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USDA proposes new labeling rule for biobased products

By Sara Wyant

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The USDA wants to make it easier for consumers to identify biobased products through the release of its proposed BioPreferredSM labeling rule. USDA's BioPreferred labeling program, published today in the Federal Register, intends to create a product label that would appear on qualifying BioPreferred biobased products. When final, this regulation will allow biobased product manufacturers to participate in a voluntary labeling program to identify biobased products on retail store shelves.

"Increasing the purchase and use of biobased products is a priority of the Obama Administration because it helps increase our nation's energy security and independence by using American agricultural products, while spurring economic development in rural areas," said USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Consumers want to make more informed product choice decisions and BioPreferred will help them. This label will help consumers, businesses and Federal government purchasers easily identify biobased products."

Manufacturers will be able to utilize the BioPreferred label, when finalized, to help customers identify their products as biobased. Currently, USDA has identified more than 15,000 commercially available biobased products across approximately 200 categories, from cleaning products to construction materials. Biobased products are available to consumers today and the new label will help make these sustainable products more accessible and serve as a valuable marketing tool for manufacturers and vendors of biobased products.

Biobased products are products that are composed wholly or significantly of biological ingredients - renewable plant, animal, marine or forestry materials. A BioPreferred designated item is one that meets or exceeds USDA-established minimum biobased content requirements.

This Federal Register notice announces the program's intent to create and make available a voluntary product label for increased commercial and consumer promotion of biobased products. USDA, through the publication of this draft rule, seeks to notify and gather feedback from

interested groups and the public-at-large on this process.

More information about BioPreferred's proposed labeling rule can be found at www.biopreferred.gov or contact BioPreferred at biopreferred@usda.gov. BioPreferred encourages interested parties to submit comments on the proposed rule until Sept. 29, 2009. To submit comments go to <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/E9-17610.htm>

The BioPreferred program was created by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (2002 Farm Bill) as a preferred procurement program to increase the purchase and use of biobased products within the Federal government. The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) expanded the program's scope to promote the sale of biobased products in other sectors. BioPreferred is comprised of two programs: a preferred procurement program for Federal agencies and a voluntary labeling program for the broad scale marketing of biobased products. A complete list and detailed description of each BioPreferred designated item, and items for future designation, can be found at www.biopreferred.gov or follow BioPreferred at <http://twitter.com/BioPreferred> for the latest updates.

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