

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of the Secretary

[Docket No. 00-001-2]

Declaration of Emergency Because of Plum Pox Virus

An exotic plant virus, plum pox virus, has been detected in the United States. The disease was detected in Pennsylvania and had not previously been detected in the United States.

Plum pox virus is the cause of an extremely serious plant disease, affecting a number of *Prunus* species, including peach, nectarine, apricot, plum, and almond. Infection eventually results in severely reduced fruit production, and the fruit that is produced is often misshapen and blemished. There is no cure or treatment for the disease once a tree becomes infected. In Europe, where plum pox has been present for a number of years, the disease is considered to be the most serious disease affecting susceptible *Prunus* species. The disease is spread over short distances by a number of different aphid species, and over longer distances through the movement of infected budwood and nursery stock. The strain of virus now present in the United States is known not to be seed-transmitted.

If plum pox is allowed to become established and to spread, the overall crop loss and impact on quality could be significant. The estimated annual value of stone fruit at the farm gate for the entire United States is at least \$1.8 billion. If steps are not taken to eradicate plum pox in the very limited area in Pennsylvania where it is now known to be present, there is every possibility the disease will eventually spread to other areas in the United States where host crops are produced. This would result in substantial losses to producers of these important fruit crops, and to those industries that transport, process, or otherwise utilize

this fruit. Consumers would also be affected by a reduction in the quantity and quality of fruit available, and by increased prices.

There are three components to controlling and eradicating plum pox: (1) A regulatory program to prevent the movement of plant material infected with plum pox virus from the area where it is now known to be present to other areas where the host plants are likely to be present; (2) a survey program adequate to detect any additional infestations of plum pox virus that may be present; and (3) a control program to remove all infested orchards. Initial action was taken by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA). The PDA has instituted a quarantine that encompasses the two townships that include the area where plum pox virus is now known to be present. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the United States Department of Agriculture intends to establish a parallel Federal quarantine of this area.

APHIS has insufficient funds to conduct the control and eradication programs deemed necessary to protect stone fruit production areas. Once funded, APHIS can continue a control and eradication program.

Therefore, in accordance with the provisions of the Act of September 25, 1981, 95 Stat. 953 (7 U.S.C. 147b), I declare that there is an emergency that threatens the stone fruit crops of this country, and I authorize the transfer and use of such sums as may be necessary from appropriations or other funds available to agencies or corporations of the United States Department of Agriculture for the conduct of a program to control and prevent the spread of plum pox to noninfested areas of the United States, and to eradicate plum pox wherever it may be found in the United States.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This declaration of emergency shall become effective January 20, 2000.

Dan Glickman,

Secretary of Agriculture.

[FR Doc. 00-4987 Filed 3-1-00; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of the Secretary

[Docket No. 00-001-1]

Declaration of Extraordinary Emergency Because of Plum Pox Virus

An exotic plant virus, plum pox virus, has been detected in the United States. The disease was detected in Pennsylvania and had not previously been detected in the United States.

Plum pox virus is the cause of an extremely serious plant disease, affecting a number of *Prunus* species, including peach, nectarine, apricot, plum, and almond. Infection eventually results in severely reduced fruit production, and the fruit that is produced is often misshapen and blemished. There is no cure or treatment for the disease once a tree becomes infected. In Europe, where plum pox has been present for a number of years, the disease is considered to be the most serious disease affecting susceptible *Prunus* species. The disease is spread over short distances by a number of different aphid species, and over longer distances through the movement of infected budwood and nursery stock. The strain of virus now present in the United States is known not to be seed-transmitted.

If plum pox is allowed to become established and to spread, the overall crop loss and impact on quality could be significant. The estimated annual value of stone fruit at the farm gate for the entire United States is at least \$1.8 billion. If steps are not taken to eradicate plum pox in the very limited area in Pennsylvania where it is now known to be present, there is every possibility the disease will eventually spread to other areas in the United States where host crops are produced. This would result in substantial losses to producers of these important fruit crops, and to those industries that transport, process, or otherwise utilize this fruit. Consumers would also be affected by a reduction in the quantity and quality of fruit available, and by increased prices.

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likely to be present; (2) a survey program adequate to detect any additional infestations of plum pox virus that may be present; and (3) a control program to remove all infested orchards. Initial action was taken by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA). The PDA has instituted a quarantine that encompasses the two townships that include the area where plum pox virus is now known to be present. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (the Department) intends to establish a parallel Federal quarantine of this area.

It is essential to the control and eradication of the plum pox virus that orchards known to be infested be removed promptly, along with any additional orchards that are determined to be infested in surveys to be conducted this spring. The Department has reviewed the measures being taken by Pennsylvania to survey, regulate, and control plum pox virus and has consulted with the Governor of Pennsylvania. Based on such review and consultation, the Department has determined that Pennsylvania does not have authority or funds to compensate growers for the removal of infested orchards. Without such funds, it will be unlikely to achieve expeditious removal of the orchards.

The infestation of plum pox virus represents a threat to U.S. stone fruit crops. It constitutes a real danger to the national economy and a potential serious burden on interstate and foreign commerce. Therefore, the Department has determined that an extraordinary emergency exists because of the existence of plum pox virus in Pennsylvania.

In accordance with 7 U.S.C. 150dd, this declaration of extraordinary emergency authorizes the Secretary to: (1) Seize, quarantine, treat, apply other remedial measures to, destroy, or otherwise dispose of, in such manner as the Secretary deems appropriate, any product or article of any character whatsoever, including means of conveyance, that the Secretary has reason to believe is infected by or contains the plum pox virus; and (2) quarantine, treat, or apply other remedial measures to, in such manner as the Secretary deems appropriate, any premises, including articles on such premises, that the Secretary has reason to believe are infected by or contaminated by the plum pox virus. The Governor of Pennsylvania has been informed of these facts.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This declaration of extraordinary emergency shall become effective January 20, 2000.

Dan Glickman,

Secretary of Agriculture.

[FR Doc. 00-4988 Filed 3-1-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Research Service

Notice of Federal Invention Available for Licensing and Intent To Grant Exclusive License

AGENCY: Agricultural Research Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability and intent.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Federally owned invention U.S. Patent No. 5,968,541, issued October 19, 1999, entitled "Composition and Method for the Control of Diabroticite Insects" is available for licensing and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, intends to grant to Florida Food Products, Inc., of Eustis, Florida, an exclusive license to Serial No. 08/917,852.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before May 31, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to: USDA, ARS, Office of Technology Transfer, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Room 4-1158, Beltsville, Maryland 20705-5131.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: June Blalock of the Office of Technology Transfer at the Beltsville address given above; telephone: 301-504-5989.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Federal Government's patent rights to this invention is assigned to the United States of America, as represented by the Secretary of Agriculture. It is in the public interest to so license this invention as Florida Food Products, Inc., has submitted a complete and sufficient application for a license. The prospective exclusive license will be royalty-bearing and will comply with the terms and conditions of 35 U.S.C. 209 and 37 CFR 404.7. The prospective exclusive license may be granted unless, within ninety (90) days from the date of this published Notice, the Agricultural Research Service receives written evidence and argument which establishes that the grant of the license would not be consistent with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. 209 and 37 CFR 404.7.

Richard M. Parry, Jr.

Assistant Administrator.

[FR Doc. 00-4989 Filed 3-1-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-03-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 00-008-1]

Public Meetings; Imported Fire Ant

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of public meetings and request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service plans to hold four public meetings to discuss issues related to how we should administer our imported fire ant program in light of reduced funding.

DATES: We invite you to comment on this docket. We will consider all comments that we receive by May 1, 2000.

The public meetings will be held in: (1) Raleigh, NC, on March 21, 2000; (2) Orlando, FL, on March 23, 2000; (3) Austin, TX, on March 28, 2000; and (4) Santa Ana, CA, on March 30, 2000. Each public meeting will begin at 9 a.m. and is scheduled to end at 5 p.m.

ADDRESSES: If you cannot attend a public meeting, please send your written comment and three copies to: Docket No. 00-008-1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Suite 3C03, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238.

Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. 00-008-1.

You may read any comments that we receive on this docket in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690-2817 before coming.

APHIS documents published in the **Federal Register**, and related information, including the names of organizations and individuals who have commented on APHIS dockets, are available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html>.

The public meetings will be held at the following locations:

(1) Raleigh, NC: Wake County Commons Buildings, 4011 Cary Drive, Raleigh, NC.

(2) Orlando, FL: Radisson Barcelo Hotel, 8444 International Drive, Orlando, FL.

(3) Austin, TX: Clements Building, Committee Room 5, 15th and Lavaca Streets, Austin, TX.