

USDA Moves to Regulate Genetically Engineered Plant Pests

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to establish regulations governing the importation, interstate movement and release into the environment of genetically engineered organisms or products that are either plant pests or believed to be plant pests. The proposed regulations would set up a permit system under which such products or organisms could be safely moved or imported.

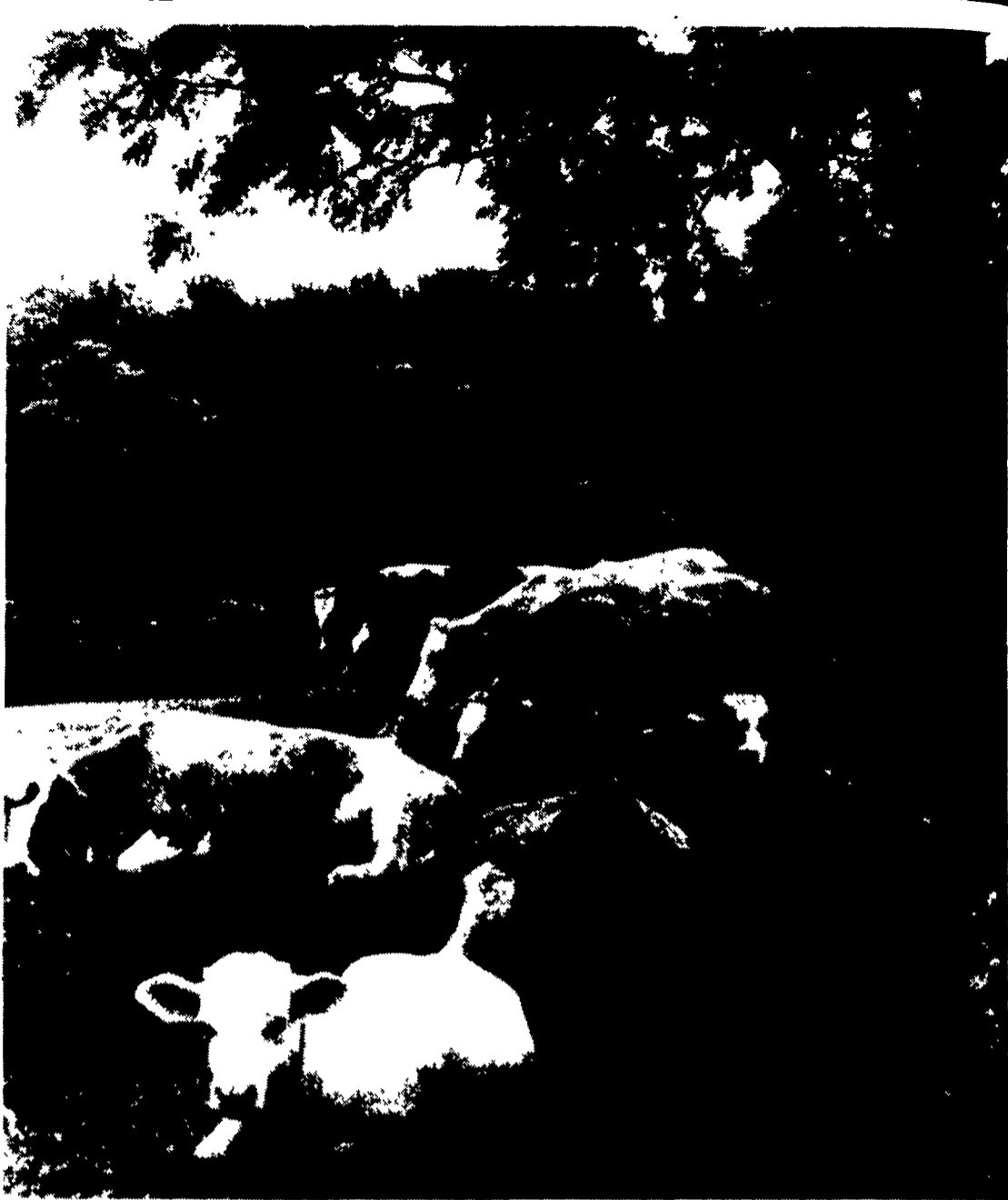
"USDA's mandate is to protect and enhance agriculture in this country," Hawkins said. "We are confident that organisms altered or produced through genetic engineering will play a major role in increasing plant yields and improving quality. However, they may also present a risk of introducing new plant pests, so these regulations are needed to prevent the introduction or establishment of such plant pests in the United States."

"During the past ten years there has been a dramatic increase in biotechnology research and product development," Hawkins said. "There is also a growing domestic and international trade

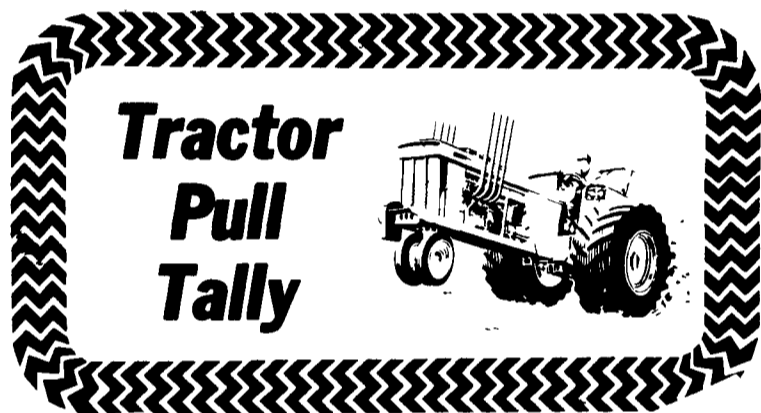
in genetically engineered organisms. We anticipate that products developed by modern biotechnology will not differ fundamentally from conventional products. Our proposed regulations would minimize the chance of introducing genetically engineered plant diseases and pests into the United States. At the same time, we would not regulate a genetically engineered organism or product merely because of the process by which it was produced."

The proposed regulations would list known pest groups. If the donor, recipient or vector of a genetically engineered organism or product comes from a known pest group, it would be deemed a regulated article and would require a permit before it could be brought into the United States, moved across state lines or released into the environment.

A public hearing on the proposed regulations will be held on Aug. 5, 9:30 a.m., at the Jefferson Auditorium in the South Agriculture Building, 14th and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington.



This beautiful Union County farm setting composed of animals and vegetation caught the eye of Hellen Kelchner, Columbia County Staff Correspondent. The photo was taken recently West of Lewisburg near Vicksburg.



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