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United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD 20737-1232 • Voice (301) 734-7799 • Web: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>

Contact:

R. Andre Bell (301) 851-4059

Lyndsay Cole (970) 494-7410

USDA Announces Decision to Deregulate Genetically Engineered Sugar Beets

WASHINGTON, July 19, 2012 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today announced its determination of nonregulated status for a variety of sugar beet genetically engineered (GE) to be resistant to the herbicide glyphosate. This variety is commonly referred to as Roundup Ready (RR) sugar beets.

After completing both a thorough environmental impact statement (EIS) and plant pest risk assessment (PPRA), holding three public meetings and considering and analyzing thousands of comments regarding its analyses, APHIS has determined that, from the standpoint of plant pest risk, RR sugar beets are as safe as traditionally bred sugar beets.

In June, 2012, APHIS published a final PPRA and EIS for RR sugar beets. The final PPRA scientifically examined the plant pest characteristics of the RR sugar beet variety and found the variety is not likely to pose a plant pest risk to agricultural crops or other plants or plant products. Under the Plant Protection Act and APHIS’ regulations, the Agency is specifically required to evaluate if RR sugar beets are a plant pest to agricultural crops or other plants or plant products.

APHIS’ final EIS, conducted under the National Environmental Policy Act, evaluated the potential environmental impacts of three alternatives prior to determining whether to approve the petition for nonregulated status submitted by the developers of RR sugar beets. In its record of decision, APHIS selects the second alternative analyzed in the final EIS; this was the alternative in which RR sugar beets are approved for nonregulated status because the variety is not likely to pose a plant pest risk. APHIS’ selection of the second alternative analyzed is consistent with the Agency’s authority with regard to determining the plant pest risk for RR sugar beets.

This is APHIS’ final regulatory determination in this matter. Since a district court decision in 2009, APHIS has worked hard to complete this final EIS to ensure it is sound and comprehensive. APHIS’ determination of nonregulated status of RR sugar beets reflects this hard work and will become effective upon publication of the Agency’s notice of availability of the determination and record of decision in the *Federal Register* on July 20, 2012. APHIS’ determination and record of decision on RR sugar beets are now available to the public at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/news.shtml>.

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