

**BRS Stakeholder
Updates**

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cc:

Subject: USDA Biotechnology Update

I hope the subject line of this e-mail intrigues you long enough to take a few minutes and read this first-ever stakeholder update from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS). You're receiving this e-mail because you're one of our valued stakeholders, and we want to keep you informed of the latest BRS news and information.

From new regulations to personnel and organizational changes, our goal is to provide you with a brief overview of what's happening and then refer you to the BRS Web site and other sources for additional information. In the coming year, you can expect a number of exciting developments as we continue to build and expand upon the foundation that was created when BRS was formed in August 2002. Through this update, you'll be among the first to learn of these new initiatives. We also welcome your suggestions for future updates.

This inaugural stakeholder update is to introduce BRS' new compliance and enforcement unit, which will build upon efforts already underway to ensure that companies and institutions field testing GE crops adhere to BRS regulations and permit conditions. Compliance with BRS' rules and regulations protects American agriculture, the food supply, and the environment by ensuring that genetically engineered (GE) organisms are safely introduced. We are currently actively recruiting for a new compliance director, and we'll also be working to hire specialists to address compliance issues resulting from field tests.

Compliance with APHIS' biotechnology regulations has always been high. In keeping with this standard, the six overarching goals of the new compliance and enforcement unit are to take action to prevent and identify compliance infractions and violations; ensure high quality inspections and auditing; ensure prompt and consistent enforcement; ensure consistent and comprehensive documentation, reporting, and tracking; implement continuous process improvements; and enhance transparency and communication.

In coordination with this announcement, BRS is launching a new compliance Web page, which highlights information about our new compliance program and recent steps taken to strengthen compliance. In addition, the Web page provides a summary of historical compliance data from 1990 to 2002, including the outcome of all investigations that resulted in financial penalties. Beginning in 2003, BRS will post the outcome of all compliance investigations regardless of whether penalties were assessed. In order to preserve the integrity of investigations, information will only be posted after investigations are complete and all enforcement actions have been finalized.

To visit BRS' new compliance Web page, go to: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov> and click on Hot Issues. Then click on the link for Biotechnology Compliance. This is also where you'll find the vacancy announcements for the new compliance positions. We hope you find this first stakeholder update beneficial and informative. It's part of an overall effort to increase

communication, cooperation and collaboration with stakeholders as well as transparency of our regulatory system. We also want to make sure that the businesses and organizations affected by BRS regulations are aware of regulation and policy changes.

Although USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has been regulating and facilitating biotechnology for 15 years, these efforts to increase transparency and promote communication among a diversity of stakeholders are part of the foundation of BRS. In just 1 year, BRS has worked to strengthen regulatory policies, establish a cadre of dedicated biotechnologists, and expand its role in developing international biotechnology standards. As we continue to grow and evolve as a program, we want to make sure our stakeholders are involved in the process.

To add or remove a name from this update, e-mail BRS@aphis.usda.gov. Suggestions for future updates are encouraged and can be sent to the same address. We also want to know what you think of this first update, so please send us your comments, reactions, and feedback.

Sincerely,
Cindy Smith
BRS Deputy Administrator