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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 97-070-1]

Notice of Request for Extension of Approval of an Information Collection

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Extension of approval of an information collection; comment request.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's intention to request an extension of approval of information collection in support of regulations intended to prevent the introduction of foreign plant pests into the United States.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by September 22, 1997 to be assured of consideration.

ADDRESSES: Send comments regarding the accuracy of burden estimate, ways to minimize the burden (such as through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology), or any other aspect of this collection of information to: Docket No. 97-070-1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, suite 3C03, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please send an original and three copies, and state that your comments refer to Docket 97-070-1. Comments received may be inspected at USDA, room 1141, South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. Persons wishing to inspect comments are requested to call ahead on (202) 690-2817 to facilitate entry into the comment reading room.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For information regarding foreign

quarantine notices, contact Mr. Peter Grosser, Senior Operations Officer, Phytosanitary Issues Management Team, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road, Unit 139, Riverdale, MD 20737-1236, (301) 734-8295; or e-mail:

pgrosser@aphis.usda.gov. For copies of more detailed information on the information collection, contact Ms. Cheryl Jenkins, Agency Support Service Specialist, at (301) 734-5360.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Foreign Quarantine Notices.

OMB Number: 0579-0049.

Type of Request: Extension of an approval of an information collection.

Abstract: The United States Department of Agriculture is responsible for preventing the introduction of foreign plant pests into the United States. Implementing this mission often requires us to collect information from a variety of individuals, both within and outside of the United States, who are involved in growing, packing, handling, transporting, and importing foreign plants, fruits, vegetables, roots, bulbs, seeds, and other plant products.

We are asking the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to approve the continued use of these information collection activities.

For example, many plants or plant products may not be imported until the person wishing to import them receives a permit from us. The person wishing to import these items must first fill out a permit application.

We consider the permit application process extremely important, since the information on the application enables us to determine whether the items for import represent a potential pest threat to U.S. agriculture.

Under certain circumstances we also require importers to supply us with other types of information. We require, for example, that containers used to import various plants or plant products be marked in a certain way so that our inspectors can accurately identify them and match them to their accompanying documentation.

We require that certain shipments be accompanied by a phytosanitary inspection certificate, which is a document completed by plant health officials in the originating country. This certificate attests to the plant pest condition of the shipment at the time it was inspected in the originating

country. We use this important information as a guide in determining the intensity of the inspection we must conduct when the shipment arrives in the United States.

This and other information we collect is vital to helping us ensure that imported plants and plant products do not harbor plant pests that, if introduced into the United States, could cause millions of dollars in damage to U.S. agriculture.

The purpose of this notice is to solicit comments from the public (as well as affected agencies) concerning our information collection. We need this outside input to help us:

(1) Evaluate whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(2) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(3) Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(4) Minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, through use, as appropriate, of automated, electronic, mechanical, and other collection technologies, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average .4 hours per response.

Respondents: Importers and foreign plant health protection authorities.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 96,028.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 2.6.

Estimated Annual Number of Responses: 249,672.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 99,869 hours.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Done in Washington, DC, this 17th day of July 1997.

Terry L. Medley,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 97-19363 Filed 7-22-97; 8:45 am]

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