USDA APHIS BRS

Moderator: Richard George
June 13, 2017
01:33 pm CT

Richard George: We're ready to start.

Man 1: Sure.

Richard George: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to our public comment meeting on our proposed revisions to USDA biotechnology regulations regarding the importation, interstate movement and environmental release of certain genetically engineered organisms.

Today, we're meeting at the University of California Davis in Davis, California.

I'm Dick George. I'm the Communications Branch Chief of Biotechnology Regulatory Services, or BRS, which is a part of APHIS, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, which, in turn, is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Joining me today are BRS Associate Deputy Administrator Ibrahim Shaqir to my far right and our APHIS Deputy Administrator of BRS, Mike Firko. Mike?

Mike Firko: Good morning, everyone. Thanks for joining us for this public meeting. On January 19 of this year, we proposed the first comprehensive revision to USDA's biotechnology regulations since 1987 -- 30 years.

The public comment period is open now. We're having these public meetings during the official public comment period that will remain open until this coming Monday, January 19…

Richard George: June 19

Mike Firko: June 19, and it's open for a total of 150 days. The goals of this proposed rule are first and foremost to protect plant health. That is the extent of our statutory authority, and that's our primary goal. But, we also want to improve regulatory processes that we use as we regulate certain products with genetic engineering, and we want to regulate at a level that is more commensurate with the risk. We want to eliminate unnecessary regulatory burdens, and we want to enhance development opportunities for small companies and universities who can't afford our deregulation process as it exists today.

So, if finalized, the proposed rule would result in less regulation of organisms that pose little or no risk to plant health, and more regulation of those genetically engineered organisms that do pose a pest or noxious weed risk.

But, the purpose of today's meeting is to receive your input on the proposals that we've made and all the material that we provided on our web pages and the regs.gov website. I'd like to now introduce Ibrahim Shaqir.

Ibrahim Shaqir: Thank you, Dr. Firko. So, let me share with you the mechanism by which you can submit and share with – share with us your comments. So, there's a wealth of information about our proposal on our website as shown here, and the easiest way to find us is to use a search engine of some sort such as Google, and search for biotechnology regulatory services.

Click on the entry for us to get to our home page, and then in the left navigation shown here -- somewhere over there -- you will see a link called, "Engagement on APHIS Biotechnology Regulations." Click on it and you will go to a page explaining what we are doing with a list of documents including the Federal Register Notice with the Proposed Rule itself, questions and answers about the Proposed Rule, the Regulatory Impact Statement that looks at economic impacts of the Proposal, a draft Environmental Impact Statement and other helpful information.

So, you can comment here today on these documents, or you can comment anytime through June 19 as Dr. Firko mentioned at regulations.gov. You can get there by clicking on the link at our website, or simply go to regulations.gov, and enter the docket ID number, APHIS-2015 -- 2015 -- dash 0057. If you comment in today's meeting, we will fully capture that comment as part of the record. You don't also need to go to regulations.gov to get your comments into the record. Though, of course, you are free to do so if you choose.

Mike Firko: So, in terms of next steps, we are at the end of our five-month comment period and this coming Monday, June 19, we have one more public meeting. We'll be holding that this Friday in Riverdale, Maryland, at APHIS headquarters in Riverdale, Maryland. Just like today's meeting, that will be broadcast by webinar.

We will also be accepting comments at that public meeting this Friday and accepting public comments until midnight, June 19, next Monday.

At the end of the comment period, we will spend as much time as is needed to review all of the comments that we've received, whether they be written comments submitted through regs.gov, or verbal comments that we've received in these three meetings, and after we've had a chance to review all those and consider how we might respond to all the issues that are raised, we'll make decisions about whether and how to proceed to the next step and potentially a final rule, codifying new regulations for genetically engineered organisms. Dick?

Richard George: We're here today solely to listen and receive your comments, not to answer questions or debate the merits or demerits of the proposed revisions. If you have questions, make them part of your comment and we will address them in our response to comments that will be published later in this process.

This meeting is being recorded, and that recording -- along with the transcription of it -- will be posted to our website.

Today, we will hear first from those who are in attendance in the room and have pre-registered to speak. Then, we'll open the mike to others in the room who will like to speak that have not pre-registered, then we'll open the phone lines for comments from those of you who are attending via the web. We'll initially limit you to five minutes each, but we are here for three hours and if we have time left over, we will invite those who have already spoken to elaborate on their comments if they'd like as time allows.

With that, we'll begin to take comments. We would ask that as you begin, please state your name, and then spell your name, so our transcriber has a fair chance of spelling it right.

So, we will start. I will ask if (Belinda Martineau) is in the room. (Belinda Martineau) has pre-registered to make a comment. She's not here. Okay. In that case, we'll go to (Peggy Lemaux). Is she in the room? Peggy Lemaux?

(Peggy Lemaux): Yes, I didn't submit any comments.

Richard George: Pardon me?

(Peggy Lemaux): I didn't submit any comments.

Richard George: Okay.

Richard George: Oh, okay. So, you didn't intend to make a comment? Okay. Fair enough. John Schoenecker?

Richard George: John, if you'd just come to this mike, we'd be happy to hear your comment.

John Schoenecker: Thank you. Thank you. Good morning. My name is John Schoenecker, and that's spelled s-c-h-o-e-n-e-c-k-e-r. I work through H.M. Clause, a company that specializes in breeding marketing in vegetable seed. We're here in Davis, California. I'm here today as past Chairman of the American Seed Trade Association, ASTA.

Thank you for allowing me to make these comments.

The U.S. has a long history of fostering innovation and a strong tradition of science-based safety regulation. It is no coincidence that U.S. agriculture has a rich history of innovation by applying science to the practice of farming.

In order to ensure that agricultural production meets the everyday challenges of providing food in a sustainable way, continued innovation must be fostered. Innovative seed varieties are basic input for improved agriculture.

Today, there's a suite of new tools that plant breeders can use to enhance their craft. These advances provide wider access for all crops to improve plant characteristics, useful in solving food production challenges. ASTA, the American Seed Trade Association, is supportive of USDA's efforts to modernize these regulations, use the best available science and utilize the thirty years of experience USDA has in reviewing the safety of these products.

In particular, we applaud the science and risk-based approach USDA has taken for products of plant breeding innovation, and strongly support the conclusion that many applications of the newer breeding methods result in products essentially the same as those produced through more traditional methods.

We believe that deficiencies exist in the proposal. We believe these shortcomings are significant, and that substantial changes need to be made.

As examples, the proposal shifts the regulatory burden from commercialization stages to the research and development stage; increases the complexity, resources and time researchers and developers invest by requiring lengthy risk assessments before learning regulatory status of new products.

The proposal creates an ambiguous double standard about what the agency considers to be noxious weeds.

At the same time, public and private plant scientists and breeders urgently need certainty regarding the regulatory status of new varieties of plants developed using innovations such as gene editing. We believe USDA should play a role in the development of a clear and positive U.S. Government statement on the importance of innovation in agriculture, particularly in the innovation of plant breeding. The U.S. Government should take a leadership position and actively engage with other governments, particularly among our trading partners, with the goal of working towards consistent science-based policies.

We ask you to please reference the ASTA written comments for more background and details on the ASTA recommendations.

Thank you for your time.

Richard George: Thank you, John. Our next commenter is Kent Bradford. Kent?

Kent Bradford: My name is Kent J. Bradford, k-e-n-t-j-b-r-a-d-f-o-r-d. I'm a professor of plant science here at UC Davis, and Director of the Seed Biotechnology Center.

I'll go right to my comments I want to say that I fully support the proposal in the document to no longer determine regulated status solely based on whether some sequences from plant pests such agrobacterium have been used.

This has been a rather spurious application of regulatory authority all along, and I'm glad to see that that will be removed. I also support the proposal that

genomic changes that could be achieved by other traditional methods of breeding and genetic improvement will not be defined as genetically engineered organisms and will not be regulated. This is completely reasonable and is scientifically supported, and will save enormous amount of time and effort in bringing improved crop varieties to the market.

In general, in reading the document, it's good to see that APHIS reasserts the principle that was in the initial document establishing regulations of GE products, for which frankly has never been implemented to date. Which that it is the product and its phenotype that should determine risk and not the method by which the genome was altered. It's appropriate to see APHIS again state that GE organisms and I quote, "pose no great plant pest or noxious weeds risks than their counterparts developed through traditional breeding techniques for chemical and radiation based mutagenesis. I'm glad to see that that's reasserted.

I'll use the rest of my comments to suggest some, what I see for things that could be done, so while I'm glad to see these changes, I believe they could be made even less restrictive without increasing risk.

To give just as an example, we have been involved in a project to transfer a single disease resistant gene from pepper to tomato that had the desired phenotype that could be beneficial for growers, and for the environment by reducing pesticide use, and in this case, crop containing bactericides. It could be possible to create this allele directly in tomato using gene editing but since peppers and tomato are not sexually compatible, this would be considered a genetically modified organism, and incur the regulatory hurdles and product labeling that this would require so that's why I applaud that APHIS has come as far as it has in recognizing product vs process you should not draw a strict line on sexual compatibility but should examine the product and ask if it truly

poses a risk. In the example I gave, the transferred gene is already in the environment being consumed in peppers and should this transfer to tomato, and really entail a significant risk particularly in relation to the production and environmental benefits it could provide.

This is just one example that of over 250 that we documented as far back as 2010 where valuable traits are being excluded from the market, particularly in specialty in crops, by the costly requirements of meeting regulatory requirements based on the source of the gene or method used to transfer it, rather than the phenotype or the final product. This continues under the proposed regulations, despite the statement in the current document and I quote, "…The Agency has discovered the expressed phenotype of the regulated organism provides the most reliable indicator of the organism's potential for deleterious effects on plants and products." I applaud that statement, and I'd like to see it fully implemented.

Thus I applaud the consumer progress estimated in the current proposals they stop short of proposing a truly rational system based on product rather than process and incorporating potential benefits as well as risks into the analysis. I hope that it doesn't require another 30 years under the new proposed system to gain enough confidence to take additional steps to truly enable plant scientists to tackle the monumental challenge of feeding the global population while reducing agriculture's environmental impacts. Thank you.

Richard George: Thank you, Kent. Is there anyone else in the room who would care to submit a public comment at this time? We invite all comments – commenters.

I see a hand. Leon?

(Leon Corzine): I'm registered now.

Richard George: You're registered now. This still works.

Leon Corzine: Good morning. I am (Leon Corzine), Leon is l-e-o-n. Corzine is c-o-r-z-i-n-e. I'm a family farmer from central Illinois. I farm with my wife (Suzie) and my son (Craig). We grow corn, soybeans, and have a few Angus cows. I'm also past-president of the National Farmer's Association, and I have been a member of the Advisory Committee on Biotechnology and the 21st Century for USDA, which AC 21 is their acronym, which has allowed me to interact with some folks in the room. So, it's extremely important that you hear from farmers and direct farmer input. We're the ones using the technology and with your help, understand the benefits.

Technologies today and those of the future help (Craig), (Suzie) and me carry out a promise we made my dad and my dad made my granddad, and that is to leave the farm in a better way than we found it. And that's extremely important, and that's what really drives us.

We also pay the price for untimely and unnecessary delays. The cost to farmers is not only not getting us a new tool for production which will make us more efficient, but also there's the additional regulatory cost passed on to whoever the farmer may be. Ultimately, it's passed on to us, the farmers, and it's important to remember that part. I want to say I truly appreciate being well received at the annual stakeholders meeting when I attended. Farmers are the biggest stakeholders, and I wanted APHIS folks, from administrators to lab technicians, to know how important your work is to us on the farm and how it affects us. You know, at the time, we had a number of backlogs and you've made very good progress, I must say and we really appreciate that.

That being said, I agree with the importance to review and update our regulatory process, part 340, in particular. The US regulatory system is the gold standard for the world, and we want to keep it that way. So option two, the preferred option, it's is a good effort, but in my eyes and ours as an organization as an option, it needs some work. For example, the upfront risk assessment evaluation, I understand and agree. That can be very good and important, but the problem is that this evaluation is going to need to be robust enough to provide a sound basis for not regulating further, and therein lies the problem, because I fear in the end it could just add another layer and cause delays in the process instead of doing what the intent was.

I foresee serious problems with noxious weed authority being rolled into part 340. I believe a better solution is to leave it in 360, because it could create duplication and confusion and they really are two separate items. And, I think it's a good idea to use a product-based, rather than a process-based approach. I think that's good, and I like the direction on the gene editing definition, but there's a concern with using the one base pair as a modification, and that being too tight a threshold.

We all need more clarity on how changes will be implemented and I'm sure you will do that and that we maintain the sound science based approach worked so well for us.

In conclusion, I'm proud of the progress on our farm and all across US agriculture made possible by the research investment and technologies available. You've been a part of it.

The USDA APHIS needs to remain the lead agency because you understand and if I will, I would like to read from your document, it was hard to get through 566 pages, but I pretty much did, and this is part 3.4-8, that's on page

180 in the document. In commercial crop production in the both the United States and abroad, sustaining maximal crop yields is a primary concern in efficiently meeting demands for food, fiber and fuel, particularly in the context of increasing population, limited land, persistence of pests, disease and weeds, and an increasingly constrained resource base. To the extent agricultural biotechnologies facilitate achieving maximal crop yields with minimal inputs and reduce environmental impacts, they provide valuable options for commercial crop producers, and to me, that really shows that I know you understand and another reason you need to remain the lead agency in this regulatory scheme. We continue to lower the environmental footprint while we produce more with less.

We're protecting and we work to protect our most valuable resource, our soil, while utilizing it to meet the demands of society, and we continue to move the bar on sustainability, we continue to work that process, and the new technologies help us to do that. It takes team work, and I feel like that we're all on the team together to continue the progress. So, I want to thank you, again for the opportunity to speak, and look forward to talking with you in the future.

Richard George: Thank you Leon. Is there another comment? Do I see another hand in the room, come up, please.

Brandon Hunnicutt: Good morning. My name is Brandon Hunnicutt and I am a farmer from south central Nebraska where I farm with my dad and brother on a farm that is 100% irrigated where we raise corn, soybeans, popcorn but our corn is somewhat unique in that fashion because what we're raising is GE white corn, we're raising GE yellow corn, we're raising non GMO. Corn last year we're raising a transitional organic, we're raising popcorn, we have this whole wide mix plus production seed corn that goes on, on our farm so we have this

unique relationship with GE products and non GE products and how they interact around us.

We also, the vast majority of our practices revolve around some sort of conservation tillage and/or some sort of cover crop on the fields as well. White there are many farmers around us are planting similar crops, we're one of the few if not the only one planting so many different types of technology in the field but at the same time in our county we have a lot of organic production, we have a lot of GE production and production seed companies, there's a lot things going on at once in the county that we have to be aware of so these types of hearings are very important to us. At the same time I also am vice chair of the freedom to operate action team for the National Corn Growers and am the team lead for the Middle East and Africa advisory team for the US grain council so there's a lot of these things that we're dealing with on a constant daily basis.

The first GE corn I observed was in the summer of 1996. I was working for a local coop and there was field of about 30 acres that was planted with GE corn. We right away discovered the benefit of having that product out in that field. So 30 acres we realized how important that tool was. Three years later I had the opportunity to have first-hand observation of pharmaceutical corn as both a crop consultant for a local company and with the crops being grown miles within my home. While the promise of this GE corn ran into a major roadblock, again it showed the importance of GE crops to the future of American agriculture.

As GE crops started to gain more and more acceptance there were a number of benefits that happened because of these products. The first was farmers were able to start to move about from pesticides that were non selective. Again, being a crop consultant, we'd walk out into the field, the field would be

sprayed to control pests, everything was dead, there was no movement in the field. It took away the beneficial insects, it took away the harmful insects. It was really an eerie feeling. So we began to realize these products allowed for targeted pest removal in the field. To those of us that are farmers, we want the beneficial insects out in the field to help with other issues that are out there.

The second is that we didn't have to handle those crop protection products that could have a greater risk of adverse health effects. We really strive for that on the farms to make sure that we can pass on to the next generation a healthy farm, not just soil but also promote from a personal standpoint that our kids are safe and grandkids are safe and these products have helped produced some of those adverse health effects. It didn't mean we had to have a specified re-entry interval like we did when applying crop protection products.

The third is that it allowed for farmers to be able to adopt more conservation tillage even though it is referenced that there isn't a clear cause and effect relationship. We've seen that benefit that I can go out there because of these crops reduced tillage so I don't have to remove weeds out in the field by mechanical tillage. I can plant the cover crops. I can do those things to help soil health, and soil longevity. And while we have seen herbicide resistant weeds develop, I also believe that GE crops allow farmers to move to more cover crops instead of tillage to deal with these problem weeds. And this has strong benefits to soil conservation and environmental sustainability.

Finally, it has led to a decrease in certain insect populations in our area like European corn borer, which has a benefit to those of us who are raising popcorn, which is nonGMO and the organic producers around that they do not have to try to find a product to get rid of those insects. Can I put numbers on that? No, but we've seen that happen. We've seen less feeding, less insect damage in the last 10-15 years.

Even with these benefits I realize and it was mentioned in section 3.10.2.4 on the issue of coexistence. We are well aware of this in our county. We are well aware of this on our field as I mentioned because we're raising so many different styles of crops. We have to be able to work with non-GE partners, we have to be able to work with organic producers. We have to be able to work with our seed producers and this is an issue. It's something we're passionate working about in Nebraska. In Nebraska and in our freedom to operate action we realize its importance.

Farmers do not like regulations, but we realize there are times we need regulations to make sure everything runs as smoothly and properly as possible. We also know we need a process that we can rely on and that we know will be timely in the manner that farmers can access the needed technology. As a farmer I look at what I planted last year, what I am going to plant this year and what I want to plant in the years upcoming, I need to know that the technology will be available that I can properly rotate which GE corn I am raising each year so I know I will have the technology needed down the road to make sure we are maintaining the technology needed.

I greatly appreciate all the hard work that has gone into this process now and in the past. While Alternative 2 is the best option, in our comments that are coming from the National Corn Growers Association, you'll see that we're asking the Agency would refine and re-propose this rule. Thank you for your time.

Richard George: Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much. Is there anyone else in the room who would care to comment? Okay, seeing none, we'll go to the phones. We

had one person who signed up to make a comment, and that was (Rose) (Kachadoorian). If you're on the phone, please forgive me if I butchered the pronunciation of your name, and please press 1 and then 0 on your telephone keypad and we'll see that and we'll take your comment. (Rose) (Kachadoorian), press 1, then 0 please on your telephone keypad and we'll be happy to take your public comment at this time.

No response. So, having said that, we'll open the phone lines to anyone who would care to make a public comment at this time on our proposed revisions. You can do so by pressing 1 and then 0 on your telephone keypad. We'll be ready to take your comment.

We'll pause for a minute or two here to give people a chance to get to their keypads. One and then zero. So, no response. So, seeing no response, what we'll do is we'll go – we're going to take a pause, and what we'll do is we'll come back here in five or ten minutes or so and we'll invite people to make comments both here in the room and on the phone, so we're going to go into a pause, and we'll check back in.

In the meantime, if you're on the phone, you can hit 1, then 0 at any time, and we'll see that and we will open the phone line and we'll take a comment. So, since there are no comments at the moment, we'll take a pause and we'll be back on here in five or ten minutes. Thanks.

I'll also say, before we go, if anyone in the room has commented and would like to elaborate or make their comments a little lengthier, we can take those comments now, as well. Anybody care to say more while we have the chance? Okay, we're going to take a pause of five or ten minutes. Thanks.

Richard George: Okay, we're going to come back on for just a moment. I just want to, once again, invite anyone in the room who would care to make a comment or perhaps elaborate on a previous comment to just let us know, raise your hand or send up a flare or whatever, being done. I would ask that anybody on the phone who would like to make a comment, please press 1 and then 0 on your telephone keypad.

Richard George: I will mention while we've got the chance you can make a comment at regulations.gov through midnight on June 19, which is Monday, or you can make a comment here or you can do both. Anyone on the phone who would care to comment, press 1, then 0. All right, I see none. We'll go to another pause and like I said, we'll check back every five or ten minutes and then offer the opportunity. We're going to take a little pause. Thanks.

Okay, we've had a person who has arrived who is in the room and who'd like to make a comment. So, I would invite her to come to the microphone and hear her comment. Her name is Shannon Douglass. Shannon, for our sake, when you start, say your name and spell your name so our transcriber gets it right in the public record.

(Shannon Douglass): Perfect.

Richard George: It's all yours.

(Shannon Douglass): My name's (Shannon Douglass). My last name is d-o-u-g-l-a-s-s. (The spelling is the only tricky thing about that) Thank you, guys so much and I'm glad to be here to talk and give some more activity to your room this morning. So, for the - by and large, it is great that this rule is being reviewed, and as a farmer, we're very appreciative about that. My biggest concern with the

proposed rule is frankly the hindrance in innovation that I'm worried might come with it. I have a lot of friends right now in the Midwest in particular and in the Dakotas who are really battling a pretty severe drought in a lot of stressed corn, in particular, and I worry that if we're going to be – if we're starting to hinder some of this innovation, we're potentially limiting tools for farmers like those impacted right now to be able to use in the future. So, of particular concern to me in there the idea that we're shifting the regulatory burden from the commercial stage to the research and development. And when you think of some of the recent innovations, even the new apple variety that was done on (kind of from) smaller shops, they didn't necessarily come from huge companies that can deal with this regulatory burden.

I worry about how those kinds of small businesses will be able to compete with the innovation there. Also, the potential for risk assessment for small scale field trials, it's worrisome as opposed from when it's from a bigger scale. Again, when they're faced with that, again I think it probably a hurdle for some of those smaller companies, and also the fact that we could end up with products trapped in kind of a regulatory limbo as far as not sure when they're approved to continue through the regulatory process, and that could extend the process of them becoming approved.

And finally, some concern on the unintended consequences for not only regulatory agencies, but also the domestic and international markets with them. So, in general, just a concern that some of the specifics in this about that shift of the regulatory burden would be a problem for innovation in the future. Thank you.

Richard George: Okay. Thank you, (Shannon).

At this time, I'll take anybody else in the room that would like to make a comment, or if they've already commented, elaborate on a previous comment. I see none. I would invite those on the phone who might want to make a comment to please press 1 and 0 on your telephone keypad. We will see that and we will unmute your phone and take your comment.

We'll take a pause to give people time to reach for their keypads. I see none we will take another pause. Remind you that comments can also be left at regulation.gov through midnight on Monday, June 19. Or you can make a comment now or both. Okay. I see none. We'll take another pause and we'll be checking in every five or ten minutes or so, to let you know we're still here. In the meantime, if you're on the phone during the pause hit 1 then 0, we'll see that and we will see that at that time. Having said that, we'll take another pause. Thank you.

Richard George: We're at the public comment meeting for proposed revisions to our USDA biotechnologies regulations. We're in Davis, California, and we're just coming back on the line to remind people that we're here and we're ready to take their public comments on our proposed revisions. We have no one else in the room who wants to comment at this time, so I would also ask if anyone else on the phone would like to comment, please let us know by pressing 1 and then 0 on your telephone keypad. We'll be happy to take your comment, and in the meantime, I'll mention that comments can also be made at regulations.gov.

(Unintelligible)

Richard George: We'll pause this session.

(Unintelligible)

Richard George: If you go to regulations.gov and search APHIS-2015-005 in the search box, it will take you to the site where you can make a public comment or you can comment here. We'd love to hear from you if you care to. Please press 1, then 0, on your telephone keypad. Seeing none, we'll take another pause. We'll check in here every ten minutes or so. Thanks.

Richard George: Hi, this is Dick George at our public comment meeting in Davis, California. We'd like to invite anyone on the phone who may want to make a comment, please press 1, then 0 on your telephone keypad, and we'll open your phone. And we'll see that, we'll open your phone and be glad to take your comment. So, we're going to pause for a second for folks to do that.

I remind you also that comments can be made at regulations.gov through midnight on Monday, June 19 at regulations.gov, and if you search APHIS-2015-0057, you can comment there, as well. You can comment at both places, if you choose.

Love to hear from you. Press 1, then 0, and seeing that there are no comments at the moment, we'll take another pause.

We'll be here until noon Pacific Time. We're in Davis, California, and any time you'd like to comment, just press 1, then 0, and we'll see that and we'll open up the phone and take your comment.

Seeing none at the moment, we'll take another pause. Thanks so much.

Richard George: So, this is our public comment meeting on our proposed revisions to our regulations, we'd invite anyone on the phone to comment, let us know by pressing 1, then 0, on your touchtone, or your keypad – your phone keypad –

and we'll open your line and gladly take your comment. We'll pause here to see if anyone takes us up on that.

(Unintelligible)

Richard George: And seeing that there are none, we'll take another pause. We'll also remind you that comments can be left at regulations.gov through Monday the 19th, this coming Monday at midnight. You can leave a comment there or here or both. So, seeing none, we will take a pause. I'll also mention that we have another public comment meeting this Friday, June 16, in Riverdale, Maryland. That's our headquarters. It also is from 9-noon on Friday, the 16th in the Washington area would like to attend. We'd love to see you there and take your comments. Seeing as there are no takers, we will take another pause. Thanks so much.

(Unintelligible)

Richard George: Well, we are back at our public comment meeting (proposed revisions to our biotech technology regulations. Perhaps you've joined us late. Want to make a comment, we invite you to do so now by pressing 1 and then 0 on your telephone key pad. We'll open your mike and take your comment. If you're hopefully reaching for your phone keypad, we'll also mention that our comment period remains open through Monday the 19th, which is this coming Monday at midnight. You can make comments also at regulations.gov.

So, seeing that no one has indicated their choosing to make a comment, we'll go to another pause. We'll be here until noon pacific time. We are here at the University of California at Davis. And we'll be here until noon, which is another hour. If you'd like to make a comment, let us know. Press 1, then 0.

Seeing that no one is taking us up on this one, we'll take another pause. Thanks.

Richard George: Hello, and we're back at our public comment meeting on our biotech regulations. If you're on the phone and perhaps want to meeting, we welcome your comments on our proposed rule. If you'd like to comment, please press 1, and then 0 on your telephone keypad, and we will cue your mike and take your comment, and I will mention that the public comment period is open until Monday the 19th, this coming Monday until midnight, and you can comment up to that time at regulations.gov, as well as commenting here or commenting at both places as you choose.

So, if you'd like to comment, please let us know by pressing 1, and then 0 on your telephone keypad. We will be here for about another forty-five minutes in Davis, California, so we're out here until noon pacific time, local time. So, seeing that no one's on this, we shall take another pause and we'll be back in about15 minutes or so, unless we see that someone wants to make a comment, in which case we'll come back immediately. So, we'll take a pause. Thanks.

Richard George: (Unintelligible) comment meeting on the revisions to the (unintelligible) regulations. If anyone on the phone would like to make a comment, we'd love to hear it. Please press 1, then 0 on your telephone keypad. We will see that and will be glad to take your comment. We'll be here until noon Pacific Time, which is another half-hour or so, and I'm glad to take your comments, which can also be conveyed via regulations.gov through Monday at midnight, June 19, which is this coming Monday. Seeing as no com – no one indicating they're desiring to make a comment, we shall take another pause. Thanks so much.

Richard George: Hi. We're back at our public comment meeting to our biotech regulations. If you'd like to make a comment, we'd love to hear it. Please press 1 and then 0 on your telephone keypad and we will see that and will open your mike and (unintelligible) to any comment.

So., we're going to be here until noon local time. We're in California, so that's about fifteen minutes, and I am not seeing that anyone's indicating they're desiring to comment, and so we'll take another pause.

We'll come back a few minutes before noon to see if there are any others who would like to comment and to close the meeting. So, let us know if you'd like to comment by pressing 1 and then 0. I'm not seeing any. We shall take a pause and we'll come back on a few minutes before noon. Thanks.

Richard George: Okay, for the last time, we will ask if anyone has a comment that they would like to make to our revisions to our biotechnology regulations, so please press 1 and then 0 on your telephone keypad. When we see that, we'll be happy to take your comment.

Seeing none, we thank everyone for their comments today. Our next public comment meeting is Friday of this week, June 16, in Riverdale, Maryland, and will also be from 9 until noon. The public comment period closes on June 19 at midnight.

Ibrahim Shaqir: Thank you. You can comment online through midnight on the 19th of June at regulations.gov. Just put APHIS-2015-0057 in the search box as we have mentioned earlier, there's a lot of information at our website and the address is on the slides, as you can see. You can also find us on the web by using a search – any search engine, and search for biotechnology regulatory services.

We will consider all comments received before deciding how or whether to finalize the proposed revisions to our biotechnology regulations. Dr. Firko?

Mike Firko: Thank you very much. And lastly, I'd like to thank everyone who participated in this public meeting, and I certainly want to thank our host here at the University of California, Davis, for their support in arranging and all of the IT and technical and video support we had here in the room today that made this all possible. Thank you very much.

Richard George. And that concludes our meeting. Thank you.

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