyone does, they should raise their hand. Or if any of the people that are on that haven't made a comment wish to make a comment, if you could please raise your hand, we can get you the instruction for how to call in.

**Dick George:** Since there are none in queue at the moment, we'll take another pause. And if there are others who change their mind or people who have spoken already and they'd like to say a little more, we certainly have time for that. So we're going to take a pause and we'll keep an eye… We're getting prompted by the producer when people become available and ready to speak, and so we'll accept those comments when and if they come. In the meantime, we'll take another pause. Thank you very much.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Thank you.

**Dick George:** Well, we see that we have Orin Langelle, who already spoke and would like to say a little more. So we will get his phone unmuted and as soon as we do, we'll be happy to take more comments.

**Orin Langelle:** Hello?

**Dick George:** Yes, hello. Orin, go ahead.

**Orin Langelle:** Okay, thank you. Thank you for letting me finish up. I know I went a little bit longer. I want to echo what the first gentleman was just talking about, to do the right thing. And remind everybody that in a lot of indigenous cultures that people plan seven generations ahead of time. It's not just for the present, it's not just for money. It's about not just our children, our grandchildren, about their grandchildren. It's further down the line.

I was actually starting to talk about the Florida aquifer system. It's one of the most productive aquifers in the world. It underlies an area of about a hundred thousand square miles and it provides water for several large cities including Savannah and Brunswick in Georgia and Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Orlando, and St. Petersburg in Florida. It's a *(inaudible)* system and it underlies the states that I just mentioned. And one of the things about it, it's a very kind of a shallow aquifer so water gets into it very easily compared to the Ogallala Aquifer, which is really a large aquifer, elsewhere. And that means if it rains a lot or whatever, you'll get a lot of water going into the aquifer.

While it may seem good because it is shallow, you don't get the same kind of filtration you do when you have a deeper aquifer. So what's going to happen – and what's already happening – is toxic waste and runoff is already getting into Florida, and it's polluting things down… as things go further south. And there have been major studies done upon this. And I have a really bad feeling that when ArborGen and the other companies start putting more and more chemicals and whatever they're going to put on these things. It's going to get into that system and it's going to hurt people a whole lot more, including the species that need to be alive, the humans that need to be alive.

And I'll leave it like that but again, I'll ask you to do the right thing. I think a lot of us are very sad that we're in this situation of global warming and the way the world is going right now. So let's not make it worse, okay? Thank you very much.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Thank you very much for your comment. Is there anyone else that would like to make an additional comment or anyone that is on that would like to make a comment? If you'd like to make a comment, please raise your hand.

**Dick George:** Well, we have no other speakers ready at the moment and so we will encourage those who are listening in who might have a comment, who might want to make a comment, to do so and we'll take another pause. Thanks.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Thank you.

**Dick George:** Another speaker, apparently Lillian would like to expand her comment, which we're happy to do. So are you there?

**Lillian Kui:** Yes, hi.

**Dick George:** Hi, please go ahead.

**Lillian Kui:** Okay, great. Thanks for letting me speak again. Yeah, just to continue onto what I was saying. I think any time you introduce an invasive species into the environment or the ecological system that is not its native ecology, it's never good for the environment that it's being placed in and probably even for the species itself, which is not what its native environment is supposed to be. And I know these are genetically engineered trees so supposedly they're supposed to be freeze-tolerant but it's not natural. It's just not natural. And I want to stress the word "natural."

The earth has been *[inaudible]* for billions of years. It didn't need our intervention to come to where it is today which is full of life, full of diversity, full of biodiversity. It didn't need our intervention. It doesn't need our intervention now. You know, for us to intervene like this, it's just wrong. I don't think it needs any other evidence to support that creating a genetically engineered product, it's just wrong. It is playing God. It is not something that the earth has evolved. It is not something that is naturally evolved into. It did not evolve into a plant that wants to grow in the environment that ArborGen wants to place it in.

You know, it's just too many unnatural things going on. Like Mr. Bennington had said, Monsanto was a potential partner before. I mean, if ArborGen is anywhere close to Monsanto, it's not going to be good. It's not going to be good. From the GMO soybeans and corn, we don't need any more of that stuff. It's just bad for us, bad for the environment, and like my previous speaker said, the effect of this will reverberate to generation to generation to generation. You guys really do have the opportunity right now to do something right, to do something that will stop this. All these big companies out there that are just pushing these agendas for its profits. Whatever ArborGen's agenda is or Green Energy, all that stuff, it's got to stop at some point. And I think enough is enough. You know, for whatever profits, whatever industry; it's got to be enough. It's got to stop, okay? That's just, you know, I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to understand that introducing invasive species into an ecosystem that would not benefit from it. If history has taught us anything, any time an invasive species is introduced into an environment that is not native to it, it wreaks havoc. It just does. From other native species dying off from it or making it ill to toxins, pollutants. I understand that this GE eucalyptus tree is going to be herbicide resistant so that just means more herbicides would be sprayed, more polluting, more toxins.

I mean, really, do we really need to say more? I know there's only been a few speakers here but what we're saying makes a whole lot of sense and GE eucalyptus does not make any sense at all. It is completely, absolutely unnecessary. That's it for now. Maybe I'll come back.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Thank you for your comment.

**Dick George:** Thank you for your comment.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** And you're welcome to come back.

**Lillian Kui:** Okay, thank you.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Is there anyone else that is on the line that would like to make a comment? Please raise your hand if you'd like to make a comment.

**Dick George:** Since we have no other calls lined up at the moment, we'll take another pause. Again, encouraging anyone who may be having second thoughts or may decide to make a comment, please feel free to do so. Click on the raised-hand icon and we'll get instructions to you on how to do that. In the meantime, we'll take another pause. Thanks so much.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Thank you.

**[Music]**

**Dick George:** Okay, *[music playing over speaking]*… we still have some speakers lined up to speak. We're still here. We'll be here until 9:00 and we welcome any comments. Again, encourage you, if you'd like to make a comment, to use a raised hand icon to let us know and we'll get instructions to you so that you can do so. So basically, we'll take another pause. We'll come back on every five or ten minutes or so just to let folks know that we're still here and we're glad to take any comments. So having said that, I see we still have no speakers lined up and so we shall take another pause.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Thank you.

**Dick George:** Thanks so much.

**Dick George:** Okay, so seeing that we have no one else scheduled to speak, we're going to bring the meeting to a close. We'd like to thank everyone who participated today in our virtual meeting for freeze-tolerant eucalyptus. The PowerPoint and the audio of this virtual meeting will be available at our website, www.APHISVirtualMeeting.com within forty-eight hours. Please do not log off before completing the survey. It will appear on your screen after the… immediately following the meeting. Please fill it out and then click the submit button. We will be posting information, including dates and times of future virtual meetings, at www.APHISVirtualMeeting.com. Our next virtual meeting is tomorrow from 4:00 to 6:00 Eastern time. To register, to attend, or to speak, please go to www.APHISVirtualMeeting.com.

So having said that, for Rebecca and myself, we'd like to thank you for participating in our virtual meeting, and this meeting is now concluded. Thanks so much.

**Dr. Rebecca Stankiewicz Gabel:** Good night.