U.S. Department of Energy
Categorical Exclusion Determination Form

Submit by E-mail

Proposed Action Title: (0470-1507) University of Massachusetts-Amherst - Development of a Dedicated, High-Value Biofuels Crop

Program or Field Office: Advanced Research Projects Agency - Energy

Location(s) (City/County/State): Amherst, MA; Cambridge, MA; Pullman, WA; Berkeley, CA

Proposed Action Description:
Funding will support development of genetically modified (GM) camelina that grows faster and produces more seed oil than natural camelina and that produces the high-value biofuel product limonene in both the seeds and leaves of the plant.

Proposed work will consist of (1) laboratory-based genetic modification of cyanobacteria and other microorganisms, nicotiana, and camelina; (2) growth of GM nicotiana and GM camelina in contained growth chambers and greenhouses; and (3) laboratory-based analysis of the resulting GM nicotiana and GM camelina plants using standard techniques to determine if they meet target milestones. This project will not involve field tests of GM plants.

Proposed genetic modification of microorganisms will take place at the University of California - Berkeley campus in Berkeley, CA. Proposed genetic engineering and growth of GM nicotiana and GM camelina will take place at the University of Massachusetts - Amherst campus in Amherst, MA, the Washington State University campus in Pullman, WA, and the Metabolix, Inc. facility in Cambridge, MA. Standard laboratory analyses of GM nicotiana and GM camelina will be performed at the University of Massachusetts - Amherst campus in Amherst, MA. All university teams will receive approval from their respective Institutional Biosafety Committees prior to beginning work with recombinant DNA molecules.

Categorical Exclusion(s) Applied:
B3.6 - Small-scale research and development, laboratory operations, and pilot projects

For the complete DOE National Environmental Policy Act regulations regarding categorical exclusions, including the full text of each categorical exclusion, see Subpart D of 10 CFR Part 1021.

Regulatory Requirements in 10 CFR 1021.410(b): (See full text in regulation)

☑ The proposal fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix A or B to 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D.

To fit within the classes of actions listed in 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B, a proposal must be one that would not: (1) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders; (2) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators), but the proposal may include categorically excluded waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment actions or facilities; (3) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases; (4) have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources, including, but not limited to, those listed in paragraph B(4) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B; (5) involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those listed in paragraph B(5) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B.

☑ There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal.

☑ The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion. This proposal is not connected to other actions with potentially significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.25(a)(1)), is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)), and is not precluded by 40 CFR 1506.1 or 10 CFR 1021.211 concerning limitations on actions during preparation of an environmental impact statement.

Based on my review of the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (as authorized under DOE Order 451.1B), I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class(es) of action, the other regulatory requirements set forth above are met, and the proposed action is hereby categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

NEPA Compliance Officer: Matt Dunn

Date Determined: 11/22/2011