

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)
ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE

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PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WEBINARS ON APHIS
BIOTECHNOLOGY REGULATION

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WEDNESDAY
MAY 20, 2015

+ + + + +

The Webinar commenced at 4:00 p.m.
Eastern Daylight Time.

PRESENT

RICHARD GEORGE, Communications Branch Chief,
Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS)

NEIL E. HOFFMAN, Science Advisor, Office of the
Deputy Administrator, BRS

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T-A-B-L-E O-F C-O-N-T-E-N-T-S

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3) Are there legal authorities given to USDA outside the Plant Protection Act that APHIS should examine to regulate or oversee the products of biotechnology? What are they and how would they be used?	5
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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 (4:02 p.m.)

3 MR. GEORGE: Good afternoon and
4 welcome to our public engagement webinar on APHIS
5 Biotechnology Regulations. My name is Dick
6 George. I'm the Communications Branch Chief at
7 Biotechnology Regulatory Services, or BRS.

8 We're a part of APHIS, the Animal and
9 Plant Health Inspection Service, an agency of the
10 U.S. Department of Agriculture. Joining me is Dr.
11 Neil Hoffman, Science Advisor in BRS's Office of
12 the Deputy Administrator.

13 DR. HOFFMAN: Our purpose today is to
14 receive your comments on several subject areas
15 regarding the regulation of biotechnology by
16 APHIS. We value your input and are pleased that
17 you joined us today, either to make a public comment
18 or to listen to the comments of others. Background
19 information is available at our website at
20 www.aphis.usda.gov/aphisvirtualmeetings.
21 Tonight is our last of three webinars.

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1 MR. GEORGE: If you prefer to make
2 written comment instead of a spoken one you can do
3 so by going to www.regulations.gov through June
4 22nd. Enter APHIS-2015-0036 in the search box and
5 this will take you to the pages where you can make
6 your comment.

7 You can go to regulations.gov any time
8 up until June 22nd to leave a written public comment
9 or you can make a spoken comment here at our meeting
10 which will go until 7:00 p.m. eastern time.
11 Whether spoken or written your comment will become
12 part of the public record. A transcript of your
13 spoken comments will be posted to the website in
14 the next three weeks.

15 Today we're here to listen and to
16 receive your input only, not to answer questions
17 about biotechnology regulations.

18 DR: HOFFMAN: APHIS is considering
19 amending its current regulations and seeks your
20 input on the following questions.

21 First, should APHIS regulate based on

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1 the characteristics of biotechnology products and
2 the potential risks they may pose or by the process
3 by which they were created? In either case what
4 criteria should be used to determine what APHIS
5 regulates? Are there products and processes APHIS
6 should not regulate?

7 MR. GEORGE: Two. The Plant
8 Protection Act gives APHIS the authority to protect
9 plant health through regulatory programs. APHIS
10 has implemented the plant pest authority as part
11 of the biotechnology regulations. Should APHIS
12 add noxious weed provisions to their biotechnology
13 regulations and if so how? What protection goals
14 should APHIS consider?

15 DR: HOFFMAN: Three. Are there legal
16 authorities given to USDA outside the Plant
17 Protection Act that APHIS should examine to
18 regulate or oversee the products of biotechnology?
19 What are they and how would they be used?

20 Four. What non-regulatory solutions
21 or policy alternatives could or should be

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1 considered to complement APHIS's regulatory
2 program?

3 MR. GEORGE: We have asked commenters
4 to preregister to comment and we will ask those
5 commenters to go first. Each commenter will have
6 up to seven minutes to speak. After all that have
7 signed up to speak have done so, we will ask if
8 others on the call would care to comment and give
9 you the same opportunity.

10 If we reach a point where all who choose
11 to comment have commented and there's still time,
12 we will invite those who have already commented to
13 come back and make additional comments if they care
14 to.

15 With that we will begin to take your
16 comments. We ask that you please say your name,
17 spell your name, and if you represent an
18 organization please let us know that so that our
19 court reporter can capture this information
20 correctly.

21 So with that we will go to the list of

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1 folks who have already registered to comment and
2 give them the first opportunity.

3 So I would ask if Tamara Nelsen is on
4 the call please press one and then zero and we will
5 see that.

6 OPERATOR: This conference is being
7 recorded. Only the main conference is recorded.

8 MR. GEORGE: Tamara Nelson? If you're
9 on the call please press one and then zero. We will
10 be happy to take your comment. We'll give Tamara
11 a moment or two. Tamara Nelsen, press one and then
12 zero if you'd like to make a comment, please.

13 Okay. We will go to Randy Gordon.
14 Randy, if you are on the call would you please press
15 one, then zero. We'll be glad to take your call,
16 your comment. Randy Gordon. Randy Gordon, one,
17 then zero, please, if you're there. No?

18 Brian Lehmann? I believe Brian made a
19 comment on one of our earlier webinars. If you'd
20 like to make another comment and you're on the call,
21 we welcome it. Please press one, then zero.

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1 Randy Gordon or Brian Lehmann, are you on the call?

2 No?

3 Fred Gould? Is Fred on the call?

4 Please press one, then zero.

5 Nancy Osterbauer? Please press one,

6 then zero. We'd be glad to take your comment.

7 Nancy Osterbauer.

8 Logan Peterman? If Logan Peterman is

9 on the call, please press one, then zero. We'll

10 be glad to take your comment.

11 Analena Bruce? Please forgive me if

12 I've mispronounced your name. Analena Bruce,

13 press one, then zero please, on your telephone

14 keypad. Okay. We will open.

15 OPERATOR: You have one question

16 remaining.

17 MS. BRUCE: Hi. Can you hear me okay?

18 MR. GEORGE: Yes. We sure can.

19 Please go ahead and say your name, spell your name,

20 and let us know if you're affiliated with any

21 organization and then go ahead.

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1 MS. BRUCE: Great. My name is Analena
2 Bruce, A-N-A-L-E-N-A, B-R-U-C-E. Something is
3 happening. Do you hear that?

4 MR. GEORGE: You're getting an echo?

5 MS. BRUCE: Yes.

6 MR. GEORGE: Give us one second,
7 Analena. I think we might be able to adjust for
8 that. Just give us a second and see if we can't
9 make an adjustment here.

10 MS. BRUCE: Great.

11 MR. GEORGE: We're going to take a
12 minute or two and try and straighten that out.

13 MS. BRUCE: Great.

14 MR. GEORGE: Do you still hear an echo
15 now?

16 MS. BRUCE: Can you hear me okay?

17 MR. GEORGE: Analena, I'm going to ask
18 you to just hold one second.

19 MS. BRUCE: Okay.

20 (Pause)

21 MR. GEORGE: Analena, go ahead. Let's

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1 see if that's any better.

2 MS. BRUCE: Okay. Can you hear me
3 better?

4 MR. GEORGE: If you would mute your
5 computer, please.

6 MS. BRUCE: Yes. How's that?

7 MR. GEORGE: Better. That's it.

8 MS. BRUCE: Great. Okay.

9 MR. GEORGE: Yes. Please, go ahead.

10 MS. BRUCE: So again, my name is
11 Analena Bruce, A-N-A-L-E-N-A, B-R-U-C-E, and I'm
12 a rural sociologist. I'm speaking as an
13 independent academic.

14 I am in the process of working on a
15 research study on the challenges facing organic
16 farmers in the state of Ohio. And many of the
17 farmers that I interview face a variety of
18 obstacles. But one of the big ones that they told
19 me about is the risk of contamination of their
20 fields from neighboring farmer's genetically
21 engineered crops.

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1 And they're facing significant cost and
2 take extraordinary measures and deal with a lot of
3 hassle on the streets trying to keep their crops
4 separate from GE seeds. They use buffer zones,
5 inspection of their crops in the processing
6 facilities. They deal with frequent testing and
7 currently all of that falls on the farmers who do
8 not plant or profit from GE technology.

9 So for example, if they maintain buffer
10 zones on their land they are unable to farm this
11 portion of the land that they own or lease and are
12 paying money to farm.

13 Many of them delay planting for two
14 weeks which puts them at a disadvantage getting
15 their crops in the ground so late, especially if
16 the planting season has already been delayed or if
17 they face difficult weather conditions at harvest
18 time.

19 Then they undergo testing for genetic
20 drift in order to receive the organic premium. If
21 their product is found to have genetic

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1 contamination it can be rejected and they lose
2 their organic premium.

3 The financial impact of losing their
4 organic premium after making the investment to farm
5 organically is really significant. The risks of
6 facing loss of their organic certification or
7 growing an organic crop only to lose their premium
8 is a level of uncertainty and regulatory burden and
9 cost that isn't really faced by any other business
10 that I can think of.

11 The situation is unacceptable. In
12 fact, the existing lack of regulatory oversight of
13 GE crops and the failure to protect organic and
14 non-GMO farmers or to provide compensation for
15 contamination does a disservice to the producers
16 of GE crops as well, I think.

17 Why? The situation has turned many
18 Americans against consuming GE ingredients because
19 it offends their sense of core American values like
20 the protection of private property. If my calves
21 escape and compromise my neighbor's crop I'm liable

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1 for the damage and I assume that responsibility.
2 In no other case was a victim of property damage
3 either one, held responsible for the risk of
4 contamination and loss of their investments by a
5 neighbor.

6 One would argue that my responsibility
7 to invest in containment measures for my cattle
8 such as fencing is an unfair regulatory burden or
9 cost.

10 I think APHIS should be commended for
11 their decision to withdraw the proposed rule to
12 encourage greater stakeholder engagement and
13 investigate alternative policy approaches to
14 address some of these problems.

15 In this process I would just ask that
16 they consider mandating contamination prevention
17 measures on the part of the owners of GE seeds and
18 establishing a fair compensation mechanism for
19 their farmers who lose their organic premium, and
20 also invest more in the testing and oversight of
21 GE products post commercialization. Thank you

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1 very much for this opportunity.

2 MR. GEORGE: Thank you for your
3 comment.

4 Also registered to comment, Margaret
5 Moloney. If you're there please press one, then
6 zero.

7 OPERATOR: You have one question
8 remaining.

9 MS. YOUNGBLOOD: Hi, this is Abby
10 Youngblood. Can you hear me?

11 MR. GEORGE: Yes, we can. Please go
12 ahead.

13 MS. YOUNGBLOOD: Okay. I'm not
14 Margaret Moloney but I've got, I do have a comment.
15 So good afternoon, my name is Abby Youngblood and
16 I'm the Executive Director of the National Organic
17 Coalition and our coalition is seeking to advance
18 organic within our culture and to ensure that
19 policies are equitable. We're made up of 14 member
20 organizations and we're diverse.

21 It gives the voice to multiple sectors

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1 of the organic community including farmers,
2 ranchers, consumers, environmentalists, retailers
3 and other members of the organic industry. And I
4 want to thank you for this opportunity to provide
5 comments. This really is a critical issue for the
6 organic community. And I'd like to focus my
7 comments on three issues.

8 First, I would like to explain why the
9 National Organic Coalition believes that APHIS
10 should implement this noxious weed authority. And
11 like the previous commenter, I want to talk just
12 a little bit about the challenge that genetic
13 contamination poses for organic producers, and
14 then I want to say why I think we need a system to
15 prevent contamination and to compensate farmers
16 for harms in contamination events.

17 So to my first point, we believe that
18 APHIS should add noxious weed provisions to its
19 biotechnology regulation because the plant
20 protection act provides an obligation for the USDA
21 to prevent the spread of noxious weeds.

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1 We do believe that APHIS has the
2 authority to protect not only agricultural markets
3 but also natural resources, public health and the
4 environment against the broad range of direct and
5 indirect harm. .

6 We believe that there should be
7 protections against market destructions that occur
8 due to genetic contamination and we believe that
9 APHIS should use its authority to also protect
10 against damages associated with increased
11 pesticide and herbicide use. Including, for
12 example, even pesticide resistance as well as
13 negative human health and environmental impact.

14 And like the previous commenter, the
15 National Organic Coalition would like to see APHIS
16 implement a regular system to oversee GE crops,
17 from field trials to post commercialization.

18 I want to talk also about the threat
19 that genetic contamination poses for organic
20 producers. So organic producers need to ensure
21 that they do not rely on genetically engineered

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1 seeds or other GE methods if they want to label
2 their products as organic using the USDA seal. And
3 compliance with the organic standards requires
4 that organic operations have verifiable processes
5 in place to avoid contact with GMOs.

6 So for example, organic farms have to
7 identify at-risk crops. They have to communicate
8 with neighboring farmers who are growing these
9 crops. If there is a possibility of contamination
10 they have to try to avoid any sort of
11 cross-pollenization.

12 They've got to test at-risk food and get
13 verification from their seed supplier that any
14 at-risk food is GMO free. They've got to create
15 buffer zones. They have to avoid using
16 pollinators that have been used in proximity to GMO
17 fields. And they're applicable if some producers
18 have to clean and inspect storage facilities and
19 equipment that may have come in to contact with
20 GMOs. They have to verify that all inputs are
21 non-GMOs and do many more things in addition to what

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1 I just said to prevent the contamination from
2 happening. But really when they take all these
3 precautions it's not always possible to prevent
4 contamination.

5 So for example, one of our national
6 organic coalition members, Food and Water Watch,
7 did a study recently. And in that study they found
8 that one out of every three grain growers who
9 participated in the survey had a serious
10 contamination on their farm. These are organic
11 grain growers taking all of these prevention
12 measures and as a result of that contamination,
13 they were experiencing financial losses.

14 So the situation right now is that these
15 organic growers alone are responsible for
16 preventing the contamination but then when it
17 occurs, they also have to shoulder those costs, and
18 we believe that's not fair.

19 So this weekend we are asking that APHIS
20 establish a new regulatory system to ensure that
21 GMO patent holders and those growing GMO crops are

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1 also working to prevent contamination, and are also
2 working to ensure that when contamination does
3 occur and it's through no fault of the organic or
4 non-GMO producer, that there's some mechanism in
5 place to compensate those who are harmed.

6 At the National Organic Coalition we do
7 not support the crop insurance model as a way to
8 compensate those who have suffered economic losses
9 from GMO contamination. Instead we believe that
10 the patent holder should be held responsible for
11 segregation and traceability from seed to plate and
12 that the patent holder should cover the economic
13 and market harm that their products cause.

14 I'd also like to note that we believe
15 that non-regulatory solutions and other
16 non-binding activities by themselves are not a
17 factor in preventing the contamination from GE
18 crops. We believe that ongoing regulatory
19 oversight that is comprehensive and coordinated
20 and predicated on whether its independent
21 assessment of the socioeconomic and environmental

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1 impact is necessary.

2 And these assessments must prove that
3 GE products are safe and they must be accompanied
4 by a mandatory plan for mitigating risk to prevent
5 harm and a compensation mechanism for parties who
6 are harmed.

7 Thank you very much for this
8 opportunity to comment and thank you. I would just
9 like to respectfully request that APHIS maintain
10 transparency throughout this stakeholder
11 engagement process by making all proceedings and
12 written comments available to the public. Thank
13 you very much.

14 MR. GEORGE: Abby, thanks so much for
15 your comment. By the way, I will mention in
16 response to the end of your comment that the
17 transcripts of all of these comments will be posted
18 to the website within a couple weeks. We also have
19 audio recordings of all of the comments in these
20 meetings. They're also being posted as we
21 accumulate them.

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1 Thank you so much for your comment.

2 MS. YOUNGBLOOD: Thank you.

3 MR. GEORGE: And I will, we'll move on
4 to Margaret Maloney, if you're there. I don't know
5 if we really gave you an adequate opportunity to
6 let us know. Please press one, then zero if you
7 are.

8 If not we shall move ahead to Carol
9 Mallory-Smith. If you are on the phone, would you
10 please press one, then zero and we'll be glad to
11 take your comment. Carol Mallory-Smith? If
12 you're on the phone please press one, then zero and
13 we shall be glad to take your comment.

14 Okay. Elizabeth O'Nan? O-'-N-A-N.
15 If you're on the phone please press one, then zero
16 and we'll take your comment now. Elizabeth O'Nan.
17 No response.

18 Leon Corzine? Leon, if you're on the
19 phone please press one, then zero. We'll be glad
20 to take your comment.

21 Lisa Griffith? If you're on the phone

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1 please press one, then zero and we shall be glad
2 to take your comment. Lisa Griffith.

3 OPERATOR: You have one question
4 remaining.

5 MS. GRIFFITH: Hello?

6 MR. GEORGE: Hello. Lisa, are you
7 there?

8 MS. GRIFFITH: I am, thank you.

9 MR. GEORGE: Please go ahead.

10 MS. GRIFFITH: My name is Lisa
11 Griffith, G-R-I-F-F-I-T-H, and I work with the
12 National Family Farm Coalition. We will be
13 submitting most of our comments online but I would
14 like to note that we have worked with farmers and
15 ranchers across the U.S. since the mid-1980s and
16 since the mid-1990s have been working with those
17 who have seen various problems with genetically
18 modified organisms.

19 We do feel that process-based
20 regulation is the only way, and practical way, the
21 best way to oversee new technologies. And that

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1 there are narrow categories of GE products that
2 should go completely unregulated. We see a strong
3 need for regulation to protect human health, the
4 environment, biodiversity and other sectors of
5 agriculture which will also protect our farmers and
6 the non-GMO and organic crops they grow for
7 personal consumption and for trading on domestic
8 or international markets.

9 We've also seen the case of a number of
10 farmers who dealt with contamination of their
11 non-GMO crops by GMOs that were accidentally released
12 and for which they were not adequately warned of
13 a problem and we were a part of an oversight hearing
14 in 2008 led by Representative Dennis Kucinich
15 regarding the oversight of APHIS and the lack of,
16 I guess I should say lack thereof, regarding this
17 release. And we would like to see that

18 this sort of activity doesn't happen again. We
19 feel like there needs to be a lot more assurances
20 that GMO crops will not be released and that farmers
21 are not held accountable for the work, for the crops

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1 that they lose. As someone said earlier, relying
2 on an insurance based system is not fair to the
3 farmers who go to the trouble of planting non-GMO
4 and organic crops that go through certification and
5 high markets and then lose out. But they should
6 not have to buy insurance constantly to protect
7 themselves.

8 Oh, I guess the other thing I would like
9 to mention is that the USDA is also obligated to
10 uphold the mission of a national organic crop
11 program and the Plant Protection Act and we hope
12 that we will be able to rely on USDA to see that
13 farmers are protected. I will submit the rest of
14 our comments online. Thank you.

15 MR. GEORGE: Thank you, Lisa.

16 So I think we've gone through the list
17 of folks who have registered to comment. At this
18 time we'll open the lines to anyone on the call who
19 would care to make a comment. Please press one,
20 then zero and we'll see that and we'll open your
21 line and take your comment.

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1 Hello? Do we have a commenter?
2 Hello? Do we have a commenter, please? You may
3 need to mute your computer.

4 MR. LINDER: I pressed one and zero.

5 MR. GEORGE: There you go. You're
6 there.

7 MR. LINDER: All right. This is John
8 Linder, J-O-H-N, L-I-N-D-E-R, addressing as
9 National Corn Growers Association. And I'd like
10 to make a few comments but we're also going to
11 submit comments in writing.

12 NCGA has had longstanding positions
13 supporting science-based regulatory oversight and
14 product review under the coordinated framework. To
15 date, this system under the USDA's authority via
16 the Plant Protection Act has worked.

17 The possibility of allowing
18 non-science-based criteria into the review and
19 deregulating of new products in agriculture
20 implied by these questions causes us great concern.
21 The USDA has scrutinized, challenged and bolstered

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1 NEPA considerations in the past, specifically the
2 conduction of an EIS for new herbicide-tolerant
3 systems without a clear environmental assessment
4 indicating that was necessary.

5 We call upon USDA to reverse the trend
6 of precedents would apply and we suggest the proven
7 scientific-based safety review system already in
8 place. It is NCGA's understanding that the Plant
9 Protection Act (PPA) identifies specific plant
10 pest risk sequences that trigger regulatory review
11 and we support this approach.

12 The oversight as a result of
13 development of modern transgenic methods have
14 allowed plant scientists to convert traits into the
15 plants that would have been impossible to achieve
16 otherwise, so making sure these products are safe
17 is reasonable.

18 Science advances now allow us more
19 accurately modified internal genomes of sexually
20 compatible systems achieving what traditional
21 breeding abroad mutagenesis have done since the

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1 dawn of agriculture but in far less time. These
2 advanced methods provide safe, more accurate and
3 more efficient results than the older methods like
4 natural or forced mutagenesis or transgenic
5 technologies.

6 NCGA supports review of next generation
7 technology broadly for safety and looks to the
8 current oversight of breeding and assessing
9 products delivered from these new breeding
10 techniques. But criteria question, the critical
11 question should be could this have happened
12 naturally? If the answer is yes, how much beyond
13 FDA allergenicity testing would need to be, would
14 be needed to conclude that modification is risk.

15 NCGA has concerns over greater noxious
16 weed provisions impacting the oversight of modern
17 agricultural products and germplasms. It is our
18 understanding that the definitions of a noxious
19 weed is too broad and can be interpreted in a way
20 that would severely limit grower's access to
21 current and new products. To define a noxious weed

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1 as any plant that can have negative effect on
2 another plant can be carried to unreasonable ends
3 and would limit a growers freedom to operate.

4 We would again like to voice our support
5 on how the current system has handled this and why
6 there is no need to change for something, change
7 something that has been working.

8 NCGA supports the USDA's authorities
9 regarding the regulation of modern agricultural
10 products. These science based criteria that allow
11 growers to access to safe products while also
12 allowing the market to determine effectiveness and
13 that adaptation.

14 The association's position regarding
15 coexisting cropping systems remains consistent.
16 If a grower attempts to add value to their crop over
17 commodity corn it is their responsibility to
18 maintain that value. The terms and the conditions
19 and the quality of value-added products should be
20 determined by the delivered contracts to which
21 growers agree and should only affect parties

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1 involved in those agreements.

2 We also maintain the very best way for
3 growers to engage in value-added agriculture
4 community should be with neighbors and all possible
5 coexisting practices in order to maintain the value
6 of both crops.

7 USDA has the opportunity to champion
8 the world's most efficient and diverse
9 agricultural system with efforts to educate
10 growers and public on the modern agricultural
11 technologies. Modern ag products that have
12 profound impact on the sustainability, economics,
13 efficiency, safety and security of our food
14 production. The current system has not let us down
15 in any way related to feed safety and has arguably
16 enhanced non-target production systems through
17 herb production.

18 As a farmer in Ohio, we find these tools
19 to control weeds, all weeds, while reducing
20 herbicide use are just essential. We need all the
21 tools available. Not just all GMO, but even the

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1 opportunity for some to grow non-GE crops in side
2 by side coexisting situations. Everybody needs to
3 do their part to control weeds and if one gets out
4 of hand then the most suitable and safest way is
5 to use less herbicide is by using a GMO event, and
6 we are better off in the environment and as safety
7 as producers and it still is a safe food product
8 when used.

9 We also, at our home on our farm, we grow
10 soybean seed. We understand coexistence. We
11 understand what I mentioned earlier about we
12 entered the contract. It's not my neighbor's
13 problem to make that contract work for me. We have
14 to provide all the boundaries and all the
15 qualifications to get that premium or it's on us.

16 We're well regulated. You know,
17 everything is followed by label, by regulations,
18 that require even refuge for these genetically
19 engineered products. Farmers greatly understand
20 this and greatly embrace the ability to use these
21 in a very sustainable way.

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1 We can do so much more with so much less
2 as far as resources. We use less water. We can
3 do a lot of no-till to protect the environment with
4 the carbons by using no-till. We are 98 percent
5 no-till in our operation and we do a balance of GMO
6 and non-GMO and we can make it work.

7 And so it's exciting to see new products
8 come online that help us to be able to advance our
9 own production and our own safe productivity for
10 the environment. So as new products come on so we
11 can handle the situation so there's no resistant
12 weeds. We're excited. So to have the
13 opportunities of new products be squelched by more
14 regulatory oversight and the cost becoming
15 prohibitive. We've got a good system. We're not
16 sure what's broke or why we're trying to fix it.

17 Thank you for the opportunity and again
18 we'll submit comments in writing.

19 MR. GEORGE: Okay. Thank you, John.

20 So I'm understanding that we have a
21 couple in the queue.

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1 Nathan Fields? If you're there?

2 OPERATOR: You have one question
3 remaining.

4 MR. CORZINE: This is Leon Corzine.

5 MR. GEORGE: Leon, please go ahead.
6 Say your name.

7 MR. CORZINE: I don't want to jump ahead
8 of anyone but I will apologize. I was registered
9 to make comments and I had trouble getting on the
10 system. I heard you ask my name but I couldn't
11 respond until just now, so.

12 MR. GEORGE: We're glad you're here.

13 MR. CORZINE: Okay. Thank you. I,
14 for just as an introduction, I am a family farmer,
15 a fifth generation in Central Illinois. I farm
16 with my wife and my son. I am also a member of AC21
17 and I've been involved in the process and am proud
18 to represent family farmers in the process.

19 I appreciate the work that you do
20 because what I have seen, what we do, my
21 generation's able to do what the last generation,

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1 my dad, my granddad could not do, was have these
2 tools in the toolbox. And new technologies that
3 really, really help us were the things John Linder
4 mentioned.

5 On our farm personally, actually in my
6 lifetime we have nearly doubled our productivity.
7 We also have increased our soil health. We've
8 reduced runoff. We have less toxic chemicals that
9 we use so that my son doesn't have to handle, that
10 my dad and I had to handle. All of those things
11 have been positive benefits and I understand that
12 we weigh things.

13 We need to take a look at new
14 technologies to make sure they're safe and that's
15 your job to help us do it, but we also need to do
16 it in a timely manner. To your questions that you
17 had for this call, the characteristics about the
18 products and risks. They need to be science-based
19 and if you aren't science-based you aren't
20 anything, you don't have any basis. Our farm, we
21 count on the safety. We count on your regulatory

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1 system and the way our framework works to assure
2 that there are products that are safe.

3 And I'm proud that we have not had one
4 case proven in now over 20 years of use of anyone
5 getting sick or an animal harmed. We have some
6 cattle and we're in about, probably about six
7 generations of cattle now who have consumed biotech
8 corn, GMO corn. Haven't gotten sick, in fact we
9 have less health issues because we don't have the
10 aflatoxin issues because we don't have the insect
11 damage we used to have.

12 So this new technology really offers a
13 better way. And with your help to make sure that
14 they are safe, the biotech products and GMOs are
15 the most highly regulated product that we use on
16 the farm and that's okay because it is needed.

17 We don't use every technology but some
18 of them really, really work for us and some of them
19 we don't use and we have those choices. And a lot
20 of this is about choice. About having new products
21 on line to help us control new things that come

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1 along in regards to climate, in regards to how much
2 water we have to use. We're in an area where we
3 are all, now I'll call it, natural rainfall. We
4 don't use irrigation.

5 But also this then leads to the question
6 of noxious weeds and resistance weeds and I think
7 that should not be added because when you really
8 look at it, these weed issues are not really GMO
9 or biotech issues. They're chemical use issues.

10 And at one point we've learned as we go.
11 We've counted on too much of one mode of action like
12 we had done a generation before with ALS inhibitors
13 and weeds become resistant. So we come with a new
14 technology and we did that with glyphosate.

15 And now with new technologies that are
16 recently being deregulated we're going to use
17 multiple modes of action and we're already doing
18 that on the farm. We don't have a noxious weed or
19 weed resistance issue on our farm because we've
20 been conscious of that but it is proper chemical
21 use and people need to remember that.

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1 I'm not sure in your question, number
2 3, as far as the legal authorities. I don't get
3 into that quite as much so I'm not sure. But as
4 far as non-regulatory solutions, you know, I've
5 really been pleased to be a part of AC21 and to see
6 USDA taking a hard look and utilizing the findings
7 that we have come up with after a lot of work by
8 a lot of people, and a lot of time. And we're
9 acting on them in the regards to coexistence and
10 how we're able to enhance it or make it work better.

11 Like John said, we as well grow a number
12 of specialty products. We've done that. It's all
13 about if the extra effort and the segregation that
14 we do is worth the premium and if it is, why we take
15 a look at those contracts and often do that. But
16 it is incumbent upon us to secure the product to
17 make sure that it is segregated and maintain the
18 purity levels.

19 We work with our neighbors. We have
20 neighbors that are biotech. We have neighbors
21 that are non-GMO. We have neighbors who are

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1 organic. And we all get along because we talk.
2 And it works. We don't have the issues that some
3 claim to have, that really haven't been proven.

4 In the organic world they're process
5 based and I understand that. Some of the, I'll
6 call them organic-plus contracts that require
7 added things to be done, it's just like I grew a
8 regulated product and I had to do a lot of extra
9 things and it was upon me and I got an added premium
10 for it.

11 So those are things that we do in the
12 countryside. We make it work. To what you folks
13 do, we applaud your efforts. We like to see things
14 move along quickly because we need things to be
15 science-based but we also need to have access to
16 those tools and there are other parts of the country
17 that need them, some of the products, more than I
18 do on my part of the world.

19 With that I'll stop for now. I am on,
20 a lot of it is to listen, because I think as an AC21
21 member I try to do that and that's where we've been

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1 able to reach some compromises. And hopefully
2 we'll continue to do that and move forward. So
3 thank you very much for the opportunity.

4 MR. GEORGE: Thank you, Leon.

5 So it's Nathan, it's Traci. Traci, I
6 can't --

7 OPERATOR: You have one question
8 remaining.

9 MS. AQUARA: Hi. This is Traci
10 Aquara. Can you hear me?

11 MR. GEORGE: We sure can, Traci.
12 Would you please say your name and spell your name
13 and let us know if you're affiliated with an
14 organization, please?

15 MS. AQUARA: Sure my name is Traci,
16 T-R-A-C-I. My last name is Aquara, A-Q-U-A-R-A.
17 I have been affiliated in several groups in the past
18 but I'm really calling just as a citizen today if
19 that's all right with you?

20 MR. GEORGE: Sure.

21 MS. AQUARA: In the past I have worked

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1 with a lot of farming groups and 501(c)(3) not for
2 profits that worked with a lot of farmers with
3 implementing and informing about a lot of
4 government programs so I'm familiar with both sides
5 of a lot of the issues. I appreciate the
6 opportunity to speak today.

7 I'm not very well versed in the previous
8 2008 bill, just that you're withdrawing and taking
9 the comments. But I would, I would like to say that
10 I find that there are a lot of great actors out
11 there. Everyone isn't, it isn't all black and
12 white and good and bad. But I find that it's
13 commendable that there are some USDA programs that
14 are supporting organic, yet it seems like some of
15 those steps are a little bit not followed through
16 on in terms of being balanced.

17 As a few of the other speakers have said
18 it seems like when there is contamination of an
19 organic crop, all of the burden is on the grower
20 to rectify that. And, you know, they have to go
21 through certain steps to certify and it just seems

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1 that that burden should not always be on the farmer,
2 the organic farmer.

3 I was likening it to, you know, your
4 spray painting your fence and the paint goes over
5 the edge and, you know, sprays your neighbor's car.
6 The neighbor isn't liable to fix that. It's up to
7 the person who was doing the spraying, so I guess
8 that harkens to cross contamination with seed and
9 pesticide use and a lot of issues.

10 But I am hopeful that both sides will
11 be considered. I'm not sure if coexistence, I
12 think it has to be better defined what coexistence
13 means and what being good neighbors means in the
14 farming community. And I look forward to seeing
15 and hearing what others have to say about this
16 issue. So thank you for the opportunity to speak
17 and I'll be putting something together in writing
18 as well.

19 MR. GEORGE: Great. Thank you, Traci.

20 So at this time we would invite anyone
21 else who would care to make a call or to make a

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1 comment, please press one and then zero on your
2 telephone keypad and we'll be glad to take your
3 comment.

4 Anyone caring to make a comment, one and
5 then zero, please. So we'll pause here a few
6 seconds and see if anyone steps up and to make a
7 comment. One and then zero on your telephone
8 keypad.

9 Seeing that we have no commenters at the
10 moment we shall take a pause. We'll take a short
11 break and in the meantime if you would like to make
12 a comment, press one and zero and then we'll see
13 that. We'll come right back to take your comment.

14 However, since there are no commenters
15 in the queue at the moment we'll break for a few
16 minutes and we'll come back in five or six minutes
17 and make the same offer. So having said that we'll
18 take a short break and we'll be back in a few
19 minutes. Thanks so much.

20 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
21 went off the record at 4:47 p.m. and resumed at 4:59

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1 p.m.)

2 MR. GEORGE: Okay, we're back. I'm
3 Dick George. I'm here with Neil Hoffman. We're
4 here to take your comments on APHIS Biotechnology
5 Regulations. We're here to invite anyone who is
6 on the call who would like to make a comment to
7 please press one and then zero on your telephone
8 keypad and we shall see that and be glad to take
9 your comment. So I'll take a short pause here to
10 see if anyone takes us up on our offer.

11 If you'd like to make a comment please
12 press one and then zero. Seeing that no one's in
13 the queue we'll take another break and I'll remind
14 you, that if during the break you'd like to make
15 a comment just press one, then zero. We'll come
16 right back on to receive your comment.

17 I will also remind you that you could
18 make written comments through June 22nd by going
19 to regulations.gov and entering APHIS-2015-0036 in
20 the search box and you can leave comments there.
21 Having said that, we'll take another short pause

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1 and be back in six or eight minutes or so. Thank
2 you.

3 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
4 went off the record at 5:00 p.m. and resumed at 5:10
5 p.m.)

6 DR: HOFFMAN: I'm Neil Hoffman. I'm
7 here with Dick George and we're waiting to hear your
8 comments on the 340 biotech regulations. If you'd
9 like to make a public comment, please press one and
10 then zero on your keypad. We currently have no one
11 in the queue so if you'd like to make a comment
12 you'll be next.

13 Please press one and then zero if you'd
14 like to make a comment. We'll give you a few more
15 seconds before we sign off again. There's still
16 no one in the queue. If you're listening and you'd
17 like to make a comment please press one and then
18 zero on your keypad and then we will take your call.

19 It doesn't look like we have any takers
20 now so we will take another brief pause, and while
21 we're taking that pause if you'd like to make a

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1 comment, if you just joined us and you have
2 something you'd like to say, press one and then
3 zero. We'll see you're on the queue and then we'll
4 immediately come back on the air. Thank you.

5 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
6 went off the record at 5:11 p.m. and resumed at 5:23
7 p.m.)

8 DR: HOFFMAN: This is Neil Hoffman.
9 I'm here with Dick George and we're here waiting
10 for your comments on the biotech 340 regulations.
11 If you'd like to make a comment, please press one
12 and then zero on your keypad. Right now we have
13 no one in the queue. If you may, press one and then
14 zero we'll see that you'd like to make a comment
15 and we will take your comment. Give you a few
16 seconds to get started.

17 If anyone would like to make a comment,
18 please press one and then zero. If you just joined
19 late and haven't had a chance to make your comment
20 yet, please press one and then zero and we'll be
21 happy to take your comment.

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1 It doesn't seem like anyone's in the
2 queue so we will pause again briefly. While we're
3 paused if you'd like to make a comment please press
4 one and then zero, we'll see that you'd like to make
5 a comment and we'll come back on the air
6 immediately. Thank you.

7 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
8 went off the record at 5:24 p.m. and resumed at 5:40
9 p.m.)

10 MR. GEORGE: Hi, I'm Dick George. I'm
11 here with Neil Hoffman. We're here to take your
12 comments on APHIS Biotechnology Regulations. If
13 you'd like to make a comment please press one and
14 then zero on your telephone keypad and we'll be glad
15 to take your comment. So we're waiting a moment.

16 I will remind you that you can also make
17 written comments through June 22nd at
18 regulations.gov. Simply put in the search box
19 APHIS-2015-0036. You can leave a written comment
20 there on the same subject and that will be open
21 until June 22nd.

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1 This is the last of our three webinars
2 so if you'd like to make a spoken comment this is
3 your opportunity to do so. And if you'd like to
4 do that, please press one and then zero on your
5 telephone keypad. We shall see that and be glad
6 to take your comment.

7 So I see that there is no one in the
8 queue so we will break away again and I'll remind
9 you that if you hit one, then zero on your keypad
10 we'll see that and come back on right away to
11 receive your comment. So having said that, we'll
12 take another short pause. Thanks so much.

13 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
14 went off the record at 5:41 p.m. and resumed at 6:01
15 p.m.)

16 DR: HOFFMAN: We're back. This is
17 Neil Hoffman with Dick George and we're listening
18 for your comments on the biotech regulations.
19 Right now we have no one in the queue so we're
20 looking to see if anyone who has joined us is
21 interested in making a comment. If so please press

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1 one and then zero on your keypad and that will put
2 you into the queue. Again if you're interested in
3 making a comment please press one and then zero on
4 your keypad and we will acknowledge your comment.
5 We'll wait here a few more seconds.

6 We'll pause to see if any of you decide
7 you'd like to make a comment. While we're waiting
8 I'll remind you that you can submit comments in
9 writing through regulations.gov up through June
10 22nd.

11 Any takers, please press one and then
12 zero. And it doesn't look like anyone's in our
13 queue so we will sign off again. Please, if you're
14 interested in making a comment you can press one
15 and then zero while we're off the air and we'll come
16 back on to take your comment.

17 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
18 went off the record at 6:03 p.m. and resumed at 6:15
19 p.m.)

20 MR. GEORGE: Hi, I'm Dick George.
21 We're here to take your comments on APHIS

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1 Biotechnology Regulations. If you'd like to make
2 a comment we would invite you to please press one
3 and then zero on your telephone keypad and we will
4 be glad to open your mic and to take your comments.

5 And we have no one in the queue right
6 now so if you'd like to make a comment it's a perfect
7 opportunity. And while we're waiting I will
8 remind you that you can also go to regulations.gov
9 and make a comment there up through June 22nd.
10 This is the third of three webinars and we'll be
11 here until 7pm to receive any other comments so if
12 you'd like to comment this is a great opportunity
13 to do so.

14 And I see that there's no one in the
15 queue so we'll take another break and I'll remind
16 you if you'd like to comment press one, then zero.
17 We'll see that and come back right away to receive
18 your comment. Otherwise we'll be back in, say
19 maybe another 10 minutes or so. And in the
20 meantime let us know you'd like to comment. We'll
21 be glad to take your comment. So thanks so much.

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1 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
2 went off the record at 6:16 p.m. and resumed at 6:30
3 p.m.)

4 MR. GEORGE: Hi, I'm Dick George.
5 We're here to take your comments on APHIS
6 Biotechnology Regulations. If you'd like to make
7 a comment we'd love to hear it. And the way you
8 do that is you press one and then zero on your
9 telephone keypad and we will see that and unmute
10 your mic and take your comment.

11 And so and I will also remind you while
12 we're waiting to see if someone would like to
13 comment, that you can also leave written comments
14 at regulations.gov. If you go to
15 www.regulations.gov and in the search box enter
16 APHIS, A-P-H-I-S, -2015-0036 that'll take you
17 straight to that docket where you can leave a
18 written comment. We welcome those as well.

19 So if you'd like to make a comment here,
20 a spoken comment, please press one, then zero. And
21 I'm not seeing anyone in the queue at the moment,

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1 so I'll take the opportunity to also remind you that
2 the comments that have been made today and on our
3 two previous webinars will be posted to our website
4 within about three weeks. The transcripts will be
5 there. And audio recordings of what's been said
6 in these webinars for the first two webinars are
7 there already. And for this one will be there in
8 a matter of a few days.

9 So having said that I will invite you
10 one more time to press one and then zero to make
11 a comment. And seeing that there is no one in the
12 queue we'll break away again. And we'll be here
13 until 7:00 p.m. eastern daylight time which is
14 about another 30 minutes or so and we would love
15 to take your comment. And seeing that no one's in
16 the queue we'll take a break and we'll be back in
17 about eight or ten minutes to make this offer once
18 again. Thanks so much.

19 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
20 went off the record at 6:32 p.m. and resumed at 6:45
21 p.m.)

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1 MR. GEORGE: Hi, I'm Dick George and
2 I'm here to take your comments on the subject of
3 APHIS Biotechnology Regulations. If you'd like to
4 make a comment we're glad to hear it. Please press
5 one and then zero on your telephone keypad. We'll
6 see that and we'll open your mic and be glad to take
7 your comment.

8 We will be here until 7 o'clock eastern
9 daylight time which is about another 15 minutes or
10 so and would love to hear your comments if you care
11 to make them.

12 So while we're waiting to see if anyone
13 enters the queue I will remind you that this is the
14 last of three webinars. You can also leave written
15 comments if you choose to through June 22nd. You
16 do that by going to regulations.gov and in the
17 search box entering APHIS, A-P-H-I-S, -2015-0036
18 and that will take you to the docket for APHIS
19 biotech regulations.

20 I see still that there is no one in the
21 queue and so we will break away once again. It's

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1 about quarter of 7:00 now. We'll come back on
2 sometime a few minutes before 7:00 with one last
3 invitation and this meeting will close at 7:00 p.m.

4 So if you'd like to make a comment this
5 is a great time to do it. Press one, then zero.
6 We'd be glad to hear from you. Seeing that there's
7 no one in the queue we will take another pause.
8 Thanks so much.

9 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
10 went off the record at 6:47 p.m. and resumed at 6:57
11 p.m.)

12 MR. GEORGE: Hi, I'm Dick George.
13 We're here to take your comments on APHIS
14 Biotechnology Regulations. We'll be here until
15 7:00 p.m. which is just a few minutes away, so this
16 will be our last call to invite you to make a comment
17 if you'd care to on the subject of APHIS
18 Biotechnology Regulations.

19 If you'd like to make that comment now
20 is a great time. Please press one and then zero
21 on your telephone keypad and we'll see that and be

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1 happy to take your comments.

2 And I see that there's no one in the
3 queue and so I will remind you that through June
4 22nd you can go to regulations.gov and make a
5 comment there and you do that by entering in the
6 search box APHIS-2015-0036. That will take you to
7 the docket to leave a written comment.

8 Also you can go to
9 www.aphis.usda.gov/aphisvirtualmeetings where
10 there is a lot of background material about our
11 regulations and that's where we will post a
12 transcript of the webinars within the next couple
13 of weeks and audio recordings are being posted
14 there even sooner. For the first two webinars
15 those audio recordings are already on the site and
16 the audio recording from this webinar will be there
17 in the next few days.

18 So still seeing that no one is in the
19 queue we will bring our meeting to a close and thank
20 you for participating. Whether you made a comment
21 or not we're glad to have you along and to have your

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1 participation.

2 So with that I am going to say that we'll
3 bring this meeting to a close and thank you again
4 for your participation and good night.

5 OPERATOR: The conference recording
6 has stopped. We're sorry. Your conference is
7 ending now. Please hang up.

8 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
9 was concluded at 6:59 p.m.)

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