

ROUNDUP READY SUGAR BEETS
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
PUBLIC MEETING

Tuesday, November 22, 2011

4:07 p.m.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE
BIOTECHNOLOGY REGULATORY SERVICES

4700 River Road
Riverdale, Maryland 20737

Reported by: LaQuicia Thomas
Capital Reporting Company

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. GEORGE: We're ready to start our
3 meeting. I want to thank everybody for being here
4 today. As part of the public participation process,
5 we're holding this public meeting to solicit your
6 comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement
7 for H7-1 sugar beets, also known as
8 glyphosate-tolerant or Roundup Ready sugar beets.

9 My name is Dick George. I'm the
10 communications branch chief at Biotechnology
11 Regulatory Services, a part of APHIS, the Animal and
12 Plant Health Inspection Service, which, in turn, is
13 part of the USDA. Soliciting public comments is a
14 very important part of our process. We value your
15 input and are very glad and grateful that you've
16 taken the trouble to come here today and be part of
17 our process.

18 Also with me are Rebecca Stankiewicz-Gabel,
19 senior environmental protection specialist -- she'll
20 be working the mic in the middle of the room -- and
21 Neil Hoffman, science advisor to the Office of the
22 Deputy Administrator. Neil is signing people in at

1 the table in the back of the room. Neil and Rebecca
2 are project managers on this Environmental Impact
3 Statement.

4 Our purpose today is to take your comments
5 and to make them part of the public record. You can
6 also enter comments into the public record by going
7 to regulations.gov on the web and entering H7-1 sugar
8 beets in the search box. The public comment period
9 ends on December 13th. All public comments will be
10 considered before determination is made of the
11 regulatory status of Roundup Ready sugar beets.

12 On the table on the side of the room we've
13 placed some handouts, including an executive summary
14 of the draft EIS, fact sheets, and other background
15 information. There are also CDs of the draft EIS,
16 and you're welcome to take any of this material. A
17 draft EIS is also available on our website.

18 This is our third meeting that we've had.
19 Up until now, we've been providing our speakers with
20 five minutes. However, we're not going to be
21 enforcing that very strictly today as we don't have
22 that many speakers signed up. If you forgot to note

1 at sign-in that you would like to make a comment,
2 please do so. We will take speakers in the order in
3 which they have arrived and signed in. Rebecca will
4 be our timer. She'll let you know when your time is
5 up. And as I said, we won't be enforcing that
6 terribly strictly today. We appreciate everyone
7 being polite and offering comments in a civil way.

8 We will end our meeting by 7:00 p.m.
9 tonight. When your name is called, please come to
10 the microphone in the center of the room. Please
11 begin by stating and spelling your name for our court
12 reporter who's over here, LaQuicia Thomas. Please
13 say your name and spell your name so that she can get
14 it right on her official record.

15 All right. If you haven't already done so,
16 if you have a written copy of your statement, please
17 be sure to give it to Rebecca when you finish giving
18 your statement. It's important to remember that any
19 comments provided informally in conversations with us
20 before or after this meeting are not on the record.
21 To be on the record, your comments must be provided
22 either during the listening session or as a written

1 comment. There's an area in the back of the room on
2 the table with a public comment box and public
3 comment forms that you can fill out if you choose not
4 to make a spoken statement on the record, and you can
5 make a written statement and put it in that box.

6 This concludes our introduction. We'll now
7 begin to take public comments on the draft
8 Environmental Impact Statement, and our first speaker
9 is Genna Reed.

10 MS. REED: Good afternoon. My name is
11 Genna Reed, G-E-N-N-A R-E-E-D, and I'm a researcher
12 for Food & Water Watch, a non-profit consumer
13 advocacy group that supports safe, accessible, and
14 affordable food for consumers and fair access to
15 markets for farmers.

16 We thank USDA for hosting this public
17 hearing on the proposed deregulation of Roundup Ready
18 sugar beets. After evaluating the draft EIS, we
19 continue to have concerns about the approval of yet
20 another Roundup Ready crop, especially sugar beets,
21 which are grown only in very specific regions of the
22 U.S. and pose several risks to non-GE growers. The

1 use of yet another Roundup Ready crop will add to the
2 already elevated use of glyphosate in the U.S.,
3 carrying its own environmental and public health
4 risks. We urge USDA to choose alternative 1 and deny
5 the petition for deregulated status of GE sugar
6 beets.

7 First, sugar beets are a wind-pollinated
8 crop that are sexually compatible with their
9 vegetable relatives, table beets and chard. Beet
10 pollen can travel several miles, and in the
11 densely-concentrated-seed-production area of the
12 Willamette Valley, there's no way to exclude that
13 possibility. In fact, it's already happening.
14 Chard, table beet, and non-GE sugar beet growers must
15 worry about the possibility of contamination from
16 nearby GE sugar beet growers and the potential
17 economic burdens like paying hundreds of dollars to
18 test for contamination. This cost, compounded with
19 that of harvest loss, would result in these farmers
20 bearing the entire financial burden for
21 contamination. This will effectively push many
22 conventional and organic seed growers out of the

1 Willamette Valley and limit consumer choice.

2 Furthermore, if farmers do not suspect
3 contamination and unknowingly plant GE seeds,
4 contamination could continue throughout the
5 processing life cycle of the beets. This could
6 affect the export market if Japan or the EU, for
7 example, find that there is transgenic content in
8 shipments of beets or chard. Even without proof,
9 these countries may suspect contamination in dense
10 seed-producing regions like the Willamette Valley and
11 buy seed elsewhere. Both of these issues are not
12 fully represented in the EIS.

13 Next, as Roundup Ready sugar beets dominate
14 the market, these more expensive seeds will be the
15 only option remaining for farmers. According to the
16 EIS, farmers will pay \$53 an acre for the technology
17 agreement just to grow Roundup Ready seeds, which is
18 actually more expensive than USDA's calculations for
19 the cost of herbicide use on conventional sugar
20 beets, which is an estimated \$49 an acre. In effect,
21 just the cost of Roundup Ready sugar beet technology,
22 not including the cost of glyphosate and additional

1 herbicides, would exceed that of conventional sugar
2 beets. Also the EIS cost analysis assumes that
3 glyphosate will be the only herbicide used on these
4 sugar beets, when earlier it suggested that a regimen
5 of herbicides must be used in order to prevent weed
6 resistance. The regimen of herbicides needed to keep
7 up with Roundup Ready sugar beets and
8 glyphosate-resistant weeds will result in even higher
9 costs for farmers, which is not acknowledged in the
10 EIS.

11 The EIS acknowledges that glyphosate has a
12 high runoff potential, yet brushes off glyphosate's
13 effects on wildlife even though numerous studies have
14 shown serious developmental effects on amphibians and
15 other aquatic organisms. And with more and more
16 glyphosate use, dozens of herbicide-resistant weeds
17 have made an appearance. The EIS notes that these
18 weeds already infest an estimated 3.1 million acres
19 of sugar beet production states, which will only get
20 worse with time. And how does the USDA plan on
21 dealing with this increase in weeds? Using a mix of
22 older and more toxic herbicides. Not only are

1 resistant weeds growing in number, but the EIS also
2 pointed to increased disease susceptibility in
3 Roundup Ready sugar beets. When weighing
4 environmental impacts, herbicide pollution and
5 elevated plant disease risks should not be
6 disregarded.

7 Finally, there's no mandatory requirement
8 to label GE food products. Sugar from GE sugar beets
9 will make up majority of conventional sugar products
10 without consumers even knowing it. And according to
11 Monsanto research, the average American consumes
12 about 17 grams of sugar beet daily -- sugar beet
13 sugar daily. The EIS itself references a Rutgers
14 Food Policy Institute report which found that 94
15 percent of respondents favored GE food labels, yet
16 USDA argues that consumer demand for non-GE foods is
17 hard to estimate.

18 Consumers have a right to choose to eat
19 non-GE foods, and farmers have a right to sow the
20 crops of their choice without threat of
21 contamination. The approval of GE sugar beets will
22 inevitably lead to contamination of other crops and

1 the food supply. Therefore, we urge USDA to choose
2 alternative 1 and deny the petition seeking
3 deregulated status of GE sugar beets. And Food &
4 Water Watch also encourages APHIS to think critically
5 about its permitting process as it reforms its
6 regulations. It should not have taken a series of
7 lawsuits for APHIS to conduct an Environmental Impact
8 Statement for GE sugar beets. NEPA obligations
9 should be taken more seriously in the future. Thank
10 you.

11 MR. GEORGE: Thank you. Our next commenter
12 is Jim, it looks like White.

13 MR. WHITE: Hi. My name is Jim white. I
14 used to work for USDA.

15 MR. GEORGE: Jim, could you just say your
16 name, spell your name just in case there's something
17 strange about it so that our court reporter gets it
18 right, please.

19 MR. WHITE: It's Jim, J I-M W-H-I-T-E. I'd
20 just like to say that I support alternative 2, the
21 full deregulation of Roundup Ready sugar beets. I
22 think our previous speaker raised a lot of issues --

1 commented I guess I should say, raised a lot of
2 issues that were addressed in the draft Environmental
3 Impact Statement, but in my opinion, none of them are
4 plant pest risk issues, which the regulations under 7
5 CFR 340 have been written. I do agree that these are
6 issues. They're issues that need to be addressed by
7 the government, if assuming they have regulatory
8 authority.

9 Let's start with food issues. Food and
10 labeling is an important issue. That's definitely an
11 FDA issue, not a USDA issue. All the other issues
12 cost the farmers of seeds. Farmers can choose not to
13 use these seeds. That's their option. We have a
14 free country. They can choose not to. Farmers have
15 not chosen that in accordance with soybeans and in
16 any other crops where Roundup Ready is available.
17 They seem to like it.

18 And third, herbicide use.
19 Herbicide-resistant weeds have been reported since
20 the '70s. You can go back, and ever since, you use
21 any chemical, including antibiotics, resistance will
22 occur. Those issues need to be addressed by EPA.

1 EPA is the agency that is registering Roundup for use
2 on the sugar beets, not USDA. The use of older toxic
3 herbicides, for example, are already approved by the
4 EPA for use. Farmers could choose to use those if
5 they wanted to use those now. That's no change.
6 That was talked about in the proposed EIS.

7 I'd just like to say, again, I favor
8 alternative 2 for deregulation. Thanks.

9 MS. REED: Thank you for your comment.

10 MR. GEORGE: Is there anyone who has signed
11 in who indicated they did not want to make a comment
12 but has changed their mind and would like to make a
13 public comment while they're here? No?

14 In that case, we have heard from the two
15 people that have signed up to speak. We will not
16 adjourn, but we will suspend this meeting until
17 others, perhaps, arrive who choose to make a public
18 comment. Thank you.

19 (Whereupon, the meeting was suspended at
20 4:26 p.m.)

21 (Whereupon, at 7:00 p.m., the
22 proceedings concluded.)

1 CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

2 I, LAQUICIA THOMAS, the officer before whom the
3 foregoing proceedings were taken, do hereby certify
4 that I was authorized to and did stenographically
5 report the foregoing proceedings; and that the
6 transcript is a true and complete record of my
7 stenographic notes; and, further, that I am not a
8 relative or employee of any counsel or attorney
9 employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or
10 otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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LAQUICIA THOMAS
Notary Public in and for the
State of Maryland

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21 My commission expires:

22 October 8, 2014

<hr/> \$ <hr/> \$49 7:20 \$53 7:16 <hr/> 1 <hr/> 1 6:4 10:2 13th 3:9 17 9:12 <hr/> 2 <hr/> 2 10:20 12:8 2011 1:7 2014 13:22 20737 1:15 22 1:7 <hr/> 3 <hr/> 3.1 8:18 340 11:5 <hr/> 4 <hr/> 4:07 1:8 4:26 12:20 4700 1:14 <hr/> 7 <hr/> 7 11:4 7:00 4:8 12:21 70s 11:20 <hr/> 8 <hr/> 8 13:22 <hr/> 9 <hr/> 94 9:14 <hr/> A <hr/> access 5:14	accessible 5:13 accordance 11:15 according 7:15 9:10 acknowledged 8:9 acknowledges 8:11 acre 7:16,20 acres 8:18 action 13:10 actually 7:18 add 6:1 additional 7:22 addressed 11:2,6,22 adjourn 12:16 Administrator 2:22 advisor 2:21 advocacy 5:13 affect 7:6 affordable 5:14 afternoon 5:10 agency 12:1 agreement 7:17 AGRICULTURE 1:11 already 4:15 6:2,13 8:18 12:3 alternative 6:4 10:2,20 12:8 am 13:7 American 9:11 amphibians 8:14 analysis 8:2 Animal 1:12 2:11	antibiotics 11:21 anyone 12:10 APHIS 2:11 10:4,7 appearance 8:17 appreciate 4:6 approval 5:19 9:21 approved 12:3 aquatic 8:15 area 5:1 6:11 argues 9:16 arrive 12:17 arrived 4:3 assumes 8:2 assuming 11:7 attorney 13:8 authority 11:8 authorized 13:4 available 3:17 11:16 average 9:11 <hr/> B <hr/> background 3:14 bearing 6:20 beet 6:9,14,16 7:21 8:19 9:12 beets 1:3 2:7,8 3:8,11 5:18,20 6:6,7,9 7:5,8,13,20 8:2,4,7 9:3,8,21 10:3,8,21 12:2 begin 4:11 5:7 Biotechnology 1:13 2:10 box 3:8 5:2,5	branch 2:10 brushes 8:12 burden 6:20 burdens 6:17 buy 7:11 <hr/> C <hr/> calculations 7:18 Capital 1:22 carrying 6:3 case 10:16 12:14 CDs 3:15 center 4:10 CERTIFICATE 13:1 certify 13:3 CFR 11:5 change 12:5 changed 12:12 chard 6:9,14 7:8 chemical 11:21 chief 2:10 choice 7:1 9:20 choose 5:3 6:4 9:18 10:1 11:12,14 12:4,17 chosen 11:15 civil 4:7 comment 3:8 4:1 5:1,2,3 12:9,11,13,18 commented 11:1 commenter 10:11 comments 2:6,13 3:4,6,9 4:7,19,21 5:7
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