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USDA Announces Final Rule Allowing Importation of Chinese Wooden Handicrafts and Protection of American Agriculture from Harmful Pests

WASHINGTON, March 1, 2012—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is amending its regulations to allow, under certain conditions, the importation of wooden handicrafts from China. This action allows trade in Chinese wooden handicrafts to resume and continues to protect America's agriculture and natural resources from the introduction of harmful foreign pests.

The final rule requires that all wooden handicrafts from China be treated with a heat treatment or a heat treatment with moisture reduction at an APHIS-approved facility, unless the handicrafts are less than 6 inches in diameter. Handicrafts that are less than 6 inches in diameter may be treated with heat treatment, heat treatment with moisture reduction, or methyl bromide fumigation. Shipments must be accompanied by a specific APHIS permit and accompanied by an importer document or certificate. All shipping packages of wooden handicrafts must also be labeled with a tag indentifying the product manufacturer. The identification tag will allow APHIS to track shipments after importation into the United States.

The final rule also clarifies the definition of a "wooden handicraft" and amends the definition of "regulated article." A wooden handicraft is defined as a commodity class of regulated articles derived or made from natural components of wood, twigs and vines, and including bamboo poles and garden stakes. Handicrafts include carvings, baskets, boxes, garden and lawn/patio furniture (rustic), potpourri, artificial trees (typically artificial ficus trees), garden fencing and edging, and other items composed of wood. The final rule also amends the definition of regulated articles to include wood parts that are either unprocessed or have received only primary processing and are not feasibly separable from the other parts of the article. The final rule adds wooden handicrafts to the list of regulated articles.

Between 2002 and 2005, APHIS issued more than 300 emergency action notices for pest interceptions on wooden handicrafts from China. In 2005, APHIS suspended the importation of most wooden handicrafts from China in order to conduct an evaluation of the pest risks associated with the importation of these items.

Protecting America's agriculture and environment from the introduction and spread of invasive pests is one of APHIS' top priorities. With this final rule, APHIS is establishing sufficient safeguards against incursions of wood-boring pests based on conclusions drawn from

the pest risk analysis, while still allowing the importation of wooden handicrafts from China to resume.

Notice of this action is published in today's *Federal Register* and becomes effective on April 30.

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