

Public Meetings: Proposed Biotechnology Regulatory Revisions

Welcome and thank you for participating in today's public meeting hosted by Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS), a program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). We've designed an interactive forum to familiarize you with potential revisions to our regulations regarding the importation, interstate movement and environmental release of certain genetically engineered (GE) organisms. Information is provided on posters displayed throughout the room, and APHIS personnel are available to answer your questions. Handouts with more detailed information are also available.

APHIS is proposing changes to its biotechnology regulations—based on BRS' extensive experience implementing the current regulations—in order to stay ahead of advances in biotechnology. The proposed rule outlines potential changes and allows for public input. The public is a key partner in the rulemaking process, and APHIS has encouraged public involvement throughout the entire rulemaking process.

The first opportunity for public comment occurred in January 2004 when APHIS published a notice of intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) in connection with potential changes to federal regulations regarding GE organisms. This notice identified potential issues and alternatives to be studied in the EIS and requested public comment to further shape the scope of the EIS. In July 2007, APHIS published a draft EIS, seeking public comment on the regulatory alternatives that were currently under consideration and the potential environmental effects of the proposed regulatory changes. BRS also held a series of stakeholder meetings to discuss issues associated with the proposal.

Comments from stakeholders and the public contributed to the issues that BRS considered in the formulation of the proposed rule. Your comments continue to be valued as we move towards new regulations. BRS will consider your comments as well as other public comments we've received before publishing a final rule.

BRS published a notice in the Oct. 9, 2008, *Federal Register* announcing the proposed rule and the public comment period, which ends Nov. 24, 2008. You may submit your comments by any of the methods outlined below. Before submitting your comments, we encourage you to visit our poster displays and meet with BRS personnel to answer your questions.

How to Submit Comments

1. Written and oral comments will be accepted today at the designated comment station. You may submit pre-prepared written comments, record comments on comment forms or enter comments electronically. A court reporter is also available to take oral comments.
2. Postal mail or commercial delivery: Please send two copies of written 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. Please state in the body of your comment that it refers to Docket No. APHIS-2008-0023.
3. Internet:
If you wish to submit a comment using the Internet, go to the Federal eRulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2008-0023>; then click on "Add Comments." This will also allow you to view public comments and related materials available electronically. Please do not use alternative means to send comments through the Internet. Using the Federal eRulemaking portal is the best way to ensure that your comments will be associated with the right docket and reviewed by the right people. Consideration will be given to all comments received on or before Nov. 24, 2008.

Dates and Locations of Public Meetings:

Oct. 28, 2008, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., local time. Walter A. Buehler Alumni & Visitors Center, Alpha Gamma Rho Hall, University of California, Davis, Calif. 95616. For directions or facilities information, call (530) 754-9195 or visit <http://www.alumnicenter.ucdavis.edu/>.

Oct. 30, 2008, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., local time. Hilton Kansas City Airport, Shawnee Room A, 8801 NW 112th Street, Kansas City, Mo. 64153. For directions or facilities information, call (816) 891-8900 or visit <http://www.hiltonkci.com/>.

Nov. 13, 2008, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., local time. USDA Riverside, Oklahoma City Memorial Conference Rooms B, C, and D, 4700 River Road, Riverdale, Md. 20737. For directions or facilities information, call (301) 734-8010.

For more information, please visit these Web sites:

Proposed Rule: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>

Overview of the EIS and the EIS process: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/EIS/EIS_index.shtml

Draft EIS: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/brs/pdf/complete_eis.pdf

Federal Register notices related to EIS:

NOI: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/brs/fedregister/BRS_20040123a.pdf

Notice of Availability: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/brs/fedregister/BRS_20070717a.pdf

For further information regarding the proposed rule, contact:

John Turner, USDA, APHIS, BRS
4700 River Road, Unit 147
Riverdale, Md. 20737-1238; (301) 734-8365

To obtain copies of the proposed rule, contact:

Cindy Eck, USDA, APHIS, BRS
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