

PALLET PHYTOSANITARY PROJECT NEWSLETTER



A Cooperative Effort of the Limestone Bluffs Resource Conservation and Development Area And The Wood Education and Resource Center

Number 2

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REGULATORY UPDATE

Methyl Bromide

The methyl bromide situation for SWPM (Solid Wood Packaging Material) in international trade applications became much clearer on January 3, 2003. On that date the US Environmental Protection Agency issued its final rule 40 CFR 82, "Protection of Stratospheric Ozone: Process for Exempting Quarantine and Preshipment Applications of Methyl Bromide" in the Federal Register (Volume 68, Number 1, Pages 237-254).

In effect, this rule establishes exemptions that allow unrestricted use of methyl bromide for international trade applications of SWPM covered under the IPPC's Guidelines for Regulating Wood Packaging Material in International Trade.

The EPA's final rule establishes an exemption for methyl bromide production, import reduction and phaseout schedule for quantities to be used for quarantine and preshipment applications.

For the purposes of solid wood packaging material (SWPM),

quarantine is generally recognized as the relevant application for a number of reasons. First, quarantine applications are generally focused on a specific and officially recognized quarantine pest, such as the Asian Longhorn Beetle for SWPM, while preshipment applications are generally applied to a wider range of pests.

Further, methyl bromide fumigation of SWPM for quarantine purposes requires very specific and intensive treatment parameters (including time, temperature, and concentration levels), as specified in the IPPC's "International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures". For SWPM, the treatment must penetrate the wood components sufficiently to ensure that the pest is completely eradicated. Conversely, preshipment applications are generally of shorter duration and less intensive because they are applied to products such as fruits and vegetables where penetration is less of an issue.

Because of the inherent logistics of using SWPM in international trade (the length of time necessary to manufacture the packaging, to treat it, to ship it to the product exporter, to load the product into the SWPM, and to complete the domestic portion of export process), quarantine

applications allow for treatment outside the 21-day window required for preshipment applications.

Finally, preshipment applications are limited to the movement of goods from the US to another country and do not include movement of goods within the US. In contrast, quarantine applications can apply to exports from the US, as well as applications to meet State, county or tribal quarantine requirements.

Based on the final rule, then, use of methyl bromide fumigation for the purposes of treating solid wood packing material for export to countries with explicit solid wood packaging material quarantine requirements is exempted from the phaseout schedule for methyl bromide, and will continue to be available as a treatment alternative so long as the aforementioned final rule is not amended or terminated.

No-Bug Logo Status

The latest news release from the IPPC was dated March 24, 2003 and simply reiterated the problem with the logo. The final sentence of that release stated, "The Secretariat is working with the legal office of FAO to ensure that a symbol for the certification mark can be used widely as soon as possible".

STATE LEVEL GRANT PROGRAM

Twenty-three of the thirty-two states in the eastern hardwood region participated in the state level grant program, sponsored as part of the Pallet Phytosanitary Project. Each state contracted, at a minimum, to attend the Briefing Session last spring (2002) and to sponsor at least two

informational meetings about the International Phytosanitary Standards for local businesses, organizations, and interested individuals. Each newsletter issue will summarize the results of a number of state cooperators completing their projects. The February 2003 issue highlighted the State projects in Georgia, Missouri, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia.

The Minnesota and Kentucky programs are highlighted in this month's issue.

Minnesota

The project cooperator, the University of Minnesota Extension Service, conducted three meetings to specifically discuss the phytosanitary requirements. In addition, a presentation was made to the Great Lakes Kiln Drying Association Annual Meeting and to a Kiwanis Club. About 130 individuals attended these five programs.

A number of general observations came out of these meetings. Reactions to the international standard ranged from disgruntled to an interest in adapting mill processes to implement the new standard. One lumber wholesaler anticipates additional business from companies that traditionally fabricate their own packaging. These companies will begin outsourcing this part of their business because they will find certification a barrier to continued in-house fabrication.

Another company specializing in packaging consulting services anticipates additional business from companies seeking to find alternatives to solid wood packaging.

The greatest interest in the standards was at the Great Lakes Kiln Drying Association meeting. The audience was largely unaware of the international standard, but immediately realized that it created an opportunity for increased business.

Kentucky

The University of Kentucky Extension Service is the projector cooperator in Kentucky. In cooperation with the Ohio Valley Lumber Association and the Kentucky Forest Industries Association they sponsored nine informational meetings, eight in Kentucky and one in Tennessee. A total of 631 individuals involved with the production or manufacturing of hardwood shipping pallets, containers and dunnage attended these meetings.

A packet of information about the phytosanitary regulations was sent to all pallet manufacturer's and all primary forest products industries in the Kentucky. In conjunction with the Kentucky Division of Forestry, a complete listing of companies capable of sterilizing solid wood packaging material is being compiled and will be included in the Division of Forestry's database.

A web page has also been developed and can be found at www.ukwoodcenter.net, under the pull down menu "Events & News, Sterilizing Wood for Pallets".

COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM

The February 2003 newsletter identified seven projects that were funded under the Pallet Phytosanitary Project Competitive Grants Program and provided a brief summary of each. With this issue we will begin providing

more detailed descriptions of these projects. Three of the projects are detailed below.

University of Minnesota Project Leader: Timothy M. Smith Title: The Effects of Phytosanitary Standards on Wood Packaging Users

The University of Minnesota and Virginia Tech are collaborating on this study to examine pallet customer perceptions and assess the impact of the IPPC standards on procurement of solid wood packaging material for export. The largest 500 exporters and 500 smaller pallet users will be asked by mail survey about their perceptions of recent export packaging standards and the impact on the procurement and use of pallets for export markets. The survey will assess pallet users perception of the importance of various product attributes and their role in affecting purchase decisions.

Additionally, information will be collected on pallet user concerns regarding such issues as frustrated shipments, quality, value, and alternative product propensity. The researchers will also estimate the number of pallets shipped internationally. Results will be compiled and made available in both report and handbook format and a seminar will be organized to present the results.

Ouachita Mountains RC&D, Inc. Project Leaders: Gary Garman Linda Parkhurst Title: 2003 Oklahoma Wood Conference & Equipment Exposition

Competitive Grants Program funds are supporting a number of technology transfer activities of the annual

Oklahoma Wood Conference and Equipment Exposition. A seminar program will be sponsored that includes several presentations dealing with international phytosanitary issues for SWPM, including: "Pallet Phytosanitary Requirements for Overseas Shipment", "Kiln Requirements for Phyto-sanitization", "Exporting Wood Products", "Pallet Manufacturing", "Pallet Recycling", and "Lumber Drying & Drying Schedules".

The Equipment Exposition portion of the project will include a number of equipment manufacturers displaying heat treatment equipment with specific application to meeting the international phytosanitary standards.

The seminar program and equipment exposition both start on April 28, 2003 and continue through May 1, 2003. All activities will be held at the Western Hills Resort, Sequoyah State Park, Wagoner, OK. Specific questions about the Conference and Expo should be directed to the Ouachita Mountains RC&D, Inc. at (918) 423-2479.

PSC, Inc.

Project Leader: Ben Wilson
Title: Dielectric Heat Treating of Green Pallet Parts

Application of dielectric RF heating of lumber has not yet been thoroughly tested. Preliminary research indicates the potential for very rapid heating of tightly stacked pallet parts, resulting in little moisture loss and no damage to parts.

The objective of this research is to develop and test a schedule to dielectrically heat treat tightly stacked pallet parts. A heating schedule will be designed to raise wood temperature as rapidly as possible to 56°C.

Holding the heated parts above 56°C will be accomplished by insulating or by application of convective heat.

The developed schedule will be applied to an adequate volume of pallet parts to build 18 pallets. Eighteen additional pallets will be built of untreated control pallet parts. ASTM Standard tests will be applied to all 36 pallets to determine if there are strength differences between heat treated and control pallets.

Eventual commercial marketing of an RF dielectric heater able to heat 500bf per hour of pallet parts is envisioned. Based on this research appropriate commercial treatment schedules will be established, capital and operating costs estimated, and a marketing plan for commercializing the technology developed.

The project is a collaborative effort of PSC, Inc., Mississippi State University, and Virginia Tech.

MISCELLANEOUS

Please feel free to distribute this newsletter via email or hard copy to all interested parties.

This issue of the newsletter and all subsequent issues will be posted on the following USDA Forest Service website:

www.na.fs.fed.us/econaction/palletnews.

Suggestions and items for upcoming newsletter issues are welcomed. Contact Curt Hassler, Project Manager, at (304) 282-5417 or via email at curth@mail.wvnet.edu.