

APHIS Biotechnology Regulatory Services: Engaging Native American Communities in Biotechnology Regulation



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
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Through its Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) program, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) protects against risks to U.S. plant health and provides for the safe importation, interstate movement, and environmental release/field testing of certain genetically engineered (GE) organisms. APHIS is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and has regulated GE organisms since 1987.

What We Do

APHIS requires applicants who want to move, import, or field test certain newly developed GE organisms to submit detailed information for thorough review by our scientists to assess plant pest risks or potential environmental impacts before the introduction can be allowed. Upon completion of field testing, developers can petition APHIS to determine nonregulated status for a GE organism once they have gathered sufficient information to demonstrate that the new GE variety does not pose a plant pest risk and is safe to be grown in the environment without regulatory oversight. Before APHIS determines nonregulated status, our scientists must conclude that the new GE variety is just as safe for agriculture as traditionally bred crop varieties.

Once APHIS determines that a new GE organism does not pose a plant pest risk, it may be moved and planted without our regulatory oversight. At this point, if any other applicable reviews of the product have been completed by other Federal agencies, the developer may choose to bring the GE product to market.

To date, APHIS has issued more than 36,000 field trial and movement authorizations and made determinations of nonregulated status for over 100 GE products.

APHIS achieves compliance with its biotechnology regulations through a variety of measures, including inspections, educational and outreach efforts, investigations, and audits.

Coordinating for the Safe Use of Biotechnology

APHIS coordinates its biotechnology regulatory activities with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Food and Drug Administration (FDA). EPA regulates pesticides, including crops with plant-incorporated protectants (pesticides intended to be produced and used in a living plant) to ensure public safety. EPA also regulates pesticide residue on food and animal feed. FDA has primary responsibility for ensuring the safety of human food and animal feed, as well as proper labeling and safety of all plant-derived foods and feeds. APHIS regulates certain GE organisms that may pose a risk to plant health.

Working With Native American Communities

APHIS makes it a top priority to reach out to Native American communities regarding GE field trials and regulatory decisions that may affect tribal lands. For GE field trials either on Federal reservations or close enough to have a possible impact, APHIS contacts and initiates consultation with the tribe(s). When we receive a petition to deregulate a GE organism, we provide information to Federally Recognized Tribes during the decisionmaking process and extend invitations for consultation to them. APHIS actively seeks tribal input on petitions for deregulation, and on field trials and movement of GE organisms, on or near tribal lands. In addition, we encourage tribes to contact USDA on these and any other biotechnology regulatory concerns. We are also happy to provide educational outreach on the topic of biotechnology regulation.

For More Information

To learn more about APHIS' regulation of agricultural biotechnology, please visit www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology. Additional information about biotechnology products and statistics in the United States is available at www.isb.vt.edu.

For further questions and to find out how APHIS-BRS can work with your community, please contact BRS Tribal Liaison, Gwendolyn Burnett, at (301) 851-3893 or gwendolyn.l.burnett@aphis.usda.gov.

APHIS works closely with Native American communities to help protect their agricultural resources.

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