

New and proposed regulations impact trade



FDA institutes 5-day notice procedure for food imports

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has announced it will further regulate imports and processing of food articles, such as produce, fish and dairy products, to increase accountability of handlers and protect the public from food-related health issues. Frozen boneless beef is not included.

The FDA plans to implement this new regulation this December 12 requiring handlers (i.e., importers and carriers) to submit notice of food items being imported at least five days prior to arriving in the U.S.

The regulation also would require food facilities to register with the FDA. Facilities include factories, warehouses, establishments engaged in manufacturing, processing, packing or holding of food for consumption. Foreign food facilities would need to appoint an agent.

Under the new regulation, records must include the name of the establishment and previous sources and recipients of food, including its packaging. For more details and compliance information about the 5-day notice regulation, visit the FDA Web site at www.fda.gov.

APHIS proposes adopting IPPC wood packing materials guidelines

The Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has proposed adopting international standards published last year for managing wood packing materials that come into the country. This is an effort to better protect the country against unwanted insects that hide in plant and untreated wood materials. The proposed regulation may affect the handling of wood pallets used to transport cargo.

APHIS, under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is proposing that all solid wood packing materials be heat treated or fumigated and marked as such prior to entering the country. It suggests that wood products created using glue, heat and pressure, or a combination thereof, would be sufficiently processed and void of risk associated with raw wood and would not have to be regulated for pest infestation.

The International Plant Protection Council (IPPC), under the authority of the Food and Agriculture Organization

(FAO) of the United Nations, published “Guidelines for Regulating Wood Packaging Material in International Trade” last year as a guide. The “Guidelines,” approved by the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures of the IPPC, attempt to standardize methods for handling wood packaging materials for the industry.

Since the end of 1998, stricter regulation on solid wood packing material from China and Hong Kong has required fumigation or heat or preservative treatment to protect against pest infestation. The proposed regulation would extend that requirement to all countries exporting raw wood materials to the U.S.

Many other countries are also preparing to adapt the IPPC Guidelines for handling wood packing materials. The USDA scheduled public hearings on this issue throughout June. For updates, visit the APHIS Web site at www.aphis.usda.gov.