

(1) Exhibits no plant pathogenic properties; (2) is no more likely to become a weed than tomato lines developed by traditional breeding techniques; (3) is unlikely to increase the weediness potential for any other cultivated or wild species with which it can interbreed; (4) will not cause damage to raw or processed agricultural commodities; and (5) will not harm threatened or endangered species or other organisms, such as bees, that are beneficial to agriculture. Therefore, APHIS has concluded that the subject tomato line and any progeny derived from hybrid crosses with other nontransformed tomato varieties will be as safe to grow as tomato in traditional breeding programs that are not subject to regulation under 7 CFR part 340.

The effect of this determination is that Monsanto's tomato line 5345 is no longer considered a regulated article under APHIS' regulations in 7 CFR part 340. Therefore, the requirements pertaining to regulated articles under those regulations no longer apply to the field testing, importation, or interstate movement of the subject tomato line or its progeny. However, importation of tomato line 5345 or seeds capable of propagation is still subject to the restrictions found in APHIS' foreign quarantine notices in 7 CFR part 319.

National Environmental Policy Act

An environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared to examine the potential environmental impacts associated with this determination. The EA was prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1b), and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372). Based on that EA, APHIS has reached a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) with regard to its determination that Monsanto's tomato line 5345 and lines developed from it are no longer regulated articles under its regulations in 7 CFR part 340. Copies of the EA and the FONSI are available upon request from the individual listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

Done in Washington, DC, this 3rd day of April 1998.

Craig A. Reed,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 98–9376 Filed 4–8–98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food and Nutrition Service

Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request; Food Stamp Program Form FCS–278–B, Food Stamp Redemption Certificate and Form FCS–278–4, Wholesaler Redemption Certificate

AGENCY: Food and Nutrition Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice invites the general public and other public agencies to comment on proposed information collection. The Food Stamp Act of 1977 requires that FNS will provide all authorized retail food stores and wholesale food concerns with redemption certificates. The redemption certificates are to be used by retailers and wholesale firms to present food coupons to insured financial institutions for credit or for cash. Requirements in the Food Stamp Regulations are the basis for the information collected on Form FCS–278B, Food Stamp Redemption Certificate and Form FCS–287–4, Wholesaler Redemption Certificate.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before June 8, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information has practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to: Suzanne M. Fecteau, Chief, Redemption Management Branch, Food Stamp Program, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, Virginia 22302–1594. All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become matter of public record.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection form and instructions should be directed to Suzanne M. Fecteau, (703) 305–2418.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Food Stamp Redemption Certificate.

OMB Number: 0584–0085.

Expiration Date: 09/30/98.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved collection for which approval expires on September 30, 1998.

Abstract: The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, formerly known as the Food and Consumer Service (FCS), is the Federal Agency responsible for the Food Stamp Program. Section 10 of the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended, (the Act) (7 U.S.C. 2019), requires that FNS provide for the redemption through financial institutions, of food coupons accepted by approved retail food stores and wholesale food concerns from program participants. Sections 278.3 and 278.4 of the Food Stamp Program regulations govern the participation of authorized wholesale food concerns and retail stores in the food coupon redemption process. Form FCS–278B, Food Stamp Redemption Certificate and Form FCS–278–4, Wholesaler Redemption Certificate (RCs) are required to be used by all authorized wholesalers or retailers, and are processed by financial institutions when they are represented for credit or for cash. Without the RCs, no vehicle would exist for financial institutions, Federal Reserve Banks, and the FNS to track deposits of food coupons.

The burden associated with this form is derived from the number of RCs processed annually, based on information available in our STARS (Store Tracking Redemption System) database. As of December 1997, the number of program respondents was 184,300 retailers and wholesalers and 5,850 banks participating in the Food Stamp Program. The number of completed RC responses by authorized retailers was 20,750,000 annually, with total annual burden hours calculated to be 415,000 hours. We estimate that it takes an average of 1.2 minutes (or .020 hours) for a retailer to complete the information on the RC and for the financial institution to handle and process the document. In fiscal year 1999, we estimate that the number of program respondents will be 176,928 respondents with 5,850 banks continuing to participate in the Food Stamp Program—a reduction of 7,372 (or 4 percent) respondents. We also

estimate that the number of completed RC responses by authorized retailers to be 19,297,500 annually—providing for a reduction of 1,452,500 (or seven percent) annual responses, and a total annual burden hours calculated to be 385,950 hours. The estimated reduction of respondents and annual burden hours is based on a projected decrease in the number of authorized retailers participating in the Food Stamp Program, and a decrease in the number of RCs processed as a result of fewer authorized retailers accepting paper food coupons due to the increased use of the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system.

As a result of the Agency name change, the forms will be changed to reflect the new Agency name when our inventory records indicate that stock on hand is low and needs replenishment.

Affected Public: Businesses, wholesale food concerns, or other-not-for-profit financial institutions.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 176,928.

Estimated Annual Number of Responses per Respondent: 109.06979.

Estimated Total Annual Responses: 19,297,500.

Estimate of Burden: Estimated to average .020 hours per response.

Estimated Total Annual Burden: 385,950 hours.

Dated: March 26, 1998.

Yvette S. Jackson,

Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service.

[FR Doc. 98-9416 Filed 4-8-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-30-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

Implementation of a New Official Moisture Meter

AGENCY: Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) is announcing the selection of a new official moisture meter; i.e., a device approved by GIPSA for determining the moisture content of grain inspected under the United States Grain Standards Act. Specifically, the Grain Analysis Computer Model 2100 (GAC 2100), manufactured by Dickey-john Corporation, Auburn, Illinois, has been selected by GIPSA to replace the Motomco Model 919 Moisture Meter. The new moisture meter is expected to improve the ease, speed, and reliability

of official moisture measurement and to allow automated measurements and electronic transmission of results.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steven N. Tanner, Director, Technical Services Division, GIPSA, USDA, 10383 N. Executive Hills Boulevard, Kansas City, Missouri 64153; telephone (816) 891-0401; fax (816) 891-0478.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), acting through the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, issued a solicitation on May 15, 1997, for the purpose of selecting and procuring new official moisture meters. GIPSA uses a single technology for all official moisture measurements because research has demonstrated that the use of multiple technologies would result in significant uncorrectable differences between official inspection points. This is true even if the different technologies have comparable accuracy with respect to the USDA air oven reference method. Therefore, the moisture meter selected from this solicitation will replace the current official moisture meter model, the Motomco Model 919.

GIPSA evaluated the received proposals according to the criteria specified in the solicitation. The criteria included potential range of grain types for which the instrument could be used; the range of moisture over which it exhibited acceptable accuracy; its potential to be used for measurement of other grading factors; its ability to operate in the temperature, vibrational, and electromagnetic environment typical of a grain inspection point; time and sample size required for measurements; ease of use; instrument self-checking capabilities; manufacturer's quality control plan and error analysis; degree of expected variation between measurements from different instruments of the same model; proposed procedures for checking the performance of field instruments against a master instrument (check-testing); and cost to the government. GIPSA surveyed current users of the instruments and conducted field tests of existing instruments at several different locations.

Implementation of the new instruments for official measurements of grains, oilseeds, and processed commodities will be phased in, product by product, over a period of at least 2 years. For any given product, all official moisture measurements will be performed using the Motomco Model 919 until the transition date for that product; the GAC 2100 will be used exclusively thereafter. The transition

date for each product will be announced by GIPSA through a Notice in the **Federal Register** prior to the transition. Transition dates for each product will be selected to minimize the impact of the changes on the value of carry-over stocks and will be announced in advance. Tentative transition dates are as follows: August 1, 1998—corn, soybeans, and sunflower seeds; May 1, 1999—barley, oats, rough rices, sorghum, and all wheats. Transition dates for peas, beans, lentils, and other commodities may lie beyond 1999.

The GAC 2100 uses separate calibration equations for each grain type to achieve optimum accuracy. GIPSA routinely reviews the accuracy of official calibrations and revises calibration equations to optimize accuracy with respect to the USDA air oven method. All GAC 2100 calibration equations will be carefully reviewed for accuracy based on several years' crop data. Where accuracy can be improved, calibrations will be adjusted prior to issuing them as official calibrations.

Both the Motomco Model 919 and the GAC 2100 are calibrated to the USDA air oven method. Therefore, the overall average change in moisture results between the instruments should be quite small. The substantial differences in measurement methods between the two instrument types will, however, cause moisture measurements to differ for the two instruments on specific samples. It is impossible to predict exactly what the differences between Motomco Model 919 and GAC 2100 results will be for a given grain sample. Most results should agree within plus or minus 0.5 percent moisture, but some differences will exceed plus or minus 1.0 percent moisture.

GIPSA is currently reviewing Part 801 of the regulations, "Official Performance Requirements For Grain Inspection Equipment". Changes to the regulations will be published as appropriate and necessary.

GIPSA anticipates several important benefits from the new moisture meter. The new instrument's speed and ease of operation will help to hold down inspection costs. The instrument will increase confidence in official moisture results by eliminating most of the operator interactions in the moisture measurement process. Electronic transmission of results and adaptability to automated operation will contribute to improving the timeliness and value of official inspections. The instrument's newer technology and built-in system checks will improve reliability, reduce down-time, and automatically notify the operator of potential performance problems.