



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Marketing and
Regulatory
Programs

Washington, DC
20250

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SUBJECT: Request for Emergency Approval of a New Information
Collection for Import Requirements – Live Fish, Fertilized Eggs,
and Gametes from Tilapia Lake Virus (TiLV)-Susceptible Species

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is submitting to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) an information collection request for an emergency 6-month approval for import requirements to apply to live fish, fertilized eggs, and gametes from Tilapia Lake Virus (TiLV)-susceptible species.

APHIS' main mission is the prevention, control, and eradication of animal diseases to safeguard animal health. Disease prevention is the most effective method for maintaining a healthy animal population and for enhancing the United States' ability to compete globally in animal and animal product trade. APHIS has determined that in this situation traditional information collection and rulemaking procedures could further cause public harm, is contrary to the public interest, and that there is good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553.

TiLV is an infectious viral disease that seriously threatens U.S. aquaculture by causing high mortality in susceptible fish. Signs of the disease include cloudy or bulging eyes; skin lesions such as darkening, bruising, or ulcers; protruding gills, and abdominal swelling. There are currently no treatments or vaccines for the disease.

An APHIS Preliminary Risk Assessment and Analysis of U.S. Imports and Exports of Live Tilapia, Eggs, and Milt determined a high risk posed to relevant industries by the introduction of TiLV via imported tilapia fingerlings (young fish) or the shipping water carrying them. The assessment also found a high likelihood that tilapia infected with TiLV will be imported into the United States, especially as the United States currently lacks import regulations certifying tilapia as healthy and disease free. More than 15 countries are considered to be “affected” by TiLV, while many more are considered to be “at risk.”

APHIS used this information to determine that the United States needs import restrictions to prevent the introduction and establishment of TiLV and address the animal health and economic risks associated with imports of live fish, fertilized eggs, and gametes from TiLV-susceptible species. Therefore, APHIS prepared a Federal Order requiring importers to: 1) secure an import permit before bringing any live fish, fertilized eggs, and gametes from TiLV-susceptible species into the United States; 2) provide a health certificate for these commodities indicating freedom from TiLV for the shipment and premises of origin; and 3) have VS personnel inspect the shipment at the port of entry. This will reduce the number of infections, help restore confidence in U.S. aquaculture products among domestic and foreign stakeholders, and lessen the impact on the national economy.

Outbreaks of TiLV in the United States would not only harm domestic tilapia production, but also jeopardize the potential for the U.S. tilapia industry to export. In general, if the United States has import requirements, this provides export trading partners additional assurance they are receiving healthy animals. As no regulatory TiLV import controls are currently in place, U.S. exporters could be held to highly stringent export requirements, and export markets for tilapia would likely be closed or restricted based on negotiated export protocols by another detection of TiLV in the United States.

Approval to collect this information is needed immediately to protect the North American aquaculture population from the effects of TiLV.

Thank you for your time and consideration.