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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

7 CFR Part 301

[Docket No. 02–129–3]

Mexican Fruit Fly; Addition of Regulated Area

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Interim rule and request for comments.

SUMMARY: We are amending the Mexican fruit fly regulations by adding a portion of San Diego County, CA, to the existing regulated area and restricting the interstate movement of regulated articles from that area. This action is necessary to prevent the spread of the Mexican fruit fly into noninfested areas of the United States.

DATES: This interim rule was effective March 4, 2003. We will consider all comments that we receive on or before May 9, 2003.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by postal mail/commercial delivery or by e-mail. If you use postal mail/commercial delivery, please send four copies of your comment (an original and three copies) to: Docket No. 02–129–3, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3C71, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737–1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. 02–129–3. If you use e-mail, address your comment to regulations@aphis.usda.gov. Your comment must be contained in the body of your message; do not send attached files. Please include your name and address in your message and “Docket No. 02–129–3” on the subject line.

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>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Stephen A. Knight, Senior Staff Officer, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 134, Riverdale, MD 20737–1236; (301) 734–8247.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Mexican fruit fly (*Anastrepha ludens*) is a destructive pest of citrus and many other types of fruit. The short life cycle of the Mexican fruit fly allows rapid development of serious outbreaks that can cause severe economic losses in commercial citrus-producing areas.

The Mexican fruit fly regulations, contained in 7 CFR 301.64 through 301.64–10 (referred to below as the regulations), were established to prevent the spread of the Mexican fruit fly to noninfested areas of the United States. The regulations impose restrictions on the interstate movement of regulated articles from the regulated areas.

In an interim rule effective on January 15, 2003, and published in the **Federal Register** on January 21, 2003 (68 FR 2679–2680, Docket No. 02–129–1), we amended the regulations by adding a portion of San Diego County, CA, as a regulated area. In this interim rule, we are designating an additional portion of San Diego County, CA, as a regulated area.

Section 301.64–3 provides that the Deputy Administrator for Plant Protection and Quarantine, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), shall list as a regulated area each quarantined State, or each portion of a quarantined State, in which the Mexican fruit fly has been found by an inspector, in which the Deputy Administrator has reason to believe the Mexican fruit fly is present, or that the Deputy Administrator considers necessary to regulate because of its

proximity to the Mexican fruit fly or its inseparability for quarantine enforcement purposes from localities in which the Mexican fruit fly occurs.

Less than an entire quarantined State is designated as a regulated area only if the Deputy Administrator determines that the State has adopted and is enforcing a quarantine or regulation that imposes restrictions on the intrastate movement of the regulated articles that are substantially the same as those that are imposed with respect to the interstate movement of the articles and the designation of less than the entire State as a regulated area will otherwise be adequate to prevent the artificial interstate spread of the Mexican fruit fly.

Recent trapping surveys by inspectors of California State and county agencies and by APHIS inspectors reveal that an additional portion of San Diego County, CA, is infested with the Mexican fruit fly.

Accordingly, to prevent the spread of the Mexican fruit fly to noninfested areas of the United States, we are amending the regulations in § 301.64–3 by adding that portion of San Diego County, CA, to the existing regulated area for the Mexican fruit fly. The addition is described in detail in the rule portion of this document. The Deputy Administrator has determined that it is not necessary to designate the entire State of California as a regulated area.

As noted previously, the regulations in § 301.64–3 refer to the listing of regulated areas within quarantined States. Quarantined States are listed in § 301.64(a). When we published an interim rule quarantining a portion of Los Angeles County, CA, because of Mexican fruit fly (see 67 FR 78127–78128, Docket No. 02–021–1, published December 23, 2002), we should have amended § 301.64(a) to designate California as a quarantined State, but did not. (Prior to that December 2002 interim rule, the only areas regulated for the Mexican fruit fly were portions of Texas.) Therefore, in this rule we are amending § 301.64(a) to designate California as a quarantined State for Mexican fruit fly.

Emergency Action

This rulemaking is necessary on an emergency basis to prevent the Mexican fruit fly from spreading to noninfested areas of the United States. Under these