

Proposed Rules

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains notices to the public of the proposed issuance of rules and regulations. The purpose of these notices is to give interested persons an opportunity to participate in the rule making prior to the adoption of the final rules.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

7 CFR Part 319

[Docket No. 02–106–1]

Importation of Fruits and Vegetables

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: We propose to amend the fruits and vegetables regulations to list a number of fruits and vegetables from certain parts of the world as eligible, under specified conditions, for importation into the United States. All of the fruits and vegetables, as a condition of entry, would be inspected and subject to treatment at the port of first arrival as may be required by an inspector. In addition, some of the fruits and vegetables would be required to meet other special conditions. We also propose to recognize areas in Peru as free from the South American cucurbit fly. These actions would provide the United States with additional types and sources of fruits and vegetables while continuing to protect against the introduction of quarantine pests through imported fruits and vegetables.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before February 17, 2004.

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. 02–106–1, 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. 02–106–1. 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. 02–106–1” 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. Wayne Burnett, Senior Import Specialist, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 140, Riverdale, MD 20737–1236; (301) 734–6799.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The regulations in “Subpart—Fruits and Vegetables” (7 CFR 319.56 through 319.56–8, referred to below as the regulations) prohibit or restrict the importation of fruits and vegetables into the United States from certain parts of the world to prevent the introduction and spread of plant pests that are new to or not widely distributed within the United States.

At the request of various importers and foreign ministries of agriculture, we propose to amend the regulations to list a number of fruits and vegetables from certain parts of the world as eligible, under certain conditions, for importation into the United States. We also propose to list certain fruits and vegetables that have been imported into the United States under a permit without being specifically listed in the regulations to improve the transparency of our regulations.

The fruits and vegetables referred to in this document would have to be imported under a permit and would be subject to the requirements in § 319.56–6 of the regulations. Under § 319.56–6, all imported fruits and vegetables, as a condition of entry into the United States, must be inspected; they are also subject to disinfection at the port of first arrival if an inspector requires it.

Section 319.56–6 also provides that any shipment of fruits and vegetables may be refused entry if the shipment is so infested with plant pests that an inspector determines that it cannot be cleaned or treated.

Some of the fruits and vegetables proposed for importation would have to meet other special conditions. The proposed conditions of entry, which are discussed below, appear adequate to prevent the introduction and spread of quarantine pests through the importation of these fruits and vegetables.

We have prepared a pest risk assessment or, in two cases, a decision sheet, for each of the fruits and vegetables that we propose to add, unless we have allowed their entry previously under a permit. Copies of the pest risk assessments and decision sheets are available from the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

We also propose to make other amendments to update and clarify the regulations and improve their effectiveness. Our proposed amendments are discussed below by topic.

Inspected and Subject to Disinfection

Section 319.56–2t lists fruits and vegetables that may be imported into the United States upon inspection and subject to disinfection. We propose to amend that list to include additional fruits and vegetables from certain countries; some of the fruits and vegetables would be added in response to requests that we have received, while others have been imported into the United States under a permit but are not listed in the regulations. We also propose to make miscellaneous, nonsubstantive changes to § 319.56–2t. All of these proposed changes are discussed below.

African Horned Cucumber From Chile

We propose to amend § 319.56–2t to allow the entry of the African horned cucumber (*Cucumis metuliferus*) fruit from Chile. The pest risk assessment indicates that there are no quarantine pests associated with the African horned cucumber fruit from Chile that are likely to follow the import pathway. Therefore, we believe that the African horned cucumber from Chile may be imported into the United States under the requirements in § 319.56–6. The pest